



### **BCA Acting Chair's Statement on Ash Dieback**

BCA has become aware of potential problems regarding Ash Dieback and its effect on caving hence this advisory note. Ash Dieback is caused by a fungus which initially infects the leaf tips of Ash trees and ultimately spreads throughout the tree leading to its death and destruction over time. Affected trees become quite brittle and as a consequence are prone to shedding boughs and collapse of trunks unexpectedly.

Ash trees are native to limestone country and can be frequently found in UK caving areas around cave entrances as well as the wider countryside. Of concern, are trees at cave entrances and particularly those vertical systems where Ash trees are used for rope belays as well as hanging over entrances.

Cavers across the UK should be wary of any trees showing distress in close proximity to their activities and take a prudent approach particularly where they may find themselves attached to a tree. It would be advisable to be able to identify Ash trees and with an acknowledgement to the BMC, here is a link to a very useful document they have produced about the issue including identification:

[Climbing, walking & ash dieback: what do you need to know? \(thebmc.co.uk\)](http://thebmc.co.uk)

We are in the very early stages of coming to terms with this issue but in the short term when it comes to caving and trees, be cautious and prudent about what you may be hanging from or indeed, be stood under.

Russell Myers  
BCA Acting Chair