

A path through a forest

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**Tree Management Policy**

July 2025

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# 1.0 Introduction

This Policy describes how North Tyneside Council will manage public trees.

## **1.1 Overview of the tree population**

There is an estimated 705 hectares[[1]](#footnote-2) of tree canopy cover in North Tyneside.

This is the total area of all branches and leaves, when viewed from above.

Trees cover approximately 8.56% of the land in North Tyneside. Compared

to other areas this is relatively low. There are various reasons for this,

including the coastal location. Increasing the number of trees would bring

additional benefits to the area.

## **1.2 Why it matters how the Council manages its trees**

About half of all trees in North Tyneside are on Council land. The decisions

and activities of the Council can therefore have a significant influence on

the ‘treescape’.

The Council is responsible for a lot of land. This includes public green

spaces, such as parks and cemeteries, which contain some of our largest

and oldest trees. People value and enjoy these spaces, and the contribution

that trees make to them.

Most Council land is accessible to the public. Trees on Council land may

also be near to private land, such as gardens or businesses. The way they

are managed affects people.

Many people feel connected to trees, and care deeply about them. They

feature in important memories and places, help to define local character,

and are important for wildlife. Responsible management is not just about

trees, it is also about people.

## **1.3 Why a policy is needed**

A tree management policy ensures that small individual decisions are made

in a consistent way, with purpose. It acts as a reference for people making

decisions and plans, as well as those affected by them.

Trees take time to grow, and poor decisions can have lasting effects. A

policy helps to ensure that decisions follow sound principles and prevents

harmful actions.

Trees are very variable, and so are the places where they grow. There is no

one solution or outcome for all circumstances. However, there are principles

that should always be applied, such as consistency, competence, fairness

and value for money.

## **1.4 What the Policy covers**

This Policy applies to trees for which the Council is responsible. In most

cases, this means trees growing on Council owned land, and the public

highway. This population is always changing; as trees grow and decline,

and as land ownership changes.

The Policy does not apply to trees on privately owned land. The Council is

sometimes involved in the management of these trees, but that is not

covered by this document.

Tree management includes:

* Knowing what we have, and what it is like
* Understanding the context and priorities around trees
* Making decisions about when to act and what to do
* Arranging and delivering practical works
* Responding to changing conditions and new information
* Good records and communication
* Using resources responsibly

Council activities such as tree inspections, responding to reports and

enquiries, keeping the public informed, and practical works like planting,

pruning and tree removal are covered by this policy.

Other Council activities including making Tree Preservation Orders,

considering applications for tree works, and trees within the planning

process are covered by other policies or guidance.

## **1.5 Who is this Policy for?**

**For the public**, a policy communicates what the Council will do. This can

help to set expectations, build trust and transparency, and explain what the

Council is doing.

**For the Council**, a policy sets out an agreed approach to a complex topic,

which can be followed and referred to by different people across the

organisation, such as Elected Members and colleagues, including agency

workers and contractors. This policy represents the Council’s position, which

cannot be set or changed by individuals.

**For other stakeholders**, a policy explains how the Council will operate. This

may be helpful and provide a stable basis for planning coordinated action

across sectors, and between organisations.

# 2.0 Context

The number and distribution of trees means that tree management

happens in very diverse situations. The Council has responsibilities that may

apply to all tree management, or just in some circumstances.

Understanding and sometimes balancing these requires care and, often,

specialist knowledge.

This section is about what influences the way the Council manages its trees,

and how it is structured.

## **2.1 Responsibilities**

The Council has various responsibilities that it must consider as part of tree

management. This Policy does not contain a full list, which may change over

time, but it outlines the key topics of relevance to the Council’s tree

management.

The Arboriculture team will have regard for these in all its activities, be

aware of the Council’s responsibilities, and identify any risks or challenges

to meeting them.

The law places duties on the Council. For example, in relation to tree safety.

There are things the Council must do, which therefore may sometimes take

priority over other activities.

Working within the law is a very broad topic. Within this, some areas are

particularly relevant to tree management, such as laws around protected

and invasive species, plant health and biosecurity, waste handling, felling

licences, health and safety, and environmental impact assessment. These

mostly relate to how the Council operates.

The Council has a leadership role. It is a large organisation that manages a

significant number of trees. Its actions may have a significant impact on

both the treescape, and the culture and standards of tree management in

the Borough. It will therefore aim for excellence and follow best practice.

As a public body, the Council must use resources responsibly and ensure

value for money. Doing tree work that is unnecessary or could be done more

cost-effectively may draw resources away from more urgent or beneficial

activities. This Policy sets out how the Council will ensure careful use of

resources.

## **2.2 Arboriculture at North Tyneside**

The Council has specialist arboriculturists to manage its trees. They are

qualified, trained and competent to make informed decisions on behalf of

the Council. Collectively, they are referred to by this policy as the

*Arboriculture team*.

Having the best overview and understanding of the evidence, context and

priorities allows the Arboriculture team to understand the consequences of

its decisions and exercise professional judgement.

The Arboriculture team has an advisory and decision-making role. It

decides when to prune, remove and plant trees; and provides technical

advice. It also does all tree inspections.

The Arboriculture team also plans and delivers all aspects of practical tree

works, such as tree surgery and planting.

The Arboriculture team has a lead role in ensuring compliance with this

policy across the Council, because of its expertise in this area and direct

responsibility for many of the functions it covers.

Other service areas should consult the Arboriculture team as necessary for

technical input and advice, or to undertake tree works. For example, on

highway maintenance, in parks, planning consultation, and on enquiries and

claims.

The Council will ensure that it has the skills, systems and resources are in

place to manage its trees according to this policy. This policy does not

prescribe this type of operational detail, because what is appropriate may

evolve.

## **2.3 Other local policy, strategy and objectives**

Tree management sits within a wider Council agenda and may play a role

in delivering other connected objectives.

This policy supports the delivery of:

* Our North Tyneside Plan
* North Tyneside Net-Zero Action Plan
* Newcastle and North Tyneside Biodiversity Action Plan
* Green Infrastructure Strategy

It is also consistent with:

* The Council’s Climate Change Emergency Declaration
* The Local Plan

The Council will produce other information as required to supplement this

Policy and to guide and support tree management. These may include:

* Strategies that set out what the Council plans to achieve generally, or on a specific topic (e.g. a Tree Planting Strategy)
* Operating procedures that explain the technical detail of day-to-day activities and provide guidance and a reference for colleagues
* Standard details and specifications that establish how activities will be done as standard, including by others for the Council
* Management plans, such as for a particular site or trees can help to coordinate and communicate activities, and secure external funding
* Guidance and information for specific audiences, including via the Council’s website

# 3.0 Aims

This policy does not define what the treescape of the future should be like. It

is mostly about how existing trees are managed, and how the Council

organises tree management and makes decisions. It is intended to ensure

that any strategy or objectives can be delivered well, according to clear

principles.

The following aims will be embedded into Council tree management. These

will apply to any tree management or overall strategy:

* Protect what we have
* Make improvements
* Maximise benefits from trees
* Follow best practice

## **3.1 Protect what we have**

Trees provide a wide range of benefits that we are getting better at

understanding and measuring. We also know that having trees around us

will be increasingly important because of climate change.

However, individual trees can cause problems, for example, if they become

dangerous due to a disease. In most places, a change in tree condition or

context could necessitate action.

In our tree management there will be a presumption against doing anything

to a tree, including tree removal, unless there is a good reason. We will also

plan necessary tree works in a way that minimises loss and harm to trees so

far as reasonable.

Trees need a stable and safe growing environment to thrive. We will be

mindful of the presence of trees when we are doing other things in their

vicinity, like repairing paths. The Council will plan works to avoid damaging

trees wherever possible.

Where trees are at risk of damage, including by vandalism or accidentally,

we will try to prevent this. For example, by installing guards, or mulch around

the base of a tree.

## **3.2 Make improvements**

Trees are changing all the time, and so are the spaces they live in. Just

maintaining what we have therefore requires action. However, we also want

to enhance the treescape of the Borough.

Improvement doesn't just mean increasing the number of trees, although

this would be beneficial. It means making sure that trees are increasingly in

the right places, where they are needed the most. It also means managing

trees to improve their condition, quality and resilience, individually and

collectively.

We will look for opportunities for expansion and enhancement of the

treescape as part of our routine activities. For example, choosing preferable

species when trees must be replaced. We will also look for new

opportunities, such as places where trees could be planted.

The Council must sometimes balance improvements against looking after

what we already have. Improvements will only be made where this does not

undermine important ongoing requirements like safety.

What constitutes an improvement can be subjective, so we will identify

opportunities that are supported by clear evidence, strategy, and/or

relevant stakeholders. New initiatives may be delivered in partnership with

other organisations and sectors and may use funding from a variety of

sources. The Council will prioritise improvements that represent value for

money and deliver the widest benefits.

## **3.3 Maximise benefits**

We should understand what benefits our trees are providing, and what

potential they have. We will build and maintain a detailed understanding of

the treescape so that we can make informed decisions.

Benefits are about the relationship between trees and the surrounding

people and environments. Sometimes, maximising benefits is about

enabling people to access or take advantage of what is already available.

We will work to ensure that everyone has good access to trees and green

spaces.

Understanding trees also includes listening to people and understanding

how they interact with the treescape. This may include positive and

negative views. The Council will try to understand and balance wider public

benefits like air quality and flood management, against specific or local

objectives like views and leaf litter.

When we are deciding how to manage trees, we will choose options that

preserve or enhance the benefits that they provide where possible. For

example, we may reduce the size of a tree instead of removing it.

Where there are opportunities to change routine management to increase

benefits that we know are important, we will do this. For example, by

adjusting management to improve biodiversity.

## **3.4 Follow best practice**

Managing trees is complex. We therefore have systems and procedures in

place to help us to be consistent. In a large organisation like the Council,

these are important so ensure that we are all working towards the same

goals whilst being fair, transparent and efficient.

We will keep our tree management under review to ensure that it follows

current policy, the law, and best practice. Where necessary, we will update

operational and procedural detail.

# 4.0 Approach to tree management

## **4.1 How we work**

The Council will have documented processes and procedures, that support

this policy.

It will employ competent arboriculturists to exercise professional judgement

on its behalf. They will be expected to give independent and objective

advice and seek further information as necessary.

Information to support tree management will be taken from a range of

sources. The reliability of information that does not come from a regulated

or reliable source will be tested before the Council acts on it.

All decisions about the management of trees will be taken by

arboriculturists, following an evidence-led approach and best practice.

Decisions about other things that affect trees will be informed by

arboricultural advice (e.g. construction and maintenance works).

The Council’s arboriculturists will determine whether to do anything to a tree

according to this policy. There will be a presumption against intervention

unless it is clearly justified.

After a justification has been established, a range of options will be

considered to identify the solution that is most suitable. This will be decided

by the Council according to the principles set out in this policy.

The Council will try to balance individual and collective needs and benefits,

and to understand what type of management would be welcome. It may

consult to understand this better. Personal and individual views and

preferences regarding how trees should be managed may be outweighed

by collective benefits.

Records of all tree management will be kept, and outcomes will be

monitored. These will be used to identify opportunities for improvement.

The Council will engage and cooperate with others, including by information

sharing and collaboration.

## **4.2 When we will act**

This Policy sets out the circumstances in which the Council will undertake

tree pruning or removal in Section 6.0 and other activities in Section 7.0. It

describes what would fall within each of these definitions, including what

conditions would trigger works. Wherever the Council becomes aware that

these conditions are met or exist, it will take action.

The Council may also engage in other activities to increase, enhance,

promote, or understand the treescape. These are proactive steps which

may be taken as opportunities and resources permit, in accordance with

other Strategies and duties:

* Tree planting
* Woodland management
* Community engagement
* Advisory services
* Research, studies and analysis
* Production of information and guidance

In addition, some situations may require a specific response from the

Council, such as a claim of damage by a tree, a request or report, a policy

or strategy commitment, or a legal requirement.

## **4.3 Setting priorities**

The Council will allocate resources to the most urgent activities first, and to

where they will have the greatest impact.

The Council’s programme of tree management changes all the time.

Demand, capacity, duties, the activities of third parties, and new information

all vary over time, which can influence what will be done next. Priorities are

also influenced by the purpose of each activity. This may mean that it is not

possible to fix a specific date for certain types of operation, and that planned

works may be changed at short notice by other factors.

Some works include a deadline, for example a timescale that is generated

by a risk assessment or part of a legal requirement. Delivering such works

on time will be regarded as an essential part of the activity and these

timescales will not be changed.

In all other cases, and as possible within those timescales, activities will be

organised to maximise efficiency, and to reduce environmental impacts. For

example, by waiting to deliver a number of small pruning operations in one

area consecutively, or by doing work when it is less likely to disturb protected

animals.

Work that must be done to satisfy a legal duty, including for safety reasons

will be prioritised. The Council will forecast typical requirements where

possible, but this can be affected by events such as major storms.

Where the Council has contractual obligations that it must meet, it will

ensure that it has sufficient capacity to do so. It will consider this when

entering into any such agreement that includes tree management, for

example with a school.

Improvements and enhancements that would be made in accordance with

this policy will be done where resources and capacity permit. Those that

can be achieved will be prioritised according to the public benefits they

would deliver.

Activities that would achieve limited or temporary benefits, including

meeting individual preferences, or which do not have an essential timescale,

will not be done if this would reduce the Council’s capacity to deliver

essential works, or if there are other interventions that would deliver greater

public benefits.

# 5.0 Understanding our trees

The Council must know enough about its trees to manage them well. This

includes knowing what trees we have, where they are, and their type and

condition.

Trees and the needs or priorities around them can change over time.

Therefore, information will be updated when required so that it remains

reliable.

## **5.1 Tree inventory**

The Council will maintain an inventory of all trees under its management.

The inventory will contain information about each tree, as required for its

management. This will include the location, species, size, characteristics

and management history.

Trees may be recorded as individuals, or as part of groups or woodland

where this is appropriate.

Every entry within the inventory will include a risk assessment and a date by

which it should be updated.

The Council will take such steps as are necessary to ensure that the

inventory remains reliable as the basis for tree management.

## **5.2 Mapping and land ownership**

Responsibility for trees starts with their owner, which is the owner of the land

they are growing on.

The Council will maintain records of land for which it is responsible, including

digital mapping suitable for use in tree management.

Mapping will identify land the Council owns, as well as land it manages

under any other agreement. It will also identify any land owned by the

Council where responsibility for tree management has been transferred to

a third party.

This information will be updated regularly so that tree management covers

all of the Council’s land and does not include land that has been transferred

to others.

## **5.3 Sources of information**

Information about trees may come from various sources. The Council will

ensure that it maintains adequate familiarity with its trees, principally

through tree inspections. Other types of information may add to this.

The inventory will contain the most up-to-date information, representing

what the Council knows about its trees. When additional information from

other sources is received, it will be reviewed. Where appropriate, the

inventory will be updated to reflect information from other sources that has

been confirmed as accurate:

* Tree inspections by qualified arboriculturists will be the main source of information about trees and their context
* Insurance claims relating to trees may include detailed assessments and data or analysis of relevance to ongoing tree management
* Public records and datasets may be used to corroborate or inform our understanding of the treescape
* Studies may be commissioned to investigate topics of interest, such as around vulnerability to tree diseases trees or planting opportunities
* Enquiries and reports may include useful information about trees, their context, and the people around them
* Consultation with stakeholders, including the public, may add valuable context to tree management
* The Council will record and investigate any injury or damage caused by a tree, and near misses. This information will be used to update tree management practices where appropriate.

## **5.4 Reports, enquiries and requests**

This Policy sets out the circumstances in which tree works will be done. The

Council will proactively identify these circumstances, so that its tree

management is robust and defensible, even without information from third

parties.

The Council cannot monitor all trees all the time, and circumstances evolve.

Therefore, the Council may become aware of issues or opportunities

through a report, enquiry or request, including from the public. This can be

an important and valuable additional source of information.

It is important to note that the act of making a report, enquiry or request

does not influence whether any action is justified. It invites the Council to

look at a particular issue to determine whether the circumstances that

justify tree works exist.

The Arboriculture team is responsible for tree management, and for

evaluating whether tree works are justified, in accordance with this policy.

Reports, enquiries and requests may come from a range of sources,

including the public, as well as other parts of the Council. All information

that comes into the Arboriculture team is handled in the same way,

irrespective of who reported it.

Arboricultural specialists will verify information that is received, to establish

a reliable basis for any subsequent decisions. Where appropriate, the tree

inventory will be updated to include the new information.

The Council will never act solely based on external information and it will

never plant, remove or prune a tree based only on a report or request. It will

act where a competent assessment has established that the facts justify it,

in accordance with policy. This is an important distinction because the

Council is responsible for its decisions and actions.

Where there is a reason to act, the Arboriculture team will determine what

that action will be and when it will be done. The Council must consider a

range of factors when it plans tree works, including various legal duties,

seasonal constraints on some activities, the availability of personnel and

equipment, and other objectives. These may not be apparent or available

to the person making the initial report, enquiry or request.

### **5.5 Decision making checklist**

Where a report, enquiry or request is received, the Council will consider

whether:

* It is about trees the Council owns
* It contains new information the Council did not already have
* It relates to one or more reason for tree works (see Section 6.0)
* The information is supported by evidence
* Action is justified
* The issue can be resolved via tree works

Where these are all satisfied the Council will determine what works it will do.

The Council may also consider whether alternative solutions are available

to achieve the desired outcome.

## **5.6 Pests and diseases**

The Council will monitor the presence and significance of pests and

diseases of relevance to tree management in the Borough. This includes

those that are known to be present already, as well as those that might

arrive in the future.

The Arboriculture team will maintain familiarity with the symptoms,

management options and significance of all significant pests and diseases,

and with the current distribution, guidance and any legal requirements.

Wherever normal tree management may not be sufficient to contain or

manage a potential threat, additional measures will be put in place. The

Council will maintain contingency plans that define the conditions in which

additional measures would be put in place, and what they would be. It is

expected that this would be a rare occurrence, for example, in relation to a

disease that kills trees very quickly.

Where outbreaks occur, we will follow the advice of the relevant authorities

and agencies, including the Forestry Commission, Forest Research and the

Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs. We will also share

information with adjacent authorities.

## **5.7 Extreme weather**

The Council’s approach to tree management, including risk assessment,

anticipates a range of weather conditions. Most trees survive storms, and

by finding and dealing with those that are at risk during normal time, the

chance of tree failures during storms is reduced.

Tree management must respond to foreseeable conditions, which includes

weather. However, extreme conditions can cause healthy trees to fail. There

is always a small possibility of unseasonable or atypical weather well

beyond the normal range. By their nature, it is not possible to plan tree

management in anticipation of these anomalies.

The Council will manage the additional risks associated with extreme

weather and any other unexpected and harmful conditions through its

routine risk assessments and by taking remedial action where significant

defects are found. In addition, it will respond appropriately when extreme

weather occurs.

Extreme weather can create new hazards, such as damaged trees. It can

also reduce the confidence the Council has in data about its trees, if they

may have been affected by the event. The first response to extreme weather

will therefore normally be rapid surveys of sensitive or high priority locations

and/or routes to identify damage, and places where detailed tree

inspections may be required.

# 6.0 When we prune or remove trees

This Section explains when the Council will take action. Deciding what action

to take is covered in Section 8.0.

## **6.1 Reasons for tree works**

In general, tree works can be done either to address a problem, or to make

an improvement. Examples include pruning to remove a defect or an

obstruction, and removing one tree to benefit the growth of another.

There are many reasons why tree works might be desirable, some of which

may require specialist knowledge. More than one reason may apply.

This policy sets out the reasons the Council will prune or remove trees. These

are where it is:

* Required by law
* Necessary for safety
* To maintain suitable clearances
* The most effective and proportionate way to prevent damage
* Part of routine pruning cycles
* To enhance the tree or wider treescape
* To meet other defined objectives

Works that do not meet one of these reasons will not be done. For example,

works to satisfy an individual preference will not be done unless they also

fall within another justification.

The sections that follow provide further information on how each of the

reasons will be defined and applied.

Our website also summarises these *Tree Management Principles* to help

people to understand when we will do tree works.

## **6.2 Legal requirements**

Sometimes tree pruning or removal is required by law.

Specific requirements or instructions are uncommon. For example, a

Statutory Plant Health Notice may require the removal of trees to prevent the

spread of a disease.

More commonly, tree management may be necessary to meet legal

obligations where the outcome is defined, but the tree management is not

specified. For example, maintaining accessibility along a pavement.

This Policy does not seek to reiterate the law. The Council will work within the

law and discharge all duties placed on it in relation to the management of

its trees.

All of the topics that follow are also relevant to the legal framework around

tree management and how the Council will discharge related duties.

If tree management is engaged by other legal requirements (those that are

not principally about trees), the Council will take advice as required and

meet its obligations, in accordance with this Policy.

## **6.3 Safety**

The Council will undertake tree works where it is the best way to keep trees

reasonably safe[[2]](#footnote-3). It will proactively identify hazards and reduce risks that

are unacceptable.

Tree works for safety are a high priority for the Council. This means that other

activities may sometimes be done after more urgent safety works. For

example, following a major storm.

Works will not be undertaken in response to a perception of risk, or a concern.

Risk will be assessed in a structured and systematic way during tree

inspections by competent arboriculturists, and action will be taken based

on the risk assessment. This ensures consistency, and helps to avoid

unnecessary work, expense and damage to trees.

The Council will not try to remove all risk because this would do significant

harm. Some risks are tolerable on consideration of the benefits that would

be lost in order to reduce risk further. This means that some level of

remaining risk will not necessarily justify tree works.

Where the Council’s risk assessment identifies a risk that is not tolerable, tree

works will be considered as a possible solution.

Sometimes other solutions may be preferable for reasons such as

sustainability, speed or safety.

### **6.4 Risk assessment**

The Council will make a risk assessment against every record in its tree

inventory. In this way, every tree will have a current risk assessment, whether

this is individually, or as part of a group or woodland. These will be done

during tree inspections by competent and experienced arboriculturists.

The time period during which each assessment is expected to remain

reliable will be defined, up to a maximum of five years. The assessment and

all supporting information will be updated before this date, either during the

next planned inspection or in response to new information.

Risk assessments will consider:

* The condition of the tree and how is expected to develop and behave
* What harm the tree could cause
* How the context of the tree influences the likelihood of harm occurring

The assessment process will consider one or more specific scenarios. For

example, the condition of a branch with a defect, the harm that branch

could cause if it fell, and what is beneath it.

The outcome of each risk assessment will be tested against a defined

threshold, representing tolerable risk. Where this test is failed, an

intervention will be made to reduce the risk to a tolerable level.

The Arboriculture team will maintain an operating procedure that sets out

the Council’s current approach in detail. This will cover the risk assessment

methodology, thresholds or definitions for tolerable risk, the use of zoning,

and what tools and software will be used. The operating procedure will

support this policy.

## **6.5 Clearances**

This section is about situations where the presence of trees may prevent the

proper function or operation of something else, normally by causing an

obstruction. The potential for damage caused by contact with a tree is

covered in the next section.

There is no general requirement for clearances between trees and other

objects. The Council will not generally prune trees because of proximity to a

structure.

If a tree is blocking a streetlight or a road sign, we will address this, such as

by pruning the tree.

Where a tree overhangs a public highway, footpath or track and endangers

or obstructs the passage of vehicles or other users, the Council will remove

the cause of the danger or obstruction. This only applies to Council trees. In

the case of trees on private land, the Council may serve notice on a

landowner to do the same.

The inspection and maintenance of the highway, including streetlights and

road signs, is the responsibility of the Highway department, which will

consult the Arboriculture team to arrange remedial works where necessary.

Where trees interfere with important public services, we will consider tree

pruning or removal. For example, where trees grow to block critical sight

lines or signals. This does not normally include private interests or land, or

trees that were already present when the interference began.

Where it is possible to do so, the Council will monitor and anticipate tree

growth that may cause these types of obstruction or interference during its

tree inspections.

Contact between tree roots and underground equipment is common and

not normally a problem. Roots do not normally affect modern pipes and

cables unless they are already damaged or leaking. It is not possible to

monitor root growth during routine tree inspections and the Council will not

prune or remove trees, or their roots to prevent underground contact.

Some clearances are the responsibility of others, including on Council land.

These are generally those delivered by statutory undertakers, such as the

operators of overhead power lines.

Maintaining clearances on private land is normally a matter for the

landowner. Branches from Council trees that are interfering with the use of

private land may be pruned. There are laws governing what is allowed and

this is not an unqualified right. If you think this applies, you should contact

the Council before doing anything.

## **6.6 Property damage**

The owner of a tree, including the Council, may be liable for damage it

causes to property. The Council will manage this risk where possible by

taking steps to identify foreseeable damage, mitigating risk, and responding

where damage occurs.

The Council inspects all of its trees and assesses risks associated with

ongoing or foreseeable damage. These assessments are made by qualified

arboriculturists, according to our tree risk assessment methodology. Other

Council activities such as highway inspections, and reports by third parties

may also inform them.

Some types of damage are more predictable, such as those associated with

continued growth of branches or stems; we will assess these and try to

prevent them. Others are inherently less predictable, such as those

associated with roots; we will generally respond to these as they arise.

Wherever damage is, or will be caused by a Council tree, we may undertake

remedial and/or preventative work to the tree, the environment, or to the

structure. We will prune or remove trees where this is the most effective and

proportionate solution.

Preventative measures may include pruning as well as other measures,

such as to the affected structure, where this is straightforward. For example,

we will not prune trees to prevent damage to an overhead telephone line

unless it is not reasonably practicable to resolve the issue by adjusting the

line.

The Council will not improve structures by any repair or replacement it

makes except as a discretionary measure to prevent recurrence.

The Council will decide how to manage the risk of future damage associated

with its trees, whether damage has occurred or not. It will not automatically

remove or prune trees where damage has occurred. When deciding what to

do, we will balance the risk and cost of damage against the benefits

provided by trees. For example, where repairing or modifying a structure

would allow the retention of a significant tree.

In order to establish responsibility for any damage that has occurred, the

Council will require evidence demonstrating the damage, the role of the tree,

and that other contributing factors have been considered. In the case of

underground damage, this normally requires intrusive exploratory works. In

all cases, the evidence required will be relevant and in proportion to the

claim. The Council may also seek clarification, advice, and make its own

assessment.

The Council will not accept a presumption of damage by a tree or

unsubstantiated claims as a basis for action.

Landowners can prune Council trees that grow across a property boundary

and cause damage. There are laws that cover what is and is not allowed.

You should contact the Council before you do this.

## **6.7 Routine pruning**

The Council will undertake tree pruning that is required for the benefit of the

tree, or to preserve a pre-existing growth pattern or form.

This does not include pruning to keep a tree at a certain size, or away from

a structure. These are covered by other topics.

Routine pruning includes:

* Re-pollarding, where a tree is already pollarded and failure to continue would be detrimental
* Coppicing, where a tree is already in a coppice management cycle
* Crown cleaning, to remove potential future defects or failure points
* Formative pruning, to encourage future healthy growth
* Hedge maintenance, including cutting, flailing, and laying

## **6.8 Enhancement**

Tree management activities provide opportunities for enhancement of the

tree population as well as maintenance. These may include interventions

that improve the condition of individual trees, as well as those that change

the characteristics or composition of the treescape overall.

Generally, works for this reason are done where there is an opportunity to

increase the benefits and services that trees are providing. However, they

may also include interventions to protect benefits by addressing

vulnerabilities. For example, by increasing the diversity of tree species, age

and type.

Tree works for enhancement are normally undertaken on the initiative of the

Council rather than in response to a request or a duty. They may be specific

operations, or outcomes reflected in the way that other objectives are

delivered.

The main types of enhancements that may justify tree works, which the

Council will routinely consider include:

* Biodiversity and habitats
* Visual amenity
* Screening (e.g. light, buildings, sound and dust)
* Environmental benefits (e.g. air quality and water management)
* Placemaking, landscape design and character
* Heritage and cultural benefits
* Climate resilience and adaptation
* Social, community and economic benefits
* Health and wellbeing

This is not an exhaustive list. Any tree works that would increase the quality,

condition or value of the tree population will be considered.

Works that represent value for money may be done where this would not

jeopardise other priorities, such as safety.

## **6.9 Other objectives**

Sometimes tree works are justifiable for reasons that do not start with the

tree or its surroundings.

The Council has a broad remit and is involved in lots of different activities.

From time to time, tree pruning, or even tree removal may be justified in

order to achieve other benefits or objectives. These might include

development, improvements to public spaces, events, or the delivery of

other Strategies or Policies.

Where works would enable clearly defined benefits, these will be weighed

against any harm that would be caused, such as tree removal. Where

harms can be mitigated, such as by tree planting, that will also be

considered. There will be a presumption against harm to trees, but where

the benefits clearly outweigh the harm, tree works may be justified.

The efficiency and resilience of the Council’s tree management services is

important, because it underpins the delivery of everything in this policy. Tree

works may be done where they reduce tree management costs over the

longer term and/or improve standards. Interventions may also be made to

maintain the capacity and function of the service. For example, by

preventing ‘spikes’ in demand associated with seasonal pests or disease.

Where works would cause negligible or no harm, they may be permitted

even where they would provide only a small benefit. One way that this

principle may be applied is to allow works to a Council tree that are funded

by a third party. When making this decision, we will consider a range of

possible harms including to tree health, amenity, wildlife and environmental

benefits. In such cases, the Council will normally undertake the works in

order to control quality. This is a discretionary function, and the Council will

make the final decision.

## **6.10 Exceptions**

Works that are proposed or requested which do not fall under any of the

above reasons will not be done, unless exceptional circumstances justify it.

By definition, these situations are exceptional and therefore uncommon and

unusual. They also tend to relate to what is around a tree, rather than to the

tree itself.

We consider the context of each tree when we make routine tree

management decisions. However, there may be information that is not

available during tree inspections that changes whether action should be

taken.

Examples might include the prevention of a type of effect to which a person

or object is unusually vulnerable or sensitive.

Cases will be considered individually on their merits, balancing harms

against benefits according to this policy, and the Council will decide whether

to act. Exceptional circumstances that justify works are rarely replicated.

Therefore, such outcomes will not set a precedent that directs future

decision making.

# 7.0 Other tree management decisions

## **7.1 Planting**

The Council plants trees on its land for a range of purposes, for the benefit

of amenity, people and the environment. Broadly, there are two kinds of tree

planting:

* Planting to replace trees that are removed to maintain tree cover
* Planting to increase and/or enhance the treescape

### **7.2 Tree replacement**

Wherever trees are removed by the Council for any reason, they will be

replaced.

Replacement planting will be designed to reinstate both the canopy cover

(area) of trees and any identified benefits or functions that were lost within

a reasonable period[[3]](#footnote-4).

Replacement planting will be designed to achieve an increase in tree

canopy cover by the time new trees are fully mature; maintain or increase

species diversity; and use trees with a similar or greater life expectancy.

Replacement planting may be in the same, and/or a different location.

Canopy cover is an overall measure of the quantity of trees, whereas the

benefits and functions that replacement planting will reinstate may be

location specific.

Wherever tree removal as part of other works is agreed (e.g. as part of a

highway improvement scheme) replacement planting will be required that

meets or exceeds the requirements of this Policy. This may be embedded in

the scheme or delivered by the Council using funds provided for this

purpose.

### **7.3 Enhancement**

The Council will identify opportunities to plant trees to enhance the

treescape, such as by adding street trees to places without them or planting

to improve woodland quality. The delivery of these will be dependent on

availability of resources, such as grants, and may be influenced by other

priorities.

The Council will:

* Increase tree canopy cover on its land year on year
* Identify a ‘supply’ of tree planting opportunities that could be delivered
* Produce a Tree Planting Strategy setting out annual planting targets
* Encourage others to plant trees and provide support, such as advice

The Council will engage with third parties, such as community groups,

businesses and individuals to deliver tree planting opportunities, including

via sponsorship. It will maintain a framework of standard costs for planting

and maintenance of trees on its land for use as the basis for such

agreements.

## **7.4 Damage to Council trees**

Trees are property, and unauthorised damage may be an offence. The

Council will report any suspected unlawful damage to trees, and support

investigations and prosecutions.

Council trees are the product of an investment of public resources and a

valuable public asset. Damaging trees can destroy benefits that they would

have provided, increase future management costs, create new liabilities

and risks, and necessitate expensive remedial measures.

Where trees are damaged or destroyed, the Council will seek to recover the

value of lost benefits and/or costs incurred.

Costs the Council may face following damage include additional

inspections and maintenance, remedial works, replacement planting and

the cost of investigation.

The Council will normally use a recognised system of tree valuation, such as

CAVAT. Other methods may be used to evaluate particular functions and

benefits that have been lost, and the cost of replacing them. For example, if

the loss of trees has consequences for soil stability, structural damage,

heritage, or water quality.

The mechanism for recovering damages may vary, depending on the

circumstances. These include:

* Where unavoidable harm would occur as part of planned Council activities or pre-agreed development or maintenance works by a third party, the means of offsetting that harm will be agreed as part of the works where possible
* Where avoidable harm occurs as a result of development or maintenance activities, the Council will seek to recover costs on a voluntary basis in the first instance where possible
* Where trees are wilfully or recklessly damaged or destroyed, or where other means have been exhausted, the Council will gather evidence and recover costs and damages where possible, including through the courts

Examples of harm to public trees include:

* Unauthorised pruning or removal
* Utilities installation and maintenance that does not follow industry guidance
* Development that does not follow agreed tree protection measures
* Vandalism and intentional damage
* Damage by dogs and other animals
* Vehicle impact and abrasion
* Soil compaction and rutting

## **7.5 Other services**

The Council is involved in tree management in other ways that are not

covered by this Policy.

The planting, removal and protection of trees in the context of planning and

development covered by the [National Planning Policy Framework](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/65a11af7e8f5ec000f1f8c46/NPPF_December_2023.pdf), the

[Local Plan](https://my.northtyneside.gov.uk/category/1130/local-plan), and [supplementary planning documents](https://my.northtyneside.gov.uk/category/1150/supplementary-planning-documents-and-masterplans).

The Council can make Tree Preservation Orders. These control

pruning or removal of trees and are made and administered according to

the Tree Preservation Order Regulations. It is unusual for trees on Council

land to be protected in this way.

The Council may be consulted or involved in making some decisions about

tree management on private land, such as in Conservation Areas, hedgerow

removal and management, and tree safety around the highway.

North Tyneside is part of the North-East Community Forest. This involves

cooperation with five other local authorities and includes an ambition to

increase tree canopy cover across the region to 30% by 2050.

## **7.6 Monitoring outcomes and updating information**

This Policy will be reviewed every 4 years and updated if necessary.

The activities that are covered by this Policy will be recorded to allow

monitoring over time. In particular, the Council will monitor tree population

characteristics; tree works that have been completed; the number of

inspections, enquiries and requests; and tree planting totals.

# 8.0 Arranging tree works

This section is about deciding what works will be done, and how they will be

implemented. It assumes that the Council has already decided that

something is necessary, according to the reasons set out in Section 6.0 and

Section 7.0.

## **8.1 What are tree works?**

Any works that are done to comply with this Policy are defined as ‘tree works’

and covered by this section.

For the purposes of this section, the term ‘tree works’ is also used here to

describe any activity that is done by or for the Council that affects its trees,

irrespective of whether the purpose of the works is tree management.

This includes tree surgery, woodland management, and tree planting. It

might also include activities around a tree to address issues or make

improvements, such as habitat creation, fencing to protect a tree, or works

to an adjacent path or surface.

Works for other reasons that could affect trees might include development,

highway works, or the installation of signs, cameras or lights. Any activity

that could affect a Council tree will follow this Policy.

The Arboriculture team will be consulted by other departments before they

undertake works near to Council trees. Trees are vulnerable to accidental

damage, which can be hidden and take time to appear. This can make tree

management difficult and may compromise safety.

## **8.2 Consultation and communication**

Consultation may be done to share information; to seek views and opinions

to inform a decision; or to agree a course of action.

Urgent safety works and those with no practicable alternatives may be less

suited to consultation, except to share information. Works that are

discretionary, non-urgent, or that could be done in more than one way are

more suited to consultation.

The Council is not under a general obligation to consult before doing tree

works and sometimes it is not practical to do so. However, there are

circumstances in which this will be done.

The Council will consult before doing tree works where:

* It has a duty in law to do so, such as before felling street trees
* The works would involve loss or harm to particularly significant or important public trees
* The works would cause major disruption to the public
* Multiple options are finely balanced, and preferences would be informative (e.g. timing of works, or choice of replacement species)
* It is practically necessary, to plan a safe and effective operation (e.g. to help people to plan alternative journeys)
* Where coordination with specific parties is needed (e.g. access across private land or temporary disconnection of services)

The nature of any consultation will depend on the circumstances.

Consultees may include the public, a specific group, or an individual such

as a neighbour. The method will be selected to suit the consultees and

nature of the activity. This may be via the Council’s website, social media,

notices and signs, leaflets, door-to-door contact, or verbal communication

during the works.

Consultation responses are one source of information that the Council will

consider, but it is not bound by them and cannot always reply. The Council

will also monitor the overall level of interest in tree works. Where there is

significant public interest in a particular proposal or planned operation, it

may change its strategy for consultation and/or delivery to allow time to

gather and respond to relevant information.

Whether there is a consultation or not, the Council will be open and

transparent around its tree management decisions and explain its reasons

where practicable. The Council will endeavour to engage and communicate

with members of the public when tree works are being carried out. Large

schemes will be supported by a relevant communication strategy.

## **8.3 Selecting and specifying works**

The starting point for any tree works will be the purpose or objective. This will

be defined with reference to this Policy. There may be more than one

objective.

The Arboriculture team will consider what activities would achieve the

objective. Often there is more than one possible solution that would work.

For example, restoring visibility of a road sign could be done by pruning a

branch, pollarding a tree, or tree removal. There may also be multiple

possible locations for a new sign or light that each affect trees differently.

The Arboriculture team will consider the available solutions, with input from

others as required, and identify the option that represents a balance

between the following factors:

* Sustainability – Is the solution temporary or permanent? How soon might it need to be repeated? Is the tree particularly valuable or unusual?
* Harm – Would the solution reduce the amount, quality or longevity of trees? Is there another solution that would do less harm?
* Value – Does the solution offer value for money? Are there hidden costs, like increased future maintenance requirements, or replacement planting?
* Risk – Are some solutions safer than others? How can we keep operatives safe during works, and everyone safe during and after works.

When it is suitable to fell a tree, an appropriate stump management option

will be selected considering the future use of the site and balancing

the advantages and disadvantages for each option. This could include

leaving the stump for natural habitat, removing the stump and replacing

with another tree or removing and closing the site off. Timescales for

tree stump removal where appropriate will be determined in accordance

with section 8.6.

By balancing these priorities, the Council will take a measured approach to

selecting tree works. For example, it will not select the cheapest option if this

must be done repeatedly and costs more over the long term; equally, it may

prune a tree where this represents value for money and tree removal would

do more harm.

### **8.4 Embedding aims in tree works**

This Policy demonstrates our commitment to protecting trees, making

improvements, maximising benefits and following best practice. Each of

these aims will be embedded in the way that tree works are planned and

delivered.

When planning and delivering tree works operations, the Council will do the

following unless there is a good reason not to:

* Minimise harm to the tree
* Preserve tree size, condition and longevity
* Preserve or enhance visual amenity
* Preserve or enhance biodiversity
* Preserve or enhance environmental benefits
* Minimise material processing
* Minimise material transportation

Examples of these principles in practice might include leaving a felled log

safely in a park instead of removing it; pruning rather than removing a tree;

phasing work to allow replacement trees to grow; or timing works to

minimise disturbance to wildlife.

## **8.5 Standards for tree works**

Tree works will be clearly specified, so that everyone involved understands

exactly what is to be expected, including staff, contractors, the Council,

partners and the public, as applicable.

Tree works will follow British Standard 3998: 2010 (or later revisions), and all

relevant Arboricultural Association guidance, including the Industry Code of

Practice for Arboriculture, Technical Guides, Safety Guides and Biosecurity

Guidance Note.

Wherever possible, works will be planned to minimise the impact on the

surroundings, including by disruption. However, sometimes it is not possible

to complete tree works safely without causing some disruption, such as by

restrictions to access, or traffic management.

## **8.6 Timescales and prioritising works**

Wherever it has been decided that tree works will be done, a timescale will

be set.

The delivery of tree works may not immediately follow a decision that they

will be done. The timescale will often be influenced by a number of factors.

These include:

* The reason for works may influence their priority, for example, if there is a specific date by which the objective must be achieved
* Some operations should be done at certain times of year, for example to minimise risks to wildlife, reduce the quantity of material, or reduce the risk of disease or damage to the tree
* Some locations are less sensitive to disruption at certain times, for example work near to a school during the holidays
* Planning activities in an area to run consecutively can help to ensure efficiently as part of a programme of planned operations
* The involvement of third parties, such as for essential licensing, permissions, access agreements or consultation
* Resources may fluctuate, for example where works require special equipment or skills it may be planned for when they are available
* Overall demand can be influenced by factors such as the weather and season, which may influence capacity and lead times

The Council will balance these priorities and plan works accordingly.

Timescales for tree works will not be influenced by repeated requests or

enquiries.

If works are for safety, the timescale will be fixed. Works that are for safety

reasons will be completed as required by the relevant risk assessment.

Other types of tree works may be delayed at short notice to prioritise safety

critical works.

Timescales will, where appropriate, be measured from the date on which the

Arboriculture team determined that works would be undertaken. This may

be different from the date of any report, request or enquiry that led to them,

because these are rarely sufficient to plan works without further gathering

of information.

# 9.0 Further information

For more information on the circumstances in which tree pruning will and

will not be carried out, and how we handle enquiries please refer to the

Council’s website.

You can report an issue with a tree, or make and enquiry, request or

suggestion via the [website](https://my.northtyneside.gov.uk/category/503/report-tree-issue). If you need assistance with this or need us to do

anything differently to help you access our services, please call Envirolink

on 0345 2000 103 where our Customer Service colleagues will assist.

1. A hectare is 10,000m2. This total includes woodland and individual trees, such as in gardens and on streets. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
2. This can be understood to include common law and statutory duties of care [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
3. Typically calculated on the basis of 30 years for canopy cover; replacement of specific functions may be shorter. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)