

Stoke Gabriel Parish Council  
c/o the clerk to the Council,  
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Monday, 3<sup>rd</sup> October 2022

## **Inspection and letter of report on the risk posed Ash trees in Hoyle's Copse, Stoke Gabriel**

Dear Parish Councillors,

Your clerk asked me to inspect the trees in Hoyle's Copse, marking those Ashes badly enough affected by Chalara Ash Dieback Disease (*Hymenoscyphus fraxineus*) to need felling.

I visited on the 16<sup>th</sup> September, meeting your tree warden Phil Bolt on site, and walking over the woods, assessing marking those affected trees close enough to footpaths or third-party property to be a threat. The weather at the time was dry and clear with good visibility.

This letter may be taken as a formal report on the condition of the trees, and the risks they pose;

I start with an introduction about myself and my competence to report on the tree, moving on to an explanation of what I found, with my conclusions:

Introduction: Rupert Baker is a consultant and plantsman who works in arboriculture, forestry, and horticulture, though he also 'gets his hands dirty'. He has over 40 years' experience in these fields. He carries out tree risk surveys using the QTRA system to assess risk; trees in relation to development surveys to BS5837: 2012, veteran tree management, woodland planting and management plans, and arboretum and orchard design and layout.

He also plants, establishes, and prunes orchards and arboreta.

He keeps his qualifications up to date with courses, research, and discussion. He is a member of the Royal Forestry Society, the Arboricultural Association, the UK Tree Care Forum, and the Tree Register of the British Isles.

He is fully insured for Professional Indemnity and Public Liability in respect of tree and woodland surveys, and for carrying out works for clients.

In addition to his own work, he serves as the Arboricultural consultant to the Royal Horticultural Society (RHS) for the Chelsea and Hampton Court Flower Shows

The trees I examined stand in Hoyles Copse, an area of Public Open Space extending to about 7 acres. The land comprises some grassed areas especially on its eastern side, but most of it is secondary woodland, dominated by Ash, grown up on the site of an old quarry system. The site is exposed to the prevailing SW winds, running up the Dart estuary.

The soils in the area appear to be shallow calcareous loams of the Wetton Series, over massive, reef limestone bedrock of the Brixham Formation. (Source SSEW soil maps, BGS geological data, and on-site observation). Such soils generally drain well; but being shallow can be prone to windthrow, especially as here where they are over hard limestone.

The trees in the wood comprise a few large, older specimens associated with hedges and other features; in a matrix of younger naturally regenerated trees – mostly Hawthorn and Ash.

I walked over the site with your warden, marking all ashes close enough to paths or neighbouring properties to be a risk, and showing more than about 40% crown dieback (a level above which Ashes have been found to become brittle as a result of the disease), with pink paint.

There were a sufficient number of trees that you need to consider whether to apply to the Forestry Commission for a Felling Licence; however, given that in my professional opinion, the land is classed as 'Public Open Space' as defined in the Forestry Act 1967 (the current legislation), this should not be necessary, given that tree felling on such land is outwith the requirements for such a licence.

In addition to individually marked trees, there was a group of single-aged Ash, below the path from the lime kiln, downhill from a pair of large mature Beech, where a small group felling is needed; the start and finish trees are here marked. Along the western path, another group of single-aged, early-mature Ash is mostly below the path, with a few above, between an early-mature Beech, marked A, and a sinuous ash on the path edge, marked B, retaining the Beech, and one healthy Ash tree marked with a O. The marked trees in both sections have arrows pointing toward one another to delineate the sections.

There is a private house and its land adjacent, within falling distance of these latter trees.

I recommend that all the individually marked trees, and those in the 2 groups described above, are felled.

I am currently awaiting a response from the Forestry Commission to confirm that your land would be 'Public Open Space' within the meaning of the forestry act 1967; which means that you do not need to apply for a felling licence.

Do get in touch if you wish to discuss my findings;

I remain,  
Yours sincerely



Rupert Baker BSc(Hons) Dip Arb (RFS) M Arbor A