

## Trees Surrounding the Whaddon Recreation Ground

Recently the Parish Council became aware that many of the Horse Chestnut trees which border the Recreation Ground appeared unhealthy. Following consultations with the Tree Officer of South Cambridgeshire District Council (SCDC), the Parish Council commissioned an independent survey from a qualified Arboriculturist.

The subsequent report identified that all of the Horse Chestnuts around the recreation ground are infected, to a greater or lesser extent, with a disease called 'Bleeding Canker'. This disease is affecting large numbers of Horse Chestnuts across the UK. Besides eventually killing the trees, a problem with this disease is that it weakens the tree and its branches over time. Subsequently, the tree may drop apparently healthy branches, especially in hot, dry or windy conditions. At present there is no cure or treatment.

In summary, at least four of the 14 Horse Chestnut trees along the side of the road need to be felled in the next couple of months, before they become a danger to the public. Most of the remaining trees need remedial work to remove diseased and/or damaged branches in the next 6 months. However, with two exceptions, all the trees are infected with the disease, and will degenerate over time, requiring regular maintenance and will, regrettably, probably need to be felled within the next 5 or 6 years.

The trees behind the Village Hall are in a worse state. There are a total of 8 trees, 6 Horse Chestnuts, one Cherry and one Maple. The Maple Tree has been vandalised to the point of destruction, and needs to be felled. The Cherry Tree is badly diseased and dying and needs to be felled. Both these trees need to be felled before they become a danger to the public. Of the remaining 6 Horse Chestnuts, one is dead (from the Bleeding Canker disease), and the others are all showing advanced stages of the disease. The Parish Council have been advised to have all these trees felled in the near future.

While this is very regrettable news, SCDC have made a generous offer to pay for replacement trees and their planting. However, while SCDC have the budget in this financial year to be able to make this offer, they cannot guarantee that the budget will be available in the future. At current prices, this offer is worth between £8,000 to £12,000 (depending on which trees are used for replanting)

The options the Parish Council faced were

### **1. Partial Clearance and Replanting**

This would involve felling the 4 most seriously diseased trees along the road side of the recreation ground, and the badly diseased trees at the rear of the Village Hall, and carrying out the recommended work on the remaining trees. Only the felled trees would be replanted.

The benefit of this option was that there would be less of an immediate impact on the avenue of trees along the road. The downsides were that this would only be delaying the felling of the remaining trees, which we have been advised will be required in the next 5 to 6 years or so. Also, SCDC cannot guarantee the budget to assist with replanting in future years. If they are unable to help, the village will have to raise the money for any replanting. This would mean an increase on the Parish Precept portion of the Council Tax. There would be an ongoing cost to maintain the trees in a safe condition, which would be many hundreds of pounds per year, until the trees had to be felled. Phased replanting of the avenue would not result in a cohesive avenue of trees as the mixed ages would result in an uneven growth habit. There could also be a risk of damage to the new trees from any branches falling from the older diseased trees.

### **2. Fell All Trees and Replant**

This would involve felling all the horse chestnut trees along the road and behind the village hall. All trees would then be replanted, either this autumn or next spring, depending on when the correct trees are available from the nurseries. The benefits of this approach are that SCDC are able to provide financial assistance in the replanting, the new avenue of trees would grow and merge together and there would be no ongoing maintenance cost of diseased trees. Against this approach,

there would be a large impact (albeit short term) on the visual impact from the loss of all the trees along the edge of the road until the new trees have been planted. Once the new trees are planted, they will need several years to reach the size of the current trees (which were planted as saplings approximately 30 years ago).

Faced with this very difficult decision, the Parish Council have decided that the best approach for the long term is to go with option 2, and fell all the trees in the near future. The Parish Council are currently looking at options regarding which trees to use for the replanting. Whichever trees are selected, they would be planted as semi-mature specimens, approximately 10 to 20 feet (4-6m) tall. The Parish Council and SCDC have agreed that it would not be appropriate to use very young saplings.

If you wish to know more about this issue or, if you have Horse Chestnuts in your gardens and wish to know more about the disease, please feel free to contact one of the Parish Councillors. There are also more details on the disease, how to recognise it, its symptoms etc. on the village website at [www.whaddon.org](http://www.whaddon.org)