Tree Warden Report for 13 October 2025

Annual Tree Survey

The report is attached and includes an **action list** for works that are advised as priority for the coming winter season, drawing particularly on the baseline tree survey carried out in February this year.

Wylam Nature Reserve

- There has been recent storm damage and it is likely there may be a few more particularly if gales strike trees in leaf.

- Four new chalkboards have been set up to let visitors know what is happening on the reserve. Two boards put in earlier this year went missing. (One later found nearby.)

- The wildflower meadows have been cut and 75% of the arisings raked off to date.

- The "Our Fragile Earth" event on Saturday 18 October at the Methodist Church will include a table display of plans and photos and a guided walk.

Ash dieback - some information

I estimate 20 large ash in the reserve have the disease and at least 3 are dead and remain, reduced down, as standing dead wood. More ash are affected locally for example at The Orchard, along the wagonway, at The Spetchells and along the riverside and in hedgerows.

You may have seen a report (December 2024) on ash trees in Northumberland. The county has around 183,000 ash trees that are at risk from Ash dieback: a fungal infection formerly called "Ash Chalara" first recorded in 2012 and now identified as the fungus Hymenoscyphus fraxinea. The disease is spread by spores carried on the wind and is now present across the UK. Large mature trees, Isolated trees, trees growing in open areas or those in hedges appear to be far less affected than those in a forest environment.

Northumberland County Council say the disease will possibly kill 90-95 per cent of all the ash trees in the county over time, and have warned that the council "*can only manage the impacts*". The disease causes trees to become brittle, meaning they can fall without warning. Therefore trees near roads and in public spaces such as parks will be cut down or pollarded as the disease progresses into stage 2 (75-50% canopy loss) in order to protect the public, but the council has warned this process will take many years and come at a substantial cost.

Ash trees with dieback can die more quickly if other pathogens, like honey fungus, take advantage of the already weakened tree. Where the dark patches called 'basal lesions' are found on the trunks – usually in areas of dense ash populations and wet woodlands – these can make trees unstable and potentially dangerous more quickly.

Liz Bray 02/10/2025

WYLAM PARISH COUNCIL
ANNUAL SURVEY OF TREES ON PARISH COUNCIL LAND
July – August 2025

This is a visual, ground level assessment of the trees on land owned and managed by Wylam Parish Council, with a view to identifying any trees requiring work in the interests of public safety and in accordance with the Wylam Tree Policy. (The survey is essentially in line with the International Society of Arborists' Level 1 visual tree inspection. Levels 2 and 3 are for professionals where the tree is identified as needing a more detailed risk assessment)

Where trees are potentially dangerous, a professional arboricultural opinion is recommended to confirm the condition of the tree and specify any necessary work.

This survey has been informed by a survey carried out by Andy Clark MWA Arboricultural Consultancy, using the OTISS online survey system. The OTISS survey was carried out in February 2025 and has created a baseline set of information on all trees on Wylam Parish Council-owned land including a professional hazard assessment and recommendations for management works.

Survey findings plus a summary of the OTISS recommendations are noted below. **(Actions in Red are priority)**

Abbreviations:
TW = Tree Warden WPC = Wylam Parish Council / Parish Clerk.
DBH = Diameter at Breast Height WAC = Wylam Angling Club.
NCC = Northumberland County Council. EA = Environment Agency.
OTISS = Online Tree Inspection and Survey System. Survey Date 9 February 2025

Introduction

Spring and early summer 2025 has been exceptionally warm and dry with very limited rainfall to date. Storm Floris hit on 4 -5th August with unseasonally high winds but no appreciable rain. Despite trees being in full leaf, only one WPC tree collapsed in the storm.

Generally speaking: little change since 2023 and 2024. The OTISS baseline survey has identified and categorised a number of trees requiring management work including felling diseased and potentially dangerous trees, particularly those rated high hazard grade 8 which are clearly the highest priority. The OTISS survey also highlights areas where trees have become overly large or overcrowded for their location and where thinning and pruning operations are suggested. This survey also makes frequent recommendations for controlling ivy growth for trees in public areas and scrub vegetation management for trees on amenity spaces. Mower damage to tree roots is highlighted. This damage weakens the tree and allows decay to develop. The baseline survey will allow the Parish Council to decide how to approach the challenge of managing its tree cover and how and when to fund necessary works.

Ash dieback continues to affect trees in the parish in varying degrees. Young saplings are most vulnerable and there is evidence that older mature trees have much greater resistance to the infection. Research is continuing and the view now emerging is that ash trees will not be wiped out as previously thought.

The symptoms of what is now known as the fungal infection Hymenoscyphus fraxineus on ash (wilting and blackening leaves, bark lesions, fungal bodies) Within the parish we will need to start thinking dealing with dead trees and replacement planting. I understand that Northumberland Council are currently preparing a county-wide strategy for this. Ash die-back does not need reporting to the plant health authorities as it is already so established and widespread, but importing ash trees is currently still prohibited.

It is important to remain vigilant and check at-risk trees after storms and other extreme weather, particularly near roads, buildings, paths and the river bank. Two trees identified as medium hazards in the OTISS survey have in fact collapsed during subsequent storms. It is as always, very difficult to predict where the worst storm conditions will strike.

1 Engine Dene (OTISS Ref Engine Dene)

Northumberland Council are responsible for the eastern portion of this green space. With several recent losses including a very big prominent veteran ash. The County Council has planted replacement trees this spring and they seem to be doing well. There are still low hanging branches and deadwood in the other large ash trees on the northern perimeter of Engine Dene and the ownership of these trees is uncertain. (Note: adjoining residents have reported concerns to NCC)

On the WPC land, two very large veteran ash trees on the north garden boundary of no 20 The Dene are regularly inspected for dead wood, soil cracks and any other indications of problems, particularly after storms. The trees have a low / medium failure potential and are high risk locations. Ivy removal recommended.

A swing is still attached to a sycamore tree in the ”spinney” east of Woodvale Gardens. This area is noted in the OTISS survey as being used by children an recommended for scrub clearance and thinning. There are currently large heaps of dead vegetation here where the privet, snowberry, bramble etc has been cut down. Removal of this material would be wise as it could be a fire risk. A three-stem ash in the same area is showing die-back and two main stems have been marked, presumably for removal.

A group of overgrown and leaning elder, hawthorn overhang close to the path and require pruning back.

The OTISS baseline survey

Recommendations for potential hazards

Ash – large veteran trees.	**2 no (T001 and T002) in OTISS survey**	**Close to residential property boundary.**	**Monitor condition particularly after storms. High hazard risk, low-medium**	**TW**

			failure risk. Remove ivy	
Ash , sycamore thorn, and dense scrub in "spinney"	**W1 in OTISS Survey**	**Close to houses and used by children.**	**Remove marked stems on ash. Clear scrub, and thin trees, remove deadwood and cut vegetation.**	**WPC**
Hawthorn – recent storm damage.	**T004 in OTISS survey**	**Unstable multiple stems**	**Fell**	**WPC**
Lime	**T006 in OTISS survey**	**Low branches**	**Lift crown to 3 metres**	**WPC**
Elder, ash, holly, hawthorn etc beside path	**TG002 in OTISS survey**	**Between garden fence and path.**	**Prune back from path and reduce to 1.5m: manage as a hedge.**	**WPC/TW**

2 Green space between Hedley Street, Jackson Road and The Dene (OTISS Ref Jackson Road)

The tall shrubs that were coppiced down close to ground level in early 2024 have now regrown to a height of around 1.5 metres, apart from an area in the north east of the site where the ground is fairly bare of regrowth. Regular management will be needed to ensure that the shrubs do not exceed 2metres height.

With clearance of the dense shrubbery the site has the appearance of a more open glade but still contains over 200 trees: some fairly good mature specimens but also a very large number that are likely to be self- seeded, growing very close together and drawn up seeking the light. The OTISS survey has identified four main tree groups and has also pinpointed six individual trees. 4 mature trees (Sycamore and Norway Maple) are recommended for felling. An additional tree (Norway maple with rope swing) now has some basal decay and may also need to be felled, together with two dead birch. Prompt removal is advised for the swings and residents can be notified about the reasons for concern. The OTISS survey also recommends substantial thinning of densely packed younger trees particularly whitebeam and birch, removing any that are dead, dying, weak, leaning or otherwise inappropriate, leaving the remainder to develop as healthy trees. The veteran oak was being monitored by a local contractor but is now recommended for pollarding to reduce the risk of further storm damage. A large elm has branches in contact with the roof /gutters of the property to the north and low hanging branches, plus decay at the base.

Replacement trees (chestnut, oak, hornbeam and hazel transplants) have been planted on the site as replacements for trees already removed.

Recommendations for potential hazards

Sycamore and 2 Norway maple on eastern perimeter, 2 dead birch	**OTISS ref T001, T002,T003,and within TG001 and TG002 ,**	**Close to Jackson Road**	**Fell and grind out stumps**	**WPC**
Norway maple containing rope swings.	**OTISS ref T004 and T005**	**In grass. Severe mower damage**	**Obtain 2nd opinion on basal decay in T004, fell and grind out stump of T005**	**WPC**
Mature oak	**OTISS Ref T006**	**Previous storm damage and unbalanced crown.**	**Pollard at 8 metres, 2 metres radius**	**WPC**
Overcrowded trees		**Thin out weak, dead or dying trees**	**Survey and mark trees**	**WPC / TW**
Retained and understorey trees and shrubs		**Remove deadwood and ivy**	**Assess and prepare a management plan**	**WPC/TW**

3 The Orchard - Church Road corner (OTISS Ref The Orchard)

A request to pollard two ash trees and prune a yew on the north boundary wall is still outstanding. The OTISS survey recommended removal of one of the ash and reduction of the Yew on the road edge. (Note that the yew may or may not be the responsibility of WPC and in any case is a protected tree and **permission would be needed** before carrying out any work. Elm regrowth adjacent has recently been removed . This could be managed as a hedge.

The young trees planted as part of the new housing development have put on good growth this year, including a rowan, with a dead leader, that is continuing to put on healthy regrowth from the base. The others are healthy and have benefitted from wire netting protective collars to prevent mower damage.

Recommendations for potential hazards

Two ash trees in front of 5 Thomas Close	**Adjacent to wall. OTISS ref T002 and T003**		**Remove dying ash. Monitor condition of 2nd Ash**	**WPC**
Elm regrowth	**Adjacent to wall, and TG001**		**Monitor and control ivy and elm regrowth.**	**WPC / TW**

4 Charlie's Corner (OTISS Ref Ovingham Road)

The rowan trees continue to be slow to put on growth in the poor soil conditions but the existing birch is developing well. Four new sapling trees are establishing well. The largest rowan which had a pronounced lean toward the road fell during a recent storm. Temporary wire netting tree guards have halted the repeated severe mower damage to these trees.

Recommendations for potential hazards

Grind out rowan stump, Plant a replacement tree nearby	**OTISS Ref T007**		**Tree collapsed in Storm Floris.**	**WPC/ TW**

5 Wylam Institute (Note Advisory: the green space is **not** WPC responsibility)

There are 18 trees plus a number of small saplings and shrubs, on the perimeter of this grassed garden area. No significant change or concerns with trees. Site contains three laburnum, a cherry and a rowan in poor condition but all small. There are 3 large sycamore with roots affecting the adjoining footway surface on Church Road. A fourth large sycamore is close to the institute building so may need pruning back from time to time. Low retaining wall and signage at the corner are still in need of repairs. (Try Northumberland County Council's "FixMyStreet")

Recommendations for potential hazards

		Monitor footway surfaces affected by sycamore roots and consider discussion with NCC Highways. **Consider felling 5 small trees in very poor condition and replacement planting.**	**Wylam Institute Committee**

6 Wylam Haughs Nature Reserve (OTISS Ref W3)

Site includes the fenced area plus riverside trees and public footpath. The 2021 – 2025 Management plan will be reviewed. There have been a number of work sessions attended by a small informal group of volunteers carrying out hay raking, and rotational bramble and shrub clearance. More multi-stemmed hazel plus a storm-damaged collapsed bird cherry were coppiced by contractors with cut material stacked on site as deadwood habitat. Two oaks in early maturity have recently suffered breakouts from weak forks ad a very large drawn-up willow has lost about 50% of its crown during a recent storm. Another very large willow previously pollarded is likely to be vulnerable to storm damage and re-pollarding may prevent this tree damaging other healthy trees adjacent.

There is good regrowth of previously coppiced trees and much natural regeneration generally across the reserve. The increasing dominance of sycamore, cherry and horse chestnut is of concern. An estimated 20 ash trees in early maturity are dead or dying from fungal dieback, Hymenoscyphus fraxineus together with a great many small ash saplings. The fungal disease affects younger trees more readily than mature trees. Mesh guards placed around newly coppiced and planted trees have been removed where no longer needed.

As noted in 2023 -4 reports, there are dead and dying trees (elm, alder, etc)on the river bank plus fallen crack willows. These trees are between the public footpath and the river in an area which is often inundated during high river levels. The OTISS survey comments on "Several collapsed and partially collapsed crack willows along river frontage", plus "multiple wounds and defects to most trees, but to be expected." (See Section 9 below Tyne View re – beneficial effects of riverside willows.)

Recommendations for potential hazards –OTISS Ref The Haughs W3

Hazel rotational coppicing and removal of deadwood over paths.	**OTISS ref W3**		**Survey and prepare revised schedule of work**	**WPC/ TW**
Monitor dying ash and elms				**TW**
Prune breakouts as necessary for safety and to promote healthy growth Consider re-pollarding.			**2 oaks** **1 willow** **1 willow**	**WPC/TW**

7 The Haughs – Wylam Allotments Association (OTISS Ref The Haughs W2)

As previously reported, south of the allotments and beside the public footpath and access track , there is natural regeneration of a trees (sycamore, birch, goat willow) and berrying shrubs.(Elder, bramble, blackthorn, blackcurrant, raspberry, privet.) This southern portion is reserved for potential future allotments, but is increasingly shaded by vegetation and riverside trees plus incursion of Himalayan Balsam in an area difficult to access.

Within the allotments there are some scattered hawthorns 5 – 6 metres in height, fruit trees and a perimeter hedge, maintained by the Allotments Association. The hedges should not be allowed to develop into trees. A taller hedge to the west is long established with gaps at the base and would benefit from being laid to promote new basal growth.

The allotment association has requested tree management and thinning along the trackside, on the west face of the pit heap (see below) and to the south east of the allotments to

reduce impacts on plots adjacent. These trees have been surveyed and priced with a view to a thinning operation but the work is not currently programmed.

Recommendations for potential hazards

Shading and tree root competition affecting plots. .	**OTISS Ref W2 & W1**		**Selective thinning of trees** **Hedge laying on western boundary.**	**WPC / TW /Allotments Association**

8 Former Colliery Spoil Heap (OTISS Ref The Haughs W1)

Little change from previous years. Erosion continues gradually on steep sections particularly the south face next to the river and on the paths worn by mountain biking but the OTISS survey concludes that the general risk level is medium with "many trees in a state of partial collapse from land- erosion - all appear stable and long standing ". The steep sides tend to discourage most people from venturing up on to the pit heap.

A very large sycamore on the south west edge of the pit heap has reduced foliage and shedding bark but following a second opinion, will continue to be monitored. Many trees at the top of the pit heap and on the level ground to the east, have a mass of basal growth and ivy at the base which prevents full inspection for basal decay. However the OTISS survey has identified basal decay in a very tall sycamore (RefT001) close to the Public footpath and recommends urgent removal. A second opinion confirms this. As with many large trees in this woodland, felling is not straightforward as the tree canopies are closely meshed. In turn this means that if a tree does fall it is likely to be hung up on adjoining trees. Sapling elms overhanging the public footpath on the western side have been removed but some larger trees (8 - 12 approx.) still require professional removal, and pruning of a few high dead branches.

Riverside "beach" area to SE of the pit heap contains some invasive Japanese knotweed that has grown taller than usual this year due to low river levels. Himalayan Balsam and Giant Hogweed also present.

Recommendations for potential hazards

Elms and sycamore Pine, elm, beech	**OTISS Ref W1 Overhanging trees**	**Prune off heavy and/or dead limbs extending over footpath.** **Fell 8 -12 medium elms and larger dead elm.** **Remove basal ivy on trees adjacent to the public footpath**	**WPC** **TW**
Beech, sycamore, ash, elm.	**On or close to river. Large trees with exposed roots / root plates.**	**Monitor trees and erosion particularly after severe weather and high river levels.**	**TW**

Sycamore	**OTISS Ref T001**	**Basal Kretchmaria decay present. Tree is high risk close to well-used footpath and playing fields. Fell once tree is dormant.**	**WPC**

9 Riverside south of Tyne View House and West View (OTISS Ref Tyne View)

Large riverside willows (2) and sycamore (3) recently pollarded, are showing vigorous new growth. The largest willow has shed one of its 10 limbs. Breakouts of crack willows continue during storms and tend to root into the river bed or the bankside. This is very common locally and is beneficial for bank and sediment stabilisation according to advice from the Tyne Rivers Trust. There is an informal river edge path but the Public Right of Way is at the top of the bank beside the houses.

There are two separate plots of land in Parish Council ownership. The OTISS survey noted the trees in both areas have low failure potential and medium hazard rating. Ivy removal was suggested for the larger trees, plus removal of dead and collapsed stems. On the western bloc (Ref TG002) Thinning of dense (mainly sycamore) was suggested.
Some additional thinning is planned in response to a resident request but has not yet been carried out.
|

Recommendations for potential hazards

Monitor trees along the riverbank				**TW**
Remove ivy, dead and collapsed stems and thinning	**OTISS Refs TG001 &TG002**			**WPC/TW**

10 Riverside south of Stephenson Court and Wylam Nurseries. (Not included in OTISS Survey)

Despite barrier fencing and increasing scrub growth, the riverside footpath is still being used when river levels allow and a medium sized fallen tree has recently been sawn to clear the path. There are no other significant changes to the trees since 2020 - 2021. Elder, goat willow and hawthorn, weighed down with ivy, lean heavily over sections of the path and will continue to collapse from time to time.

Recommendations for potential hazards

Mainly mature elm and sycamore	**Leaning and dead/dying trees on the lower bankside, particularly where root plates are exposed**	**Monitor after storms and floods -**	**TW**

11 Hagg Bank Playground

No significant concerns. Recent short stretch of hedging planted but not all have survived due to the dry conditions and overhanging vegetation.

Recommendations for potential hazards - none

None				**WPC continue annual management programme.**

11 Wylam Wood Road (OTISS Ref Station Road)

One lime blown over by storms – removed but no replacement as yet. Large lime (T003)and chestnut (T001) at south perimeter of the site damaged by storms and already identified as problematic and high risk. Both now **pollarded** to 5 metres. Tall leggy willow (T006) previously pollarded but continuing weak regrowth and hazardous. Felling and replacement planting recommended. No other significant changes from previous reports noting continuing poor condition of most of the trees in this group: fissures in main trunk, possible canker and horse chestnut blotch / fungal disease, probably exacerbated by severe scalping of exposed surface roots. Lime trees, one overhanging the stone sign / planter – both need crown lifting. (Can reach lowest branches from ground, but needs more work at height)

Recommendations for potential hazards

Lime, willow and chestnut group.	**OTISS ref**	**Bark damage and fissures, possible canker.**		**TW to monitor condition**
Lime **Chestnut**	**T003** **T001**	**Recently pollarded.** **May need removal.**		
Fell willow **Prune low hanging limes.**	**T006** **T009**	**Fell willow (T006) and plant re** **Crown lift limes (T009 & 010)** **Replacement planting** **Prune back from road frontage, thin out sapling growth.**		**WPC** **WPC** **TW?WPC** **TW** **TW**
Shrub clumps with sycamore and Norway Maple	**T012** **T013**			

13 Land adjacent To Stanley Burn

No concerns. Birch obscuring Northumberland sign. (Too high above pavement)

Recommendations for potential hazards

Birch adjacent to Stanley Burn			**Pruning.**	**WPC - Refer to NCC**

14 Ovingham Burial Ground

No significant change from previous year. Lime trees have had some modest pruning and cutting back of epicormic growth and ivy. (These are protected by TPO – Check status.)
Hedges, shrubs and conifers regularly and neatly trimmed.
Trees generally in good health apart from young ash on north boundary one now dead, 2 others with ash dieback.

Debris and excavated earth continues to be stacked under a veteran sycamore. This stack should be moved to a location away from any tree rooting zones. Tree roots will extend 2 metres beyond the crown spread of a tree as a general rule.

Recommendations for potential hazards

Large veteran trees		**Monitor for vehicle abrasion and deadwood overhanging adjoining property.** **Consider a tree / landscape management plan**	**OJBG Committee**

15 Forster Gardens

Hawthorn hedge over 2 metres high. Receives annual cut though not on PC land.

Recommendations for potential hazards – none

		Review maintenance commitment	**WPC**

Wylam Annual Tree Survey 2025

Action List – Urgent and / or essential work

These tree works involve dead, dying and storm damaged trees and certain essential management works to enable appropriate management, healthy growth and prevention of nuisance, obstruction etc . Most of the work is recommended as a priority in the baseline tree survey carried out in February 2025. Numbers are from the baseline survey.

Engine Dene
T004 Hawthorn storm damaged earlier this year. Small but unstable multi-stem tree. Fell and remove stump.
W1 Ash with dieback. Reduce previously marked stems.

Jackson Road
T001 Norway Maple. Fell and remove stump.
T002 Sycamore with unstable fork. Fell and remove stump.
T003 Sycamore has decay in included fork. Fell and remove stump.

T004 Norway Maple with severe root damage, deadwood and wounds. Subject to 2nd opinion on basal decay, fell and remove stump.
T005 Norway Maple with severe root damage. Fell and remove stump.
T006 Oak with recent large limb failures in storms. Pollard at 8 metres.
TG002 Fell 2 dead birch close to road.

Charlie's Corner
T007 Tree fell during recent storm. Remove stump – trip hazard.

Wylam Haughs Nature Reserve
W3 Crack willow with recent large storm breakout.. Subject to a professional opinion, remove damaged limb and consider pollarding.
W3 Oak adjacent to allotments with minor storm breakout. Remove damaged limb over path.
W3 Large hazels and willow. Subject to review of current management plan, consider next round of rotational coppicing and re-pollarding work.

Wylam Pit Heap
T001 Sycamore with established basal decay close to public path. Fell and remove stump.

Station Road
T001 Horse Chestnut recently felled. Remove stump.
T006 Willow suppressed with deadwood. Fell and remove stump.

Work that can be undertaken by Volunteer Tree Warden
Basal ivy cutting
Removal of tree guards as required
Regular monitoring
Minor pruning and scrub clearance
Planting sapling trees as replacements for felled trees.