

National Highways
Newlands
Unit A1 6 Brewery Lane
Penrith
Cumbria
CA11 7FN

Reference: M61 AD 617264

23 November 2023

Dear Sir / Madam,

M61 - Ash dieback and woodland management works

Ash dieback is a highly destructive fungal tree disease that causes leaf loss, dead branches, and canopy decline.

Regrettably, surveys by our specialists have found many Ash trees alongside the M61 are deteriorating more quickly than expected. A large proportion are now dead or dying and pose a potential safety risk, leaving us with no alternative other than to make them safe or remove them.

What are we doing?

We will be carrying out tree management works at various locations along the M61 this winter, including:

- M61 junctions 4 to 5, near St Helens Road – November to December 2023
- M61 junctions 5 to 6, near Chew Moor Lane – December 2023 to February 2024
- M61 between junctions 6 and Rivington Services – November 2023 to March 2024
- M61 northbound from junctions 8 to 9, near Birchen Lane – December 2023
- M61 southbound from its junction with the M6, near Bankhead Lane - February 2024

Our work will focus on removing trees along the route that are suffering from Ash dieback disease that over time will make the trees weaker and unsafe. We will also be carrying out woodland management works to improve the condition of the woodland plots and encourage diversity and fresh growth in the coming years. Where appropriate we will replant suitable native trees or shrubs such as hazel and hawthorn. Some areas will be left to regenerate naturally. The waste timber and most of the woodchip will be sent for processing by local timber merchants.

When will the work take place?

Our programme of woodland management work started in late November and is scheduled to be complete by spring 2024.

We'll stop work over the Christmas and New Year holiday period, from 19 December 2023 to 3 January 2024.

Most of the woodland management work will be undertaken during the day, however some overnight work may be required. We'll be following industry best practice to reduce noise as much as possible.

Whilst we always aim to work to schedule, unforeseen circumstances such as adverse weather conditions may mean slight changes occur at short notice.

How might our work impact your journey?

To maintain safety for the travelling public and our staff, we will need to work under temporary closures of the hard shoulder, lane 1 and occasionally lane 2. Lane closures will be in effect for a section of motorway typically a mile or less in length.

The M61 will remain open to traffic throughout our work, although minor delays might be experienced at peak hours. We advise drivers to plan their journeys in advance.

Every effort will be made to ensure the works are completed safely and disruption is kept to a minimum. However, we would like to apologise in advance for any inconvenience caused.

How will residents and businesses adjacent to the works be affected?

We are not required to carry out public consultation when we remove trees for safety reasons within our operational boundary as the work is covered under the Highways Act. However, we will liaise with adjacent landowners and consult where we feel they may be impacted by the works. For example, where trees are overhanging adjacent properties or access may be affected.

If you would like to find out more about the work, please contact the National Highways customer contact centre on 0300 123 5000 or email info@nationalhighways.co.uk stating the reference given above.

Yours faithfully,

Vikas Baloch

**Vikas Baloch, Project Manager
Operations Directorate North West
National Highways**