

Ash Dieback – meeting with Hanson’s Landscape Architect

On 17th March, Hilary and Richard King kindly hosted a meeting of parishioners to be briefed by Alexandra (“Alex”) Hemming, Hanson UK’s landscape architect, on the company’s plan to address the problem of ash dieback affecting the woods in Vallis Vale.

Alex explained that ash dieback is a destructive fungal disease which causes leaf and canopy loss in ash trees often leading to their death. The disease is particularly acute in the Mendip district due to dampness and soil conditions.

Alex informed the meeting that Hanson UK had performed an ecology assessment for Vallis Vale and developed a clean-up plan which had been reviewed and approved by Natural England. The plan primarily involves cutting down around 300 diseased ash trees and replacing them with other species, installing shelters to protect those which regenerate naturally (such as alder and birch) and planting saplings (protected by tubing) in the case of others such as oak, small leaved lime and (possibly) sycamore.

Alex is currently waiting for price quotations from the contractors to execute the work which is expected to start in May with completion by the end of June. She assured everyone that more information on the project would be shared with Great Elm in the weeks to come. The meeting ended with a walk along the Mells Stream during which Alex pointed out diseased trees that had been marked for removal and examples of regenerating species that will be encouraged. *Ricardo Rosa*