Chalara and landscape character

1. The abundance of ash and its widespread distribution in the countryside has made the species important in the landscape. The Natural Character Assessment of the English countryside has defined the important elements of local landscapes: http://www.naturalengland.org.uk/publications/nca/

2. England has been divided into 159 distinct natural areas (Natural England; January 2015). Of these 159 plans, ‘non-woodland’ ash is specifically mentioned as an important landscape character in 10 plans (6.3%):
   - Tyne Gap and Hadrian’s Wall – hedgerow trees and those that occur are mainly ash;
   - Mid Northumberland: hedgerow ash;
   - Orton Fells: windswept ash trees;
   - Tees Lowlands: hedgerow trees of ash and sycamore;
   - Shropshire, Cheshire and Staffordshire Plain – small copses and clumps of trees, mainly oak and ash [...] often with dense hedgerow trees;
   - Trent and Belvoir Vales: hedgerow trees, notably oak and ash;
   - East Anglian Chalk – ash dominated copses and hilltop clumps;
   - Marshwood and Powerstock Vales – many small woods dominated by beech and ash;
   - Malvern Hills: old mature and veteran trees, particularly oak, ash and field maple;
   - Mendip Hills: old ash pollards.

3. A further 38 plans (23.9%) mention hedgerow trees, tall hedgerows, boundary and field boundary trees as important features in the landscape. Since ash is the commonest hedgerow tree and second most common individual countryside tree (Appendix 2), it follows that some of the trees referred to in these plans will be ash. The 38 plans are:
   - North Northumberland Coastal Plain
   - Eden Valley
   - North Pennines
   - South East Northumberland Coastal Plain
   - Tyne and Wear Lowlands;
   - North York Moors and Cleveland Hills
   - Vale of Pickering
   - Yorkshire Wolds
   - Vale of York
   - Yorkshire Southern Pennine Fringe
   - Humberhead Levels
   - Derbyshire Peak Fringe and Lower Derwent
   - Mid Severn Sandstone Plateau
   - Needwood & South Derbyshire Claylands
   - Leicestershire and Nottinghamshire Wolds
   - Leicestershire and South Derbyshire Coalfields
   - Northamptonshire Uplands
   - South Norfolk and High Suffolk Claylands
• Suffolk Coast and Heaths
• South Suffolk and North Essex Claylands
• High Leicestershire
• Dunsmore and Feldon
• Severn and Avon Vales
• South Herefordshire and Over Severn
• Bedfordshire and Cambridgeshire Claylands
• Avon Valley
• Berkshire and Marlborough Downs
• Yardley Whittlewood Ridge
• North Downs
• South Hampshire Lowlands
• Hampshire Downs
• Blackmore Vale and Vale of Wardour
• Thames Basin Heaths
• Low Weald
• South Purbeck
• Vale of Taunton and Quantock Fringe
• Blackdowns
• Devon Redlands

4. Sixteen other plans (10%) mention individual trees, parkland or wood pasture where ash is likely to be of importance:
  • Cumbria High Fells
  • Vale of Mobra
  • The Fens
  • Merseyside Conurbations
  • Trent Valley Washlands
  • Rockingham Forest
  • Arden
  • Melbourne Parkland
  • Leicestershire Vales
  • Herefordshire Plateau
  • Teme Valley
  • Bedfordshire Greensand Ridge
  • Midvale Ridge
  • Yeovil Scarplands
  • Chilterns
  • Wealden Greensand

5. In total, 64 (40%) of the published plans suggest that the loss of non-woodland ash will have an impact on the landscape character of the area. In response to our 2014 survey, the Landscape Institute expressed their concern that the loss of substantial numbers of ‘Ash trees as a result of Ash Dieback (Chalara fraxinea), will significantly alter the established baseline landscape character and habitat of many areas of the UK (as has already been demonstrated in, for example, Denmark)’. 