

TREES ON THE HIGHWAY

Ref No.	Date	Owner	Revision
6.5	15/10/10	Wayne Stewart	

Introduction/Scope

The management of highway trees (and third party trees that may affect the highway) is a statutory duty for Highway Authorities, necessitating policies for inspection, works, third party trees, and planting in order to discharge this duty.

Relevant Policies

1) Tree Inspection

An effective and 'reasonable' tree management programme is defined by regular visual tree assessments, contemporaneous recording of inspection findings, and implementation (and recording) of recommended maintenance work.

The key aims of the inspection process are to:
Identify the risks from potentially hazardous trees;
Specify measures to address such hazards;
Maintain records of inspections and works;
Identify appropriate periods for (re)inspection cycles;
Allocate resources appropriately.

Inspection Criteria

Effective inspection requires both the assessment of current condition and monitoring (and recording) of changes in condition.

Inspections are based upon criteria including the physical attributes of the tree, location, frequency of targets, hazard assessment and amenity or other value. Specific factors such as extremes of weather or construction or other activity in the immediate vicinity will be considered as and when arising.

Inspection Procedures

The nature and frequency of inspection will have regard to the criteria described above.

In order to achieve an acceptable standard, working methods and activities will include:

The creation and maintenance of a computerised tree inventory and management database;
Investigation of complaints and queries from the public;
Investigation of feedback from highway inspectors arising from routine highway inspection;
Programmed specialist inspections by specialist arboricultural staff including initial driven inspections, detailed highway inspection and walked inspections of trees adjacent to footpaths.

Inspection Frequency

Following initial inspection, specific inspection cycles will be nominated for each recorded tree asset.

2) Third Party Trees

Where privately owned trees represent potential hazards to the highway, the Highway Authority has a duty of care to act to ensure the safety of road users. Where such hazards are identified, whether by complaint or arising from cyclic inspection, the owner will be located and the hazard, its implications and the options to dispel it discussed.

Where works to address the hazard are not concluded by the owner, enforcement action to ensure that necessary works are completed will be employed in accordance with section 154 of the Highways Act 1980.

3) Tree Works

Prioritisation

Works to trees will be undertaken according to the following priorities:

- i) to address significant danger to persons or property;
- ii) remedial or preventative work to remove potential hazards;
- iii) works to remove or alleviate actual nuisance to persons or property.

Best Practice

Works to trees will be undertaken in accordance with industry 'best practice' as defined in British Standard 3998: 1989 'Recommendations for Tree Works'.

Aerial operations will be conducted in accordance with the Arboricultural Associations 'Guide to Good Climbing Practice'.

All arboricultural staff will hold National Proficiency Training Council accreditation in chainsaw and climbing disciplines and relative to the New Road and Street Works Act.

Each proposed tree works operation will be individually specified and risk assessed by qualified arboricultural staff.

Nuisance Management

Remedial work will be undertaken where it is considered that a Highways tree is having a *significant* detrimental effect or is causing a *serious* nuisance to a neighbouring property. Examples of qualifying circumstances would be:

Proven structural or soil shrinkage related subsidence damage;
Proximity to property presenting actual risk of contact damage.

Annual leaf fall, light shade, honeydew deposits, bird droppings, interference to TV reception or tree being 'too big' do not qualify, and pruning to address such issues would not constitute 'good arboricultural practice'.

4) Tree Planting

Trees may only be planted on the existing highway with the written consent of Highways and Access.

Planting within 5 metres of the edge of the carriageway will not usually be permitted on roads with a speed limit exceeding 40mph.

Planting where public utility apparatus or structures are within the mature 'zone of influence' (as defined by the National House Builders Council Standards Chapter 4.2) of the tree will not usually be permitted.

Requests from third parties to plant trees on highway sites are subject to the 'Third party funding of highway features' policy. The need for a commuted sum may, at the discretion of Highways and Access, be replaced by an acceptable maintenance agreement.

An arboricultural constraints assessment will be undertaken prior to consent for any planting being granted. This will specifically consider the suitability of the species proposed, the shade cast by the tree at maturity and the potential for frost hollows where the road has an east-west alignment.

Progression of adoption agreements for trees planted on roads within new developments that are intended for adoption as public highway through a Highways Act Section 38 agreement will be dependent upon a suitable third party maintenance agreement or commuted sum being in place.