

Getting started with Tree Population Management

Treework Environmental Practice Guidance Note

Background

Sometimes we forget how prone to storms the UK is and generally during the late autumn and winter months we experience higher levels of wind. Climate change predictions will see the incidence of extreme weather events become more frequent. Often this leads to a heightened level of coverage within the media as we read increasingly about tree failures and the damage and disruption that they can cause. This can put additional pressure on tree owners and manager (e.g. staff at Housing Associations, Schools or Local Authorities) who are increasingly under scrutiny to demonstrate effective systems for the management of trees and meeting their duty of care for trees in relation to public safety.

With the name of the most recent still ringing in your ears and the next storm surely brewing out in the Atlantic, what should you, as a tree manager, be doing to be confident that you are meeting your duty of care? This can often feel difficult to demonstrate, especially whilst contending with disproportionate and sensational news coverage.

At Treework Environmental Practice, we have over 30 years' experience of supporting landowners and managers to develop strategies for effective tree risk management based on the real, rather than perceived risk of harm from trees. Our deep commitment to developing greater understanding of tree risk management has led us to work with leading authorities in this field (including [Centre for Decision Analysis and Risk Management](#) (DARM) and [The Forestry Commission](#)) and we worked with these and other experts to form the [National Tree Safety Group](#) with the objective of producing guidance for landowners and managers.

The Appeal Court ruling on the Cavanagh v Witley Parish Council case at the end of 2018 began causing some nervousness among those responsible for tree populations. We have been monitoring this case and are monitoring the effects on our new and prospective clients and reviewing the implications with legal and risk experts.

In our experience the following 6 considerations are key to developing pro-active (not reactive), defensible (not defensive), cost-effective (not costly) long term tree population management.

1. Be Policy / Strategy Led

The most robust systems for tree risk and tree population management are underpinned by a well thought through Tree Policy with a Strategy that defines how the policy aims are to be delivered. These documents need to reflect your organisation's values and duties and support you to discharge your duties (including duty of care in law for public safety in relation to trees) within the resources available to you. Depending on the size and complexity of your organisation your policy may be as short as one A4 page.



2. Know the Extent of Your Land Ownership

Understanding the extent of the land that you are responsible for and where your ownership / management boundaries are is essential for effective tree management. The implications of not having these clearly mapped are twofold; firstly, you may be unaware of trees located on your land that require risk management to prevent them from failing and secondly you may instruct work to trees that do not belong to you. We often find that our first job to support tree managers is for our surveyors and mapping technicians to produce clear [ownership boundary maps](#).

3. Know Your Trees

Knowing where your trees are located and the condition that they are in enables you to proactively and cost-effectively manage those trees that require management and to provide clear information to stakeholders and contractors when required. Over the years, we have developed digital mapping and tree management software (MyTrees) that shows the location, size and condition of all inspected trees and we find this to be an invaluable tool for tree management.

4. Have a System for Tree Risk Management

If you have a Tree Strategy, this should define your system for Tree Risk Management; however, regardless of whether you have a Strategy or not, you need to have a clearly demonstrable, defensible system for managing your trees to keep risks posed by them to a level that is as low as reasonably practicable. In all of our experience, the most cost-effective system is to regularly inspect the trees and to specify and implement prioritised tree risk management operations.

5. Prioritise

Cost of tree population management can become burdensome and disproportionate to the resources that an organisation has available if it is not planned and prioritised properly. We have found that the best approach is to prioritise both the tree surgery works and the inspection of the trees based on their condition and the level of risk that they pose. We are constantly saving tree owners and managers money through this approach.

6. Keep Records

Even proactively managed trees can fail in a storm and when trees fail and cause damage, it is normally necessary to provide evidence of the tree management systems and practices that are being used. You will have much greater peace of mind if you are able to quickly find the records of when the tree has been inspected, what condition it was in, any structural faults that were observed and what management has been specified and carried out. We find that by retaining records of our tree inspections in MyTrees and by also recording the tree works that we sign-off as completed in MyTrees we are able to swiftly provide detailed records and satisfy anyone who is concerned about a tree failure and ease the concerns of the tree owners who we support.



About Treework Environmental Practice:

Treework Environmental Practice has been working at the forefront of arboriculture since the 1980s. Over more than 30 years, we have established a reputation as the leading tree experts covering all arboricultural consultancy disciplines across the whole of the UK, based on our expertise and innovation, and for using an evidence-based approach to help our clients to achieve their goals

We continually pioneer techniques and practices within the arboriculture industry. Through innovation, strategic partnerships with clients and associates and collaboration with experts from other disciplines, we have succeeded in improving quality, knowledge and expertise within our company and the industry as a whole. We always ensure that our clients gain benefits from these improvements and pride ourselves on a customer focused approach. This means that we provide total commitment to projects and support clients with the highest quality and best value services available.

Services that we provide that support tree managers and owners to meet their duty of care for public safety include:

- Tree Policies and Strategies
- Digital Boundary Mapping and Verification
- Tree Risk and Tree Inventory Surveys and Management
- Administration of Tree Work Tenders and Contracts
- MyTrees Management Software and GIS
- Detailed Tree Stability Assessment

Other services that landowners and managers value us for:

- Expert Witness for structural damage (subsidence) claims
- Expert Witness for tree failure claims
- New Tree Planting Design, Advice and Audits
- Mapping of Grounds Maintenance Features
- Soil Assessment and Remediation to Support Tree Health

As well as being innovators and leaders within the arboricultural sector, we have been instrumental in the development of key standards and approaches, through our pioneering seminar series.

We are members and active participants in the following recognised organisations and authorities:

National Tree Safety Group
 SRA - Society for Risk Analysis
 Quantified Tree Risk Assessment
 Arboricultural Association
 Institute of Chartered Foresters
 Royal Forestry Society

International Society of Arboriculture
 Trees and Design Action Group
 The Ancient Tree Forum
 RSA (Principal Consultant Neville Fay is also a Fellow)
 London Tree Officers Association (associate member)
 SAG Baumstatik



Contact Us

If you are seeking guidance on your own trees or have tree related issues, call us today to arrange to speak with one of our expert consultants; or for a free quotation contact info@treeworks.co.uk or call us on +44(0) 117 2440012

You can find out more about how we support our clients to meet and achieve their vision and adopt better tree management strategies [here](#).

