Inspection of trees on the Murhill Bank Nature Reserve.

21st September 2021

Present

John Treble	MBNR Co-ordinator
Glyn Williams	Experienced woodland management volunteer for Avon Wildlife Trust
Graham Bostock	Winsley PC

Concerns had been raised about the state of some of the trees on the MBNR due to ash dieback disease. This a fungal infection of ash trees spread by airborne spores. As the fungus spreads it blocks off the nutrient supply to the outer branches causing them to die and eventually fall to the ground. The tree therefore becomes unsafe if near paths and roadways.

An initial inspection of the area east of the meadow noted seven trees that were infected to such an extent that they should be felled. Six of the trees should be felled within the next year, one could be left for longer. A couple of the trees were identified as especially hazardous and required urgent attention. Normally a permit is required to fell the trees but there is an exception if the trees need to be felled because of safety issues. In order to provide evidence that there was a safety issue, records should be kept to include before and after photographs.

Glyn, who is qualified user of a chainsaw to fell trees, stated that he could deal with three of the trees, this would be done free of charge. However, others were too close to the road and would require specialist attention.

It was also noted that there were some other trees on the opposite side of the road, and therefore not the responsibility of the PC, that were in need of attention before they dropped branches onto the public highway.

The smaller area to the west of the meadow was inspected next. Five trees were identified as in need of felling, four of which Glyn would be able to tackle. Also, it was recommended that the area should be cleared of dead wood to allow in more light and so improve the quality of the woodland. Glyn stated that he and some volunteers should be able to perform this task.

Other woodland, further west towards Winsley Hill, was inspected; this woodland is not part of the MBNR and is thought that it belongs to Avon Park. Several hazardous trees were identified, one had already fallen across the road but was propped up by trees on the opposite side so the road was still passable. On another tree a branch had broken off and had become entangled with other trees resulting in it becoming suspended in a dangerous position above the public footpath.

This was only an initial inspection so further felling may be identified on subsequent inspections. It does, however, indicate that some expense in removing hazardous trees will be necessary which will impact the PC finances.

G.J.Bostock