Tree Management Strategy 2020-2025

Leicestershire County Council

Foreword

Byron Rhodes
Leicestershire County Council

Lead member for finance and resources

I am pleased to introduce this vital strategy. Managing our trees in Leicestershire is one of the fundamental pillars of how we are tackling the climate emergency and enhancing the environment.

Trees enhance our towns, villages and rural landscapes, providing beauty, character and a sense of place.

They provide many unseen benefits to society, absorbing carbon and producing oxygen, capturing pollutants and reducing the risk of flooding. They are a vital contributor to the natural world, providing shelter, habitat and food for numerous species.

The trees of Leicestershire are to be celebrated.

This is why I warmly welcome the launch of our refreshed Tree Management Strategy, which will ensure that the benefits of trees and the character of the Leicestershire landscape are retained and enhanced for future generations.

In the strategy, we illustrate the important contribution which trees can make to the quality of our residential areas and places of work.

We outline our ambitious plans to ensure the long-term conservation and sustainability of our tree stock through good management and through a significantly enhanced programme of tree planting.

The strategy also recognises the potential impact of significant diseases such as ash dieback, highlighting the action needed to minimise the effects on the county's trees.

It also forms an integral part of our approach to climate change and our pledge to be carbon-neutral by 2030 - this is at the top of the agenda. Trees make a vital contribution to absorbing carbon and our ambitious tree planting plans will enhance carbon capture for future generations.

We're a green council and this tree strategy is a further commitment to ensure that our landscape and environment is protected. I hope you read on to discover more about our approach and plans.

Blake Pain
Deputy Leader
Leicestershire County Council

Lead member for environment

I would like to fully support this Tree Management Strategy as it supports our commitments on carbon reduction, to adapting to the impacts of climate change and to supporting the enhancement of biodiversity, as set out in our Environment Strategy. Trees play an important role in absorbing and locking in carbon emissions, as well as reducing the impacts of climate change,

be that by acting as a means of natural flood management, reducing soil erosion or providing valuable shelter, cooling and shade to people, buildings and animals. They are also a key habitat for many flora and fauna, as well as being of distinctive importance to the landscape character of Leicestershire. By working with partners and accessing available sources of funding we can increase and improve the vital and valuable role that trees provide to our environment, our residents and our economy.

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Part 1 - Strategy overview

Introduction

Trees provide a significant contribution to the quality of our lives. In addition to the visual beauty they bring to our parks, gardens, road corridors, towns and villages they provide huge, but often unnoticed environmental benefits. They improve air quality and reduce air pollution, giving off oxygen as part of their natural growing process. They absorb carbon dioxide and contribute significantly to mitigating climate change. They retain water and stabilise soils, thereby reducing flood risk. Trees are very important for wildlife, hosting and providing food for a wide range of flora and fauna. They are the major components of forest eco-systems both locally and worldwide. Scientific research has now proven that trees provide huge benefits to physical, mental and social human health, providing calming and peaceful environments and promoting general well-being. Our trees are a very valuable and essential resource providing multiple benefits to the people of Leicestershire.

In 1994, the government published 'Sustainable Development, the UK Strategy and Urban Tree Strategies'. This recognised the value of trees and the wide-ranging contribution they make to public well-being and our living environment. Subsequently, the former Department of the Environment along with the former Office of the Deputy Prime Minister supported and encouraged the production of tree management strategies by local authorities.

Most authorities have now produced their own tree management strategies and developed management systems to enable them to manage their tree assets.

Leicestershire County Council produced its first Tree Management Strategy in 2008 and this was later revised in 2013. The County Council has also established an inventory of trees covering all its land holdings and the adopted highway network. This further revision of the tree management strategy, along with the tree inventory, outlines the County Council's tree management procedures and policies and provides a framework to enable the council to sustainably manage its trees in the long term.

Executive summary

The purpose of the Tree Management Strategy is to recognise the importance of the tree resource under the stewardship of the county council and identify standards for its management. This will ensure its long-term conservation and development for the people of Leicestershire and future generations.

The Tree Management Strategy for Leicestershire County Council will:

- **provide a framework to establish a healthy, balanced and sustainable tree population capable of withstanding predicted climatic changes and the impact of diseases such as ash dieback**
- **reduce the risk to the public from potentially hazardous trees**
- **specify the authority's policy on levels and standards of tree management**
- **ensure the most efficient use of resources**
- **increase public awareness of the value of trees in the environment**

Trees in Leicestershire

The trees in Leicestershire are a valuable and essential element of urban and rural landscapes, contributing significantly to the character of the county. They provide social, environmental, aesthetic, ecological and landscape benefits, all of which enhance quality of life.

All trees in the county are situated on land affected by human activities. These activities often impact and encroach onto their living environment and therefore some form of management is required during a tree's life span.

Tree management encompasses a range of different activities which:

- **ensure the safety of the public**
- **resolve conflicts between the tree and its immediate environment**
- **promote desirable growth characteristics and enhances amenity value**
- **benefit ecology and wildlife**
- **maximise the longevity of trees and the benefits they provide**

The 'National Inventory of Woodland and Trees (Leicestershire)' compiled by the Forestry Commission in 2002 recorded a tree population of between 5.5 and 6 million.

This is made up of 87% broad-leaved species and 13% coniferous species with 49% of the population being older than 50 years.

Many older mature trees, particularly in rural hedgerows are now in decline and have a limited life expectancy. Dutch elm disease and other disorders have had a significant detrimental effect on the county's landscape and the impact of these diseases is still evident today. This effect is illustrated in the above census which records a 52% reduction in individual trees in Leicestershire between 1980 and 1998.

The potential adverse effects of climate change and invasive pests and diseases is likely to result in the further decline of some of our common native and naturalised tree species. Over the past two decades there have been a number of invasive pests and diseases introduced into the UK. The most significant of these is ash dieback.

Ash dieback

Since the decline of the elm tree in the late 1970s, the ash has become the most common native tree in Leicestershire. It is the main component of our rural landscapes, being found commonly in woodlands, field hedges and along our road corridors. Much of the ash population is mature and the health of this species has been declining for many years due to a number of factors contributing to a syndrome known as ash decline.

Ash dieback (Hymenoscyphus fraxineus) was first reported in Britain in 2012 on imported nursery stock and was first observed in the wider environment in 2013. The disease has now spread extensively across the country and the advanced affects of the disease are now evident in southern and eastern counties. The disease has been noted in Leicestershire for a number of years and ongoing monitoring is showing that it is now well established in the county's ash population. Ash dieback was first recorded in Europe in 1992 and many countries have now suffered up to 90 percent mortality in their ash trees.

The council is working closely with the Tree Council to support their work on managing the disease nationally. They have produced a toolkit which has now been launched and is available at: www.treecouncil.org.uk/Portals/0/Chalara%20docs/The%20Tree%20Council%20Ash%20 Dieback%20Action%20Plan%20Toolkit%20FINAL.pdf

Ash dieback will present a significant public safety risk on our road corridors and public open spaces and the council's action plan will help to address these issues. The long-term effect of ash dieback on the county's rural landscape will, however, be substantial with many areas potentially becoming devoid of mature trees.

To monitor and manage the effects of the disease, Leicestershire County Council set up an ash dieback project board. An action plan has now been produced which will inform and steer the authority's response to managing the disease

Tree planting

In order to mitigate the effects of the current decline in the county's trees, a substantial and sustained programme of tree planting is essential. Not only would this help to minimise the effect on the county's landscape, it would also contribute to mitigating the effects of climate change and help to achieve many of the objectives outlined in the council's Environment Strategy. A significant change in the character of the county's tree population is inevitable in the short term, before newly planted, young and middle aged trees develop to maturity and impact fully on the landscape.

The beneficial effect of the National Forest is now very evident and demonstrates what can be achieved through a sustained tree planting programme. Since the impact of Dutch elm disease in the late 1970s, the council has introduced a number of tree planting initiatives and has supported the National Forest in converting over 200 hectares of farmland and derelict land within Leicestershire into new woodland.

"The best time to plant a
tree was 20 years ago...
...the second best time is now!"
Chinese proverb

The council's trees

The county council manages approximately 321,000 trees comprising of individual specimens, tree groups and woodlands. This includes 404 hectares of established woodland on its land holdings. Percentage breakdown of trees on specific sites are as follows:

- **trees on country parks - 37%**
- **trees on highways - 35%**
- **trees on county farms - 12%**
- **trees on schools - 10%**
- **trees on other properties - 6%**

As the highway authority, the county council also has a duty to prevent the stopping up of the highway.[1] The council also has powers[2] to take action in respect of privately owned trees which overhang, or are a danger to, roads or footpaths. Consequently, the council monitors an estimated additional population of 420,000 privately owned trees adjacent to the highway.

The council's tree assets are managed by five specialist technical staff and a further eight operational staff. Tree maintenance operations are also supplemented by an external tree work contractor.

The Tree Management Strategy identifies the major activities and considerations required for the council to effectively manage its tree resource. It considers each activity in detail, identifying the main technical, operational, environmental, social and strategic elements associated with tree management. It identifies appropriate standards for each activity by reference to industry recommendations and codes of practice. Such standards form the basis of the council's tree management policy, which is stated in part 3 of the strategy. Tree management policy details are summarised on the council's website at www.leicestershire.gov.uk

The Tree Management Strategy also provides a basis for the council to manage its tree resource in the future. An increasing need for new housing and other developments, alongside the expansion of Leicestershire's road network and the effects of disease and climate change will put increasing pressure on the county's trees. The Tree Management Strategy aims to ensure that the council's tree resource is sustained and enhanced during these challenges, to protect it for future generations.

The management policies and procedures detailed in the tree management strategy accord with all relevant legislation and national codes of practice relating to the management of trees. As such these procedures could apply to any landholding containing trees within Leicestershire. The tree management strategy can therefore be used as a guide for all landowners across Leicestershire and is particularly relevant to any organisations who invite the public and employees onto its land and property as part of everyday business.

i-Tree study and CAVAT assessment

In 2018, a study of council's trees was commissioned using an internationally recognised tree resource assessment system, i-Tree. This study covered the individually recorded trees across council owned land including schools, highways, etc. but excluded the 404 ha of woodlands on country parks and farmland. The study calculates and evaluates the benefits the tree population provides in environmental terms.

[1] Section 130 of the Highways Act 1980

[2] Section 154 of the Highways Act 1980

In addition to the above i-Tree study, the council's individual trees have been assessed to calculate their current amenity value using the CAVAT (Capital Asset Value for Amenity Trees) system. This system, developed by the London Tree Officers Association, is now recognised as a principal methodology for evaluating the amenity value of trees and has been used in a number of litigation cases.

The significant findings of these study are as follows:

Leicestershire County Council trees headline figures

Most common species
Ash, Oak and Sycamore

Number of trees assessed **82,599**

Replacement costs **£99,522,000**

Amenity valuation (CAVAT)
£428,678,777

No. of species recorded **277**

Environmental benefits and values

Carbon storage
25,202 tonnes
value - £6,007,000

Carbon sequestration
625 tonnes p.a.
£149,039 p.a.

Pollution removal
9.25 tonnes p.a.
£161,783 p.a.

Water run-off prevention
31,740 m3 p.a.
£48,129 p.a.

Total Annual Benefits £358,951

Carbon storage - Equates to emissions from 19,700 cars/8060 homes

Carbon sequestration - Equates to emissions from 500 cars/134 homes per annum

Pollution removal - Equates to removal of sulphur dioxide from 9560 cars/25 homes and nitrogen dioxide from 298 cars/134 homes per annum

Avoided run-off (flood attenuation) - Preventing 32,000m^3 of storm-water entering the sewerage system - value £48K p.a.

The findings of the i-Tree survey demonstrate the environmental and social value of the council's tree asset to the people of Leicestershire and the ongoing benefits they provide. It also highlights the importance the council's trees in light of the government's new Clean Air Strategy and the Public Health Agenda.

The CAVAT survey illustrates the value of the authority's tree asset in financial terms and demonstrates the need for a proactive and sustainable system of management to ensure the asset is maintained and enhanced in the future.

Ecology and trees

In addition to the multiple environmental benefits trees provide, they are the major components of woodland and forest ecosystems both locally and worldwide. Trees support and host a vast range of flora and fauna. A single oak tree in Britain may host over 280 species of insect and support up to 30 species of birds including nuthatches, woodpeckers, warblers and flycatchers. Additionally the oak can be associated with up to 300 species of lichen.

Trees also have a wide ranging association with fungi and, whilst some fungal species are pathogenic, many have a symbiotic relationship with trees. Soil fungi such as mycorrhiza, in particular are vital for the tree's survival and well-being, converting organic matter into nutrients which the tree can absorb. These fungi form complex webs of fungal tissue (i.e. mycelium) in the soil which can transfer nutrients for considerable distances to specific areas of the forest. This highly sensitive fungal network has been termed the 'wood wide web' due to its ability to react to the changes and requirements of the forest eco-system.

Health and wellbeing

Trees provide multiple benefits which can improve health, wellbeing and overall quality of life. These include:

Improving air quality - Trees, woodland and other green infrastructure improve air quality by intercepting up to 24 percent of harmful particulates, which are a contributing factor to respiratory conditions such as asthma.

Reducing stress - Urban residents suffering from stress experience less anxiety when they live in the vicinity of trees. Physical signs of stress such as muscle tension and pulse rate are also measurably reduced when living in green surroundings.

Aiding recovery - Hospital patients with a view of trees and vegetation have been shown to recover more rapidly, and require less pain relief medication than those who are restricted to views of buildings.

Alleviating depression - Taking part in nature-based activities helps people who are suffering from mental ill-health and can contribute to a reduction in levels of anxiety and depression.

Shading us from the sun - Thinning of the protective ozone layer coupled with more extreme weather patterns is being linked to the increase in skin melanomas, the most rapidly increasing form of cancer in the UK. Dappled shade from trees provides a useful barrier to harmful ultra-violet radiation and a 40 percent tree cover can reduce peak temperatures by 6˚C.

Encouraging physical activity - Green spaces provide a place to exercise which improves memory and cognitive function. People who use parks and other green spaces are three times more likely to achieve a suitable level of physical activity compared with non-users.

Reducing obesity - Children living in areas with good access to green spaces have been shown to spend less time in front of television screens, computers and smart phones and to have between 11 and 19 percent lower prevalence of obesity compared with children with limited or no access to green spaces.

Bringing people together - Trees and woods can help to promote social integration bringing people together and strengthening communities, thereby reducing loneliness and isolation.

Strategic aims and objectives

The Tree Management Strategy provides the council with a framework to manage its tree assets and to achieve the following objectives:

1) Conserve and enhance the tree resource in terms of quality and numbers.

2) Promote public safety through appropriately resourced tree inspection and maintenance programmes.

3) Fulfil the council's legal obligations as a tree owner by addressing safety and major nuisance issues effectively.

4) Inform customers of our legal obligations relating to trees and manage enquiries and expectations appropriately.

5) Establish sustainable management programmes for council woodland utilising external funding from central government agencies.

6) Promote and increase the current level of tree planting on public and private land to address the recent decline of individual trees and mitigate the potential effects of ash dieback and other potentially harmful diseases.

Policy background

Leicestershire County Council's responsibilities

The council as a tree owner has a direct responsibility to ensure that its trees do not pose a danger to the public or property and are managed appropriately.

The National Tree Safety Group (NTSG), a multi-disciplinary body, has produced national guidelines for tree safety management entitled 'Common Sense Risk Management of Trees'. The guidelines are proportionate to the actual risk posed by trees and recognise the benefits trees provide to society and the wider environment. The NTSG guidelines are now recognised as an industry benchmark and have been referred to in a number of recent litigation cases.

All landowners are responsible for trees growing on their property. They should arrange for their trees to be inspected regularly and should maintain an inventory of the trees under their responsibility. Inspection intervals should be proportionate to the degree of risk posed by trees according to the level of use on each site. Any recommended maintenance work resulting from the inspections should be implemented and recorded. The above measures are a necessary requirement to provide the council with a basis for defence if proceedings were brought as a result of a tree failure.

The council also has a duty of care under the Highways Act 1980 to ensure the safe use of the highway. The Highway Authority must have systems in place which ensure that all roads are inspected at reasonable intervals. Whilst the responsibility for privately owned trees adjacent to the highway lies with the landowner, defective trees may be identified during routine road inspections. As a result, tree owners may be contacted and requested to remove noted hazards.

Trees and development

When a Local Planning Authority (LPA) is determining a planning application, trees are regarded as a material consideration and their integration in a new development is guided by the British Standard 5837:2012 'Trees in Relation to design, demolition and construction - Recommendations'. This standard provides guidance to both planning authorities and developers on the effective retention and integration of existing trees within new development. It has regard to the development potential of the site and to the value of integrating suitable trees. It provides guidelines to ensure that trees are adequately and effectively protected during the construction process.

Where development activities are likely to impact on council owned trees, the above standard should be applied to ensure they are adequately protected. When it is agreed that a council tree has to be removed as a result of development, adequate compensation will be sought to cover historic maintenance costs, replacements costs and/or the amenity value of the removed tree.

Where the council agrees to adopt trees on highway verges, sufficient space must be provided to accommodate large growing trees adjacent to development in accordance with National House Building Council Standards Chapter 4.2 Building near trees (2020).

Other statutory considerations

A Local Planning Authority (LPA) has power to make new tree preservation orders (TPOs) if a tree has significant amenity value and/or is deemed to be under threat. The law on Tree Preservation Orders is in Part VIII of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 as amended and in the Town and Country Planning (Tree Preservation) (England) Regulations 2012 which came into force on 6 April 2012. Guidance on the administration and application of TPOs is provided by the National Planning Policy Framework in the Planning Practice Guidance document 'Tree Preservation Orders and Trees in Conservation Areas' - March 2014.

Trees in a conservation area that are not protected by a TPO are protected by the provisions in section 211 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990. That provision creates an offence of damaging trees in conservation areas.

Felling trees in woodlands requires a felling licence which is issued by the Forestry Commission under Section 9 of the Forestry Act 1967 (as amended). A licence is required for the felling of growing trees where more than five cubic metres of wood are to be felled in any calendar quarter.

Landscape and ecological considerations

The contribution of trees and woodlands to the county's landscape is addressed in the council's Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland Landscape and Woodland Strategy, as amended in 2006.

Similarly, the ecological value of trees and woodlands is documented in the Space for Wildlife - Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland Bio-diversity Action Plan, 2016.

The council, when undertaking management work on its trees, has due regard to the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 and The Conservation (Natural Habitats, &c.)

(Amendment) Regulations 2007, which provide protection for bats and nesting birds. All appropriate pre-works checks are carried out to avoid disturbance to protected species and wherever possible works are postponed if bats and nesting birds are present. In such cases specialist advice will be sought.

Veteran trees (defined by Natural England as 'trees which are of interest biologically, culturally or aesthetically because of age, size or condition'), are a valuable and increasingly scarce ecological resource.

These should be managed and conserved, wherever possible, to maximise their habitat value and life span.

Climate change

It is now recognised and accepted by reputable experts that climate change is happening, and that man-made emissions of carbon dioxide and other greenhouse gases are the main cause. It is predicted that temperatures could rise by as much as 3° to 5°C by the end of the century and the government now recognises climate change as 'the greatest long-term challenge facing the world today'.

Globally, forest eco-systems play a key role in addressing climate change by absorbing carbon dioxide from the atmosphere, producing oxygen, retaining water and reducing atmospheric temperatures. On a local level, trees and woodlands have an important role to play in mitigating climate change through the absorption and temporary storage of carbon dioxide, intercepting and reducing airborne particulates as well as reducing the effects of climate change by providing shade, cooling and soaking up water and helping to reduce the impacts of flooding. Trees also provide a source of wood, which is a low energy construction material and a less polluting source of energy compared with fossil fuels.

It is therefore essential that tree managers sustain and enhance this vital resource. Leicestershire County Council has a longstanding commitment to the environment and to addressing climate change, singing up to the Nottingham Declaration on Climate Change in 2006 and to Climate Local in 2012. The Council's new Environment Strategy commits the Council to becoming carbon neutral as a council by 2030 and to working with others to achieve carbon neutrality for Leicestershire by 2050 or before.

Trees and climate change

Trees counter the effects of climate change by absorbing carbon dioxide and other pollutants from the atmosphere and will play an important role in our environment, if temperatures rise as expected. In towns and cities, where temperatures are exacerbated by heat and light reflection from buildings, there will be an increasing need for effective areas of shade. Carefully positioned tree planting can provide effective cooling to buildings, decreasing the need for air cooling. Areas of shade will also be vital adjacent to outdoor facilities such as shopping precincts, roads and pavements, bus stops and car parks. Shade will benefit school playgrounds and the grounds of care establishments, providing a degree of protection to more vulnerable members of the population.

An additional consequence of climate change is the increasing possibility of flash flooding, the devastating effects of which are witnessed regularly around the world. In such cases, the presence of trees and woodlands retain large quantities of water, attenuating run-off and having a stabilising effect on the soil, thereby limiting erosion damage and reducing the possibility of landslides.

Climate change will inevitably have a detrimental effect on the present tree population. Shallow rooting species such as beech and hornbeam often suffer drought stress during hot periods. Trees can recover from drought conditions particularly if they occur as single one-off events, but if such conditions are repeated year on year, they can easily succumb to damage. Increased high winds, particularly when soils are waterlogged, and deciduous trees are in leaf, can have a very damaging effect on the local tree population. Warm summers and milder winters can favour the existence of harmful tree pathogens, which become more prevalent in such conditions.

It is important for tree owners to protect the current tree resource, ensure that it is sustained and where possible expanded. It is also important that landscape architects and tree managers have regard to the effects of climate change, particularly when selecting new trees for planting schemes.

i-tree appraisal and the positive impact of Council managed trees

I-tree is a widely recognised method of evaluating the benefits and values of trees across a large area. Using a combination of science and tools i-tree can establish the financial and environmental benefit of trees and woodlands.

The i-tree appraisal of 82,599 Leicestershire County Council managed trees indicates their benefit in tackling climate change, addressing airborne pollution and managing water run-off.

Carbon storage - 25,202 tonnes, at a value of £6,007,000

Carbon sequestration - 625 tonnes per year, at a value of £149,039 annually

Pollution removal - 9.25 tonnes per year, at a value of £161,783 annually

Water run-off prevention - 31,740m³, at a value of £48,129 annually

Total Annual Benefit £358,951

Increasing the Council's tree population could then be expected to improve and increase annual benefits in the long-term and as newly planted trees reach maturity.

Total Annual Benefit of £394,846 if tree cover is increased by 10%

Total Annual Benefit of £538,426 if tree cover is increased by 50%

Total Annual Benefit of £717,902 if tree cover is increased by 100%

The need for tree planting

The tree population of Leicestershire changed significantly in the late 1970s when Dutch elm disease accounted for the loss of more than 200,000 mature trees in the county's landscape. An ageing mature tree population and the incidence of other disorders such as ash decline in rural hedgerows have resulted in a continuing decline in our mature trees. The consequences of ash dieback will potentially have a further devastating effect on the county's rural landscape given that a high proportion of remaining hedgerow trees are ash. Additionally, mature trees continue to be lost through residential and commercial development.

Leicestershire County Council supports small scale tree planting through various tree planting initiatives. On Council land larger capital schemes have been implemented. These include several National Forest schemes and intensive landscape schemes on newly constructed roads. Tree management system require a continuous and ongoing programme of tree planting to maintain the population and eventually establish successive generations of trees. A substantial and sustained programme of planting is now required in Leicestershire to address the current long-term decline of our landscape trees and the potentially significant impact of ash dieback.

The County Council will be significantly increasing its tree planting activities in future years to meet the objectives of the tree management strategy and the targets detailed in the tree management action plan. To ensure that the requisite numbers of trees are available, officers will engage with nursery suppliers regarding production methods, stock requirements and availability.

Native, naturalised and non-native trees

The County Council currently plant a wide range of native, naturalised and non-native species. Where practical and appropriate the County Council will favour the use of native and naturalised trees. However, it is accepted that the use of non-native tree species may, on occasion, be required.

A diverse range of tree species and the avoidance of mono-culture planting will help to create a more resilient and robust tree stock, which is then better placed to withstand the predicted impact of climate change.

Sourcing of nursery stock

Nursery suppliers will be asked to provide the following details regarding the production of stock :-

Identification of seed sources/seed provenance

In general, suppliers will be required to grow stock produced from British origin seed sources. With adaptability to climate change in mind, there may be a preference with some species to select seed from European provenance zones. In such cases, demonstrable bio-security measures will have to be in place involving effective quarantine procedures and certification of imported material.

Description of production processes

Nurseries will be required to undertake the appropriate pre-sowing treatments on all seed whether it is sourced from within the UK or otherwise. Seed should be sown on the UK mainland and the resulting seedlings should remain in the UK during the entire production process. Thorough handling and protection measures will be required to ensure that all trees arrive at the planting site in prime condition. Container grown stock should be produced in container providing a suitable soil volume for a limited period to produce an evenly formed, unrestricted root system.

The County Council will continue to engage with nursery suppliers and explore a range of procurement and partnership options to ensure that sufficient quantities of healthy stock are available each year to support the council's tree planting programme.

Design and aftercare

The design of new tree planting should ensure that it compliments the local landscape character and enhances the immediate environment. Planting density and species selection should be guided by available space to ensure that each tree is compatible with its new site and has every opportunity to develop into a healthy, mature specimen. Appropriate levels of aftercare need to be employed to ensure that the tree can fully establish and develop. A new tree will only reach its potential as a mature specimen if adequate resources are available to maintain it through its life (Ref. BS 8545: 2014. Trees: from nursery to independence in the landscape – Recommendations).

National and regional policy

In 2018 the government published A Green Future: Our 25 year plan to improve the Environment. A key objective within this plan is to increase woodland in England to achieve 12% tree cover by 2060.

In 2018 the Urban Tree Manual was released by the Environment Secretary and Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs. Created by Sir William Worsley, as the government's appointed "Tree Champion", the manual promotes the government's 25 year Environment Plan. This includes influencing and challenging decision makers to commit to planting 1 million urban trees.

In 2013, the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs produced a forestry policy statement which sets clear priorities for future policy making relating to woodlands and trees. This document is focused on protecting, improving and sustainably expanding our public and private woodland resource.

In February 2008, Trees in Towns II was published. This document was commissioned by the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister (ODPM) to provide up-to-date information on the national urban tree stock and urban tree management by local authorities. The report recognises that local authority tree management programmes have a vital role to play in promoting the government's agenda for cleaner, greener, safer cities and the development of sustainable communities.

In 2017, the Charter for Trees, Woods and People was produced by a steering group led by the Woodland Trust and incorporating over 70 cross-sector organisations. This again promotes the sustainable management of trees and woodlands and recognises the cultural, social, environmental and economic benefits they provide.

In 2016 the UK Roads Liaison Group produced a new code of practice entitled 'Well-managed Highway Infrastructure' to provide guidance to highway authorities on condition, inspection and maintenance procedures, including those applying to trees.

Part 2 – Tree management actions

1. Tree inspection

1.1 Inspection criteria

Appropriate and effective tree inspection procedures should ensure that changes in tree condition are noted and, if necessary, acted upon before the tree becomes hazardous and injury to persons or damage to property occurs. The council's tree inspection procedures take into account a range of criteria including species, age, size, health and condition, location, site usage, hazard risk and landscape and ecological value.

Our tree inspection programme aims to balance the management of trees for public safety with the ecological and landscape value of trees. Both management objectives are important but the nature and use of each site normally dictates which one should take precedence. Different management prescriptions may therefore be applied depending on the tree's location. When managing trees for public safety reasons, only the minimum work required to remove the danger should be undertaken to ensure that the trees' multiple benefits are retained.

Trees are best inspected when in full leaf, from mid-summer through to autumn, before leaf fall. However, the scale of the council's tree resource dictates that inspections should continue throughout the year.

There are other factors which should be considered when formulating tree inspection procedures. For example, extremes of weather or construction work in a tree's immediate vicinity may necessitate a responsive inspection to monitor the effects on the stability of the tree.

1.2 Inspection procedures

1.2.1 The council has adopted tree inspection procedures which provide information to minimise risk to the public and property. Such procedures are considered reasonable; proportionate to the level of risk at a particular location, recognise the benefits of the trees and are acceptable in legal terms meaning they follow industry recommendations and codes of practice.

1.2.2 In addition to informal observations put forward by members of the public, site officers and other organisations, the county council provides the following two tier approach to tree inspection:

Formal Inspections - carried out periodically by council staff who regularly frequent sites as part of their routine work. Basic tree inspection training is provided for such staff.

Detailed Inspections - carried out by appropriately qualified and knowledgeable arboricultural specialists. Such inspections are carried out at regular intervals which dovetail with the programme of formal inspections and are commensurate with the level of risk identified at a given location.

Detailed inspections will take into account the biological, pathological and bio-mechanical aspects of tree health and stability along with other considerations such as the effects of weather and site disturbance.

1.2.3 The nature and frequency of such inspections have regard to the criteria detailed at 1.1 and the size and distribution of the council's tree assets.

1.2.4 All detailed inspections and resulting maintenance/remedial works carried out are recorded on a dedicated tree asset management system to enable the council to maintain appropriate records relating to tree management.

1.3 Assessment of risk and inspection targeting

The Leicestershire Road Hierarchy produced by the Environment and Transportation Department is based on levels of traffic use and classifies the county's roads as follows:

- **strategic routes**

- **main distributor roads**

- **secondary distributor roads**

- **locally important roads**

- **all other metalled roads**

This provides useful information for targeting priority areas when planning tree inspections and ensuring that procedures are commensurate with the level of risk posed by trees. On other sites such as country parks, areas of high usage are identified (e.g. pedestrian routes, car parks etc) to target tree inspections.

In addition to targeting inspection regimes around the above priority areas, arboricultural officers also note high risk trees as part of detailed cyclical inspections. The assessment of risk is based on a range of data held on the council's tree asset management system which holds current and historic data relating to the authority's trees. This assessment takes into account factors such as age and condition, tree size, species, location and site usage. These trees are flagged and a more frequent inspection cycle is then applied.

The council's tree inspection and maintenance procedures are designed to ensure that:

i) dangerous trees are identified

ii) appropriate remedial measures are employed promptly to minimise the risk of injury to persons and/or damage to property

iii) maintenance works safeguard the life expectancy, ecological value and amenity potential of the council's tree stock

iv) private tree owners adopt appropriate standards of management

1.4 Privately owned trees adjacent to the highway

The council, as the highway authority, has a duty of care to ensure the safety of the road user. The council carries out a cyclical programme of routine inspections on the road network in Leicestershire. Where obvious hazards are identified on privately owned roadside trees the council will notify the tree owner and ensure that appropriate remedial work is carried out. The tree owner is always urged to carry out the minimum work necessary to remove the hazard.

The council is committed to promoting a responsible approach to tree management, particularly adjacent to the county's highways, and will ensure that:

i) tree owners will be contacted only if a tree poses a risk of obstructing the highway or endangering the public

ii) tree owners are advised to adopt best arboricultural practice

iii) tree owners are advised not to undertake unnecessary work

iv) tree owners are encouraged to replant when dangerous trees have to be felled

2. Tree maintenance operations

2.1 Identification and generation of work

Tree maintenance work originates from the following internal and external sources:

a) Programmed detailed inspections by specialist arboricultural staff – as part of the inspection procedures outlined in Section 1.

b) Ad-hoc inspections by specialist arboricultural staff – as a result of enquiries received from the general public and members relating to tree safety and actionable nuisance issues.

c) Enquiries from other Leicestershire County Council officers

d) Reports from the Customer Service Centres

e) Reports from the Highways Management System (HMS)

f) Enquiries from other local authorities

g) Cyclical maintenance (e.g. re-pollarding of street trees)

h) Emergency Works (e.g. resulting from high winds)

2.2 Tree management priorities

An assessment is made of all incoming enquiries relating to trees before appropriate maintenance work is specified and ordered. Such an assessment takes into account factors such as tree safety implications, risk of potential claims relating to actionable nuisance, proposed remedial work, the effects of any proposals on long term tree health, the nature of the enquiry and the most efficient and cost-effective courses of action. To ensure that current resources are utilised most effectively and work programmes are effectively targeted, the different types of tree enquiry are prioritised in accordance with the following criteria:

Category 1 - Matters of safety where there is an imminent, significant danger to the public and property – i.e. urgent works

Category 2 - Remedial and preventative work which removes potential hazards – i.e. high priority works

Category 3 - Works which conserve and enhance the ecological and aesthetic value of veteran and locally prominent trees

Category 4 - Works which promote the effective establishment of newly planted trees or which address minor nuisance issues

Works to remove or alleviate a nuisance to property which could potentially cause damage and/or result in action against the council will be placed in the top two categories above depending on the severity of the issue.

The significance of tree nuisance issues is often dictated by personal perception. For example, an issue of shade to a garden may be regarded as a significant nuisance by one individual and a significant benefit by another. Some nuisance issues may only be effectively resolved by either:

a) substantial tree work (e.g. heavy crown reductions) which is potentially detrimental to tree health, safety and amenity

b) tree removal

The council will only consider such issues against the benefits of the tree to the immediate locality, the nature of the enquiry, the significance to the public/property and the extent of potential remedial work.

The prioritisation of incoming enquiries aims to ensure that:

i)   all high priority work identified or requested is undertaken promptly

ii)   existing resources are utilised efficiently and most effectively

iii) the council respond to appropriate requests for work to be carried out

iv)   council staff are empowered to refuse unreasonable requests to carry out work on trees

v)   the council's tree maintenance operations meet high standards of arboricultural practice (e.g. BS 3998 :2010 Tree Work - Recommendations)

2.3 Procurement

Leicestershire County Council provides tree maintenance contracting services through the following arrangements:

a) internal team based in Highways Operations undertaking all works on the adopted highway network

b) an external tree work contractor undertaking all works on schools, country parks and other county council property

c) partnership working between the in-house team and the appointed external contractor

Regardless of the source of provision, such arrangements will be periodically scrutinised through market testing and regular procurement to ensure value for money.

3. Standards of work

Modern arboricultural practice

Modern arboricultural practice is based on the most recent scientific research into tree biology, pathology and physiology. This research has concentrated on a number of specific areas including:

- effects of maintenance works on tree biology and functioning

- the tree's response to wounding (i.e. pruning)

- timing of maintenance operations in relation to seasonal fluctuations in tree energy reserves

- structural/mechanical properties of trees

Modern tree maintenance techniques have been formulated to minimise any possible adverse effects on the tree and promote its healthy development.

Perceptions of tree management

Tree maintenance is often judged purely on the visual effect of the work rather than the effects of the work on long term tree health. There is, therefore sometimes a conflict between good practice and what is perceived as "a good job". The county council provide advice on tree management and refer members of the public to industry advisory literature, where appropriate.

3.1 Leicestershire County Council specifications

The county council undertakes all tree maintenance work in accordance with its own forestry and arboricultural works specifications. These require a high standard of forestry and arboricultural practice which takes into account the principles of modern arboriculture and embraces the findings of recent and current arboricultural research.

3.2 British Standard 3998: 2010 'Tree work - Recommendations'

The national standard for tree surgery work is defined in British Standard 3998: 2010 'Tree Work - Recommendations'. This standard is regularly quoted by the council and should be the basic standard followed by all tree work contractors.

3.3 British Standard 5837: 2012 'Trees in relation to design, demolition and construction' - Recommendations

There is often a conflict between maximising the development potential of a site and retaining existing trees. Consequently, construction activities throughout the country account for the loss of many trees each year. The retention of suitable existing trees is highly desirable, often enhancing the quality of the development and facilitating its integration into the surrounding landscape. It is important to ensure that retained trees and new dwellings exist compatibly, well beyond the completion of the development. If trees are to be retained effectively, measures to protect them need to be thorough and should be understood by all parties involved in the construction process from architect to site operative. BS 5837: 2012 forms the basis of advice the council provides to its own planning officers and other planning authorities. The council is committed to promoting best practice when managing and integrating trees in association with new development.

3.4 Highway works and trees

Highway maintenance and improvement works can have a damaging impact on highway and roadside trees. It is often very difficult to accommodate the space required for a tree to be retained within highway improvements because of the linear nature of road corridors.

The council has produced the Leicestershire Highway Design Guide to provide guidelines to developers on highway matters. Information is given at Part 7 Appendix F on the 'Preservation of Trees'. Many trees on or adjacent to highway verges suffer significant damage due to the excavation of trenches to accommodate services and highway drainage. This can seriously impair stability and normal biological function and can have a direct effect on the safety of a tree and the hazard it poses to passing traffic. The appropriate working methods to successfully install a trench through a tree's rooting zone are detailed in the National Joint Utilities Group (NJUG) Guidance Volume 4.

The use and storage of road salt can have a significant toxic effect on trees particularly if concentrations leach into the soil within a tree's root system. Road salt should only be stored on highway verges in sealed containers well away from the potential rooting zones of nearby trees.

3.5 Tree planting

The council undertakes all tree planting work in accordance with the relevant section of its own work specifications. These specifications include the following standards:

BS 8545: 2014 Trees: from nursery to independence in the landscape - Recommendations.

Leicestershire Highway Design Guide – Part 7 Appendix G Landscaping on new developments and in highway-improvement schemes.

When designing new native tree planting, the council will specify stock produced from seed collected and grown on the British mainland. Where the primary aim of a new tree planting scheme is to conserve or enhance nature conservation, nursery stock should be produced from seed collected from local sources, if such seed is available.

4. Sustainability

4.1 Environmental sustainability

Any tree population, regardless of size and character, should be managed sustainably to conserve or enhance its status. As a minimum standard, any losses should be replaced with new trees on a one for one basis. Failure to achieve this will result in the decline and deterioration of the tree population. The importance of this principle has been recognised on a global scale because of indiscriminate logging of primary forests in various parts of the world which do not include plans to conserve, protect or regenerate the forest environment. The impact of non-sustainable forest management continues to be a major concern today and consequently, the Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) has been set up as an international non-governmental organisation with the aim of developing an independent system for the certification of timber and timber products from sustainable sources. This provides a market mechanism to reward sustainable forest management and allows consumers of wood products to make a choice and influence the management of forests.

The UK Forestry Standard was published in 1998 and sets out the government's approach to sustainable forestry. This encourages woodland owners to achieve woodland certification in accordance with the UK Woodland Assurance Standard (UKWAS) 2018. This is an independent certification standard for verifying sustainable forest and woodland management in the United Kingdom. The UKWAS standard is currently the central component of the forest certification programme operated in the UK by the Forest Stewardship Council (FSC). Sustainable woodland management plans are now a pre-requisite to obtaining woodland management grants through the Countryside Stewardship Scheme, administered by the Forestry Commission. Sustainable management is therefore essential both on a global and local scale and should be adopted by all local authorities responsible for managing both individual tree populations and woodlands.

Sustainable systems of management should:

- **maintain or enhance the tree population**

- **facilitate the removal of dangerous or potentially hazardous trees**

- **promote bio-diversity and conserve the tree/forest eco-system**

- **conserve veteran trees with significant ecological, historical and amenity value**

- **establish a tree population with a balanced diversity of age-classes**

- **optimise the use of timber and other products of tree management**

4.2 Economic sustainability

Utilisation of timber

The council will continue to maximise the financial value of timber harvested as part of its woodland management operations. All timber harvesting will be part of an approved management plan which will be scrutinised by the Forestry Commission as part of the assessment process when the council applies for felling licences or grants under the Countryside Stewardship Scheme. This assessment process will include consultation with district councils and other bodies such as Natural England, where appropriate. The council will also continue to identify a wide range of potential markets to maximise the economic value of its woodlands.

Use and re-cycling of wood waste

The council produces 3 - 5 cubic metres of wood waste each day from its tree surgery and maintenance operations. This equates to an annual total of approximately 1,000 cubic metres (approx. 600 tonnes), 800 cubic metres of which is wood chipped during clearance operations. The remainder takes the form of tree trunks, large logs and tree roots. If this material were to be disposed of at a refuse tip, costs in excess of £30,000 would be incurred each year. These costs are currently saved as the council processes all its wood waste into wood chip and supplies this material as wood fuel.

4.3 Social sustainability

The county council manages its trees and woodlands to provide a positive influence on public well-being and the local community. This can be achieved by the following:

i)   Effective tree inspection/maintenance procedures to maximise public safety

ii) Well planned tree planting design to maximise landscape benefits, minimise potential conflicts and enhance the local environment

iii) Careful selection and retention of established trees on new developments to maximise aesthetic benefits and minimise potential conflicts with new residents.

4.4 Bio-security

The council recognises and follows all national guidelines relating to the control and prevention of invasive pathogens which affect tree health. All works recommended and undertaken will have regard to these guidelines and all necessary measures will be implemented to prevent and restrict the spread of such pathogens.

5. Woodland management

Trees in woodland areas have traditionally been, and continue to be, planted at relatively close spacing, approximately two metres apart. This enables the new woodland to dominate surrounding vegetation and establish much quicker. Initially, the young trees provide shelter for each other, but eventually start to compete for light, space, soil moisture and nutrients. This triggers a natural selection process where the stronger trees start to dominate. At this point the forester will start thinning works to provide the space for the best trees to continue to develop. If management works are not implemented at this stage, competition between trees forces them to become tall and drawn. This ultimately will cause the trees to become unstable and dangerous, particularly in windy conditions. There is a significant public safety implication if woodlands/plantations are not managed through their life, particular if public access is provided through the woodland or it adjoins an area of high public use for example a plantation on a highway verge. The council therefore adopts a policy of ongoing management in all its woodland areas. If these woodlands are to be retained in the county's landscape in the long term, such management should include periodic re-stocking in order to accord with the sustainability policy detailed in the sustainability section of this strategy. This form of management will eventually provide a wide diversity of age-structure within the council's woodlands. This will enable the council's tree managers in the future to adopt management systems which provide a high proportion of mature tree cover at any one time.

Perceptions of woodland management

Systems of woodland management are designed to secure the long term retention of the woodland and enhance its landscape and nature conservation value. These long term objectives will only be achieved if there is an ongoing programme of woodland management. This may require works which drastically change the appearance of the woodland in the short term. Woodland management works particularly involving harvesting can appear devastating. However, these works are often judged on the initial visual impact of the work rather than its long term benefits to the woodland.

Highways - There are approximately 10 ha of woodland plantations in highway verges in Leicestershire. Much of these woodland areas are young or semi-mature and are a result of planting initiatives implemented during the last 25 years including verge planting in the National Forest, the Young Persons Forest at Wymeswold and various by-pass schemes. Many of these areas are now in need of thinning to allow retained trees to develop into well formed, stable specimens.

Country Parks - There are 300 ha of established woodland on the council's country parks estate. The country parks maintenance budget provides some funding for woodland management. This is supplemented by grants from relevant organisations such as the Forestry Commission, Countryside Stewardship Scheme and occasionally from timber sales, when there is sufficient demand from the timber market.

Consequently, there is a periodic programme of woodland management on country parks which covers health and safety work, harvesting, thinning, re-stocking and other desirable operations such as coppicing. Much of this work is carried out in accordance with documented management plans, which form part of grant applications to the Forestry Commission and as such, are subject to a thorough consultation process.

Farms - There are 104 ha of woodland on the council's county farms estate. The county farms estate budget provides some funding for tree management which is mostly utilised by undertaking health and safety related work on estate trees adjacent to roads.

Schools and other council sites - There are many small, dispersed areas of woodland on schools and other council sites amounting to approximately 15 ha in area. On schools, works may be recommended for woodland areas as part of the on-going inspection programme for schools. In such cases, the costs of any recommended work would be met by the school from devolved budgets. On other sites, woodland management work would be funded from site maintenance budgets held by the managing department such as plantation areas on industrial estates.

6. Tree related subsidence

The incidence of tree related subsidence damage to buildings has increased significantly during the last 30 years. This is partly due to an increased understanding of the complex interactions between the tree, the soil, the building, and more significantly, an increasing litigious approach to these occurrences.

Subsidence damage associated with trees occurs when a tree extracts moisture from a shrinkable soil such as clay, through its root system, causing the clay to shrink and/or subside. If the foundations of a building are constructed on such a soil, subsidence damage can occur to the fabric of the building. When assessing subsidence risk or considering tree related subsidence cases, the following factors are taken into account:

- **size and age of tree**
- **typical water demand**
- **time of year**
- **seasonal climatic conditions - (e.g. drought periods)**
- **type of soil - (e.g. clay)**
- **reaction to water (i.e. hydrology)**
- **capacity to shrink/swell (i.e. plasticity)**
- **age and quality of the building**
- **depth and type of foundation**
- **distance from tree to building**
- **tree/building site history**

Cases of alleged subsidence damage implicating trees are often complicated and require a wide range of information to be properly considered.

Case law has established that in managing subsidence risks councils are entitled to take into account the risk of damage, the seriousness of the potential damage, the cost of removing the risk and social value that trees provide.

Trees have a high amenity value and, unless or until there is reason to believe that a particular tree is likely to be causing damage, it is not considered to be reasonable or appropriate to deal with subsidence risks simply by felling healthy trees.

Accordingly, it is not the policy of the council to fell healthy trees on a precautionary basis because they stand in close proximity to residential or commercial property and there is a theoretical risk that they may during their natural lives cause damage to adjacent properties.

Enquiries

The council receives approximately 20 enquiries each year relating to trees and potential damage to adjoining property structures. Each enquiry is followed by a site inspection and when appropriate, preventative tree maintenance may be carried out where the potential for further damage exists. If actual damage to an adjoining property exists which could possibly be associated with a council tree, the property owner is at liberty to submit a formal insurance claim to the council's insurance section.

Insurance claims

At a pre-action stage, the council is obliged to deal with all civil claims in accordance with a practice direction on pre-action conduct and protocol. This practice direction provides a timetable which allows the claim to be investigated and identifies when responses should be given.

In order for each case to be considered, claimants should provide evidence to suggest a linkage between trees and property damage. When evidence indicating subsidence issues likely to be connected with council owned or controlled trees is received, the council's forestry group will visit the site, assess the evidence provided and advise the insurance section accordingly.

Subsidence risk

There has recently been an increasing demand from mortgage lenders, insurance companies and others for standardised assessments of the risk of subsidence damage to structures from nearby trees.

Attempts have been made to produce subsidence risk formulae but these have been unsuccessful due to the high range of variables, the lack of scientific data and the probability of unnecessary tree loss. The council does, however, refer to industry recognised published data when assessing a likely case of subsidence.

7. Response to emergencies

In line with other areas of service delivery, the council has procedures and arrangements in place to deal with emergency situations relating to its own trees. During and after seasonal gales, the council's forestry and highways operations teams receive large numbers of calls reporting fallen trees and branches. Many of these may be causing an obstruction and some could possibly have caused damage or injury. These are dealt with during working hours, but a considerable number are also received at night, by duty officers at, for example, divisional highway offices. These calls are often received from the police who require a swift response, particularly if a road is blocked or the tree in question is associated with a road traffic accident.

Call out procedures

During periods of extreme weather, a suitably equipped and skilled tree surgery response team should be available outside working hours to deal with any tree related emergency situations. This enables the council to deal with any incident promptly after it is reported. When weather conditions are severe, a high number of incidences can be reported in a short period of time. In such circumstances, a means of assessing and prioritising work can be extremely beneficial. It may also be too hazardous to deal with some situations during the night and a temporary road closure should therefore be established until conditions allow the clearance work to be undertaken. During these circumstances, procedures should also allow for a 'night scout' to be available to pre-assess emergency incidences and prioritise work with response teams.

8. Review and monitoring

After the introduction of the Tree Management Strategy, the implementation of the specified policies will be regularly monitored to ensure that the objectives of the strategy, detailed in the Executive Summary, are met. Monitoring should consider the appropriateness of each policy to ensure that it maintains appropriate standards of tree care, whilst also considering the needs and concerns of the public. The work the council undertakes in implementing the strategy should raise the council's profile as a tree manager.

There will also be a need to periodically review the strategy itself to take into account the development of the county's tree population, changes in research, work techniques and codes of practice, public opinion on the council's tree management, tree health issues and the progress of climate change. A major review of the strategy will therefore be undertaken every five years.

Part 3 – Tree management policy

The council has adopted the following policy in order to achieve the stated strategic aims and objectives included in the Tree Management Strategy.

Tree inspection

The council's tree inspection programme takes into account the criteria and procedures detailed in Section 1 – 'Actions and Policy'

The county council will target the following tree inspection frequencies:

Trees in the adopted highway

Road Hierarchy Description	Highways Inspectors – Routine Inspections	Tree Inspector – Specialist Inspections
Strategic routes (road hierarchy)	Annual basic inspections	Every three years
Main distributor roads (road hierarchy)	Annual basic inspections	Every three years
Secondary distributor roads (road hierarchy)	Annual basic inspections	Every three years
Locally important roads including residential streets (including towns and villages)	Annual basic inspections	Every three years
All other metalled roads rural roads	Annual basic inspections	Every six years
High risk trees (i.e. flagged)	Annual basic inspections	Every 18 months

Trees on schools, country parks and other council properties

Premises	Basic Inspections	Tree Officer Inspector – Specialist Inspections
Schools		
	Annual basic inspections by School Premises Officers	Every three years
High risk trees	Annual basic inspections	Every 18 months
Country parks		
Areas of high public use	Annual basic inspections by Country Park Rangers	Every three years
Areas of low public use	Annual basic inspections by Country Park Rangers	None programmed – responsive inspections only
High risk trees	Annual basic inspections	Every 18 months
Adult and young person care premises		
	No formal basic inspections – observations reported by site staff	Every three years
High risk trees	Annual basic inspections	Every 18 months
County farms		
Areas of highest risk (e.g. premises)	No formal basic inspections – observations reported by tenants	Every three years
High risk trees	Annual basic inspections	Every 18 months
Industrial properties		
Areas of highest risk (e.g. premises)	No formal basic inspections – observations reported by tenants	Every three years

Tree maintenance

The council has adopted the following tree maintenance policy which takes into account the following priority issues detailed in Section 2 – 'Actions and Policy'.

Public safety

The council will undertake all work to remove actual hazards to safeguard the public and property.

Remedial/preventative works

The council will undertake all work to:

a) remove potential hazards that may subsequently threaten public safety or property

b) prevent or minimise the effects of a tree on the structure of a property

Management of veteran trees

The council will, where public safety is not compromised, undertake all work which will:

a) conserves trees with high ecological value

b) preserves trees with significant local historical and/or aesthetic value

Young tree maintenance

The council will undertake all work which:

a) assists the establishment of young trees with significant life expectancy

b) enables new tree planting to reach its full potential

Nuisance management

i) The council will undertake remedial work where it is considered that its trees are causing an actionable nuisance to a neighbouring property.

   For example:
   Root/branch encroachment over property boundaries where damage has occurred or is likely to do so imminently.

ii) When a tree is thought to be causing a nuisance which does not require immediate remedial action, the council will consider appropriate remedial works during the next programmed detailed inspection of that tree.

   The county council will not undertake one-off, reactive inspections to deal with minor inconveniences such as:

- **shade onto a garden or property**
- **deposits of seed/leaf/fruit/blossom**
- **tree is considered 'too large'**
- **summer honeydew deposits**
- **droppings from roosting birds**
- **TV reception interference**
- **shading of solar panels**

- **contact with telephone wires**
- **pollinating insects**

The council will aim to undertake works expediently through its procurement arrangements and will execute work in accordance with the following response times relating to the priority categories detailed in paragraph 2.2.

Category 1a – an imminent danger to be completed immediately (i.e. within same day)

Category 1b – urgent works to be completed within 24-48 hours

Category 2 – high priority works to be completed within 28 days

Category 3 – routine low priority works to be completed within three months

Category 4 – routine or annually programmed works to be completed within 12 months

Standards of work

The council has adopted the following policy relating to standards of work to ensure that it achieves high standards of forestry and arboricultural maintenance.

1) The council follows the requirements of all appropriate British standards and industry codes of practice relating to tree maintenance and other works which affect trees.

2) The council has provided its own work specifications relating to forestry and arboriculture. These are revised and updated, when appropriate, to take into account the findings of current research and advances in modern arboricultural practice.

3) The council promotes good tree management practice with the general public, based on the latest research in tree biology, pathology and bio-mechanics.

Sustainability

The council will aim to achieve the following sustainability targets:

a) Woodlands

The council will adopt standards of woodland management in all its woodlands commensurate with the UK Woodland Assurance Standard (UKWAS).

b) Tree planting

i)   The council will, as a minimum standard, replace all individual, non-woodland trees which are felled on a one for one basis on all its sites.

ii) The council will seek to increase its tree population by implementing appropriate tree planting schemes on suitable sites. Such planting will include landscaping on capital schemes and woodland establishment in target areas such as the National Forest.

iii) The council will encourage private tree owners to plant new trees and provide replacements when mature trees adjacent to the highway have to be removed for safety reasons.

iv) The council will continue to support and encourage other authorities and developers to implement well planned tree planting schemes which promote sustainable tree management.

c) Long term maintenance and aftercare

The council will provide appropriate long term maintenance to new tree planting on its land holdings to ensure that these features reach their full potential in environmental terms and maximise initial investment.

d) Recycling of wood waste and utilisation of timber

The county council shall continue to explore various options relating to the utilisation of timber and the recycling of wood waste. Possible partnerships with other producers will be investigated to identify future viable markets for timber and other by-products of tree maintenance operations.

Woodland management

The county council will manage its woodlands to achieve the following management objectives:

1) Produce management plans for all main woodland areas.

2) Aim to diversify the age-class of trees within woodlands by adopting a policy of periodic thinning, harvesting and restocking which in the long term will create diverse, uneven aged tree populations.

3) Continue to carry out low key operations such as coppicing as part of long term management systems to conserve and enhance the nature conservation value of woodlands.

4) Ensure that sufficient funding is available from revenue budgets, external grants and timber sales to ensure that appropriate on-going woodland management can be undertaken on all council woodlands.

Tree related subsidence

When enquiries are made regarding the possibility of subsidence damage, the council will:

1) Respond by inspecting the site and perceived damage, liaising directly with the property owner or their specialist representatives and when appropriate, arranging for work to be carried out.

2) Deal with all subsidence related insurance claims through its own insurance section in accordance with the requirements of the Civil Procedure Rules and associated Pre-Action Protocols.

3) Consider subsidence related insurance claims only when sufficient evidence has been provided to accurately assess the legitimacy of the case.

Response to emergencies

1) The council will provide a call out procedure to deal with tree related highway emergencies which will involve a tree surgery response team, available during periods when high winds are predicted. The response team will be located to ensure that they can deal with any tree-related emergency in Leicestershire within two hours.

2) Enquiries will be prioritised to ensure that high priority situations are dealt with immediately and lower priority situations are dealt with during daylight when working conditions are safer.

3) Follow-up inspections will be undertaken by a forestry officer in emergency situations involving personal injury, damage to property or where only part of a tree has failed and the remaining part requires a safety assessment.

Appendices

Appendix A - References

1) **Government Forestry and Woodlands Statement -**
A Green Future: Our 25 year plan to improve the Environment
www.gov.uk/government/publications/25-year-environment-plan

2) **Urban Tree Manual - The Environment Secretary and Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affair**s
www.forestresearch.gov.uk/tools-and-resources/urban-tree-manual/

3) **2013 Forestry Policy Statement - Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs**
www.gov.uk/government/publications/government-forestry-policy-statement

4) **2008 - Trees in Towns II**
https://committeeadmin.lancaster.gov.uk/documents/s21579/Appx2_TreesInTowns.pdf

5) **2017 - Charter for Trees**
https://treecharter.uk/

6) **UK Roads Liaison Group - 'Well-managed Highway Infrastructure'**
www.ukroadsliaisongroup.org/en/codes/

7) **NTSG – Common Sense Risk Management of Trees**
www.forestry.gov.uk/pdf/FCMS024.pdf/$FILE/FCMS024.pdf

8) **Space for Wildlife - Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland Bio-diversity Action Plan (amended 2016)**
www.leicestershire.gov.uk/sites/default/files/field/pdf/2017/1/25/LLR_BAP_Space_for_Wildlife_2016-26

9) **Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland Landscape and Woodland Strategy**

10) **Leicestershire Environment Strategy 2018 - 2030: delivering a better future**
www.leicestershire.gov.uk/sites/default/files/field/pdf/2018/7/19/LCC-Environment-Strategy-2018-2030-June-18.pdf

11) **Leicestershire County Council's Ash Die-back Action Plan**

12) **Forestry Commission (England) Biosecurity guidance - August 2012**
www.forestry.gov.uk/pdf/FC_Biosecurity_Guidance.pdf/$FILE/FC_Biosecurity_Guidance.pdf

13) **Arboricultural Association Guidance Note 2 - Application of Biosecurity in Arboriculture**
www.trees.org.uk/Book-Shop/Products/Application-of-Biosecurity-in-Arboriculture-en

Appendix B - Useful contacts

If you have an enquiry relating to trees, please contact the appropriate section of the County Council as detailed below:

Management of trees on highways, schools and other County Council sites

Forestry and Arboricultural Group
Operational Property Services
Corporate Resources Department

Tel: 0116 305 5000
Email: LTSServiceDesk@leics.gov.uk

The Forestry Group in the Corporate Resources Department are responsible for tree management planning, inspection, specification and supervision of works and the provision of technical advice to all LCC Departments, external authorities and the general public

Forestry/arboricultural contracting services

Forestry Section
Leicestershire Operational Highways
Environment and Transport

Tel: 0116 305 7300

The Forestry Contracting Unit in the Environmental and Transport Department are responsible for providing arboricultural contracting services on the highway network

Management of county tree preservation orders and landscape design/management

Environmental Management Group

TPOs : - Tel: 0116 305 0001

The Environmental Management Group are responsible for managing and advising on tree preservation orders, landscape design and management, and the provision of technical advice on all landscape matters.

Document management

The tree management strategy will be reviewed at a maximum frequency of 5 years. Additional reviews may be undertaken to take account of changing circumstances or changes in national policy.
For example, the progress of Ash die back and/or the publication of national tree strategy guidelines may necessitate a revision of the County Council's tree management policy and procedures.

Author	Team	Department	Date Created	Approved by	Target Review Date
Nick Fell	Forestry Group	Corporate Resources	Mar-20		Mar-25

Actual Review Date	Version	Key Amendments	Reviewer	Approved by	Next Review Date

"The big tree is nature's forest masterpiece...
...the greatest of living things"
John Muir