

OGB 1

Tree safety management

A guide for FC staff

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- We will not provide support for anyone else using them.
- Anyone outside the FC uses them at their own risk.
- The guidance in the booklets is specific to FC operations.
- Our booklets refer to other internal guidance which is designed solely for FC use.
- We revise our booklets regularly. Please make sure you have the latest version.

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1. Foreword

This Guidance Booklet is one of a series covering various subjects in the Forestry Commission (FC). We have written this one entitled, 'Tree Safety Management' to help you:

- improve your awareness of tree safety issues and help you proactively manage this subject to reduce the hazard and cost;
- implement a system which will make sure we reduce risk by targeting our resources;
- undertake inspections, where risk is greatest; and
- act to reduce the risk of injury or damage.

The management of the safety of trees is an integral part our undertaking as landowners and occupiers, and under our duty of care which is part of health and safety law. However, we must also continue to recognise the wider social value and benefit that trees and woodlands provide. The objective of this guidance is therefore to promote a responsible attitude to managing the risk our trees present. It is **NOT** to promote unnecessary felling and pruning of our trees, or to restrict or reduce the experience visitors to our estate enjoy.

We have designed the booklet to be:

- a reference work;
- a supporting and instructional document; and
- the basis for follow-up support visits and audits.

We hope you find it useful. You may also find:



Mandatory elements. These are auditable actions necessary to meet legal requirements or to deliver or report on corporate policy.



Timebound mandatory elements. As above, but to a deadline.



Recommendations. These are auditable actions that you should practise for efficiency and effectiveness. Any variation must be defined and authorised by unit managers.



Cautions against certain actions, or things to avoid.

Examples, Best Practice and Important Reader Information are shown in light blue boxes like this.

If you have any comments on this booklet, its procedures, or any new ways of presenting this subject please contact the Operational Support Unit in Silvan House.

We will post updates on the Operational Support Intranet site in the Operational Guidance folder and inform you with a linked e-mail.

1.1 Moving around in this booklet

We have designed this document for you to read on screen using Adobe Acrobat Reader. You will find a guide on how to use the various versions of Reader if you click [this link](#).

2. What’s mandatory and recommended in OGB 1?






2.1 What’s mandatory?

Here we summarise for you the mandatory and recommended elements that are in this booklet, with the relevant section for you to refer to.


Each mandatory element is mapped to the [UK Forest Standard](#) (UKFS) with the reference and a category for compliance with Section 5 of the standard. Our legend is:

1. **Legal (L)** as in UKFS/Guidelines.
2. **Best Practice (BP)** as in UKFS/Guidelines.
3. **FC Policy (P.)**
4. **Internal Business Process (IBP)**.



The UKFS uses the following legends which we have used here.

	General Forestry Practice		Forests and Landscape
	Forests and Biodiversity		Forests and People
	Forests and Climate Change		Forests and Soil
	Forests and Historic Environment		Forests and Water

2.2 What’s timebound and mandatory?

No.	 Requirement	OGB Section	UKFS Ref	OGB Section
1.	<p>UZ 1 – inspect each year. You may be able to reduce this frequency where for example young crops present no risk (<10 years old). You must support this frequency with a note on your tree safety file.</p> <p>UZ 2 – inspect at least 5-yearly, again this could be extended, but your decision needs to be supported.</p> <p>UZ 3 – Although no formal inspection is required, you should record any remedial tree work on your safety file.</p>	5.2.1		IBP

2.3 What's mandatory?

No.	🔑 Requirement	OGB Section	UKFS Ref	OGB Section
1.	Each forest district will need to have in place a formal Risk Assessment for Tree Safety as detailed in the Supporting Documents (Section 9).	5.2.1	 11 & 5	L
2.	Using this pattern, managers will zone their units into three Usage Zones.	6.1.1		IBP
3.	Unit managers must use the following methods to decide on their inspection frequency.	6.2.2		IBP
4.	In those areas requiring infrequent or no formal inspection you will need to have a general fault recording system to deal with tree safety issues that arise through normal estate management.	6.2		P
5.	Staff carrying out formal inspections must recognise the limits of their knowledge and should engage appropriately trained and skilled arboricultural consultants or contractors to complete detailed inspections on high value trees presenting a risk. Units must confirm, through land agents, the status of trees within leasehold agreements. It is usual for FC to have retained the commercial interest in the trees and we therefore assume responsibility for tree safety.	6.2.7		P
6.	All units must keep the following records: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • a tree inspection file see Section 9; • a record of inspections, required actions and timescales see Section 9; • a record of completed remedial actions – all work completed must be signed off and dated, this shows our commitment to safety and good contract management; • a resumption system for required actions; and • a record should be kept of reported faults, remedial actions and resumptions that occur outside the inspection process, such as reports from the public, neighbours and staff, this will allow us to show a responsible attitude towards tree safety more generally – an example of best practice is included in Section 9. 	7.2	 5	BP
7.	Learning and Development (L & D) include in their prospectus a course to cover the principles and delivery of tree safety management. This course offers a cost option to provide a nationally recognised qualification through LANTRA Awards Certification and all unit managers must make sure that any staff involved in tree safety attend this course.	8		P

2.4 What's recommended?

Here we summarise for you all the recommendations that are in this booklet, again with the relevant section for you to refer to.

No.	Recommendation	Reference
1.	We recommend that units hold annual meetings with Highways Authorities to discuss the exchange of inspection information, work programmes, road closures, and if possible, to establish boundaries of responsibility. They should also use this opportunity to discuss the control of vegetation around FC car park entrances and exits. Remember that if you are checking the entrance or exit to car parks, you must do this from driver height.	Section 7.1.1
2.	We recommend that units retain arboricultural contractors by letting framework contracts – see OGB 3a Buying goods, works and services (Scotland) and OGB 3aa Buying goods, works and services (England) – allowing urgent work to be completed under a formal agreement. Experience shows us that the loyalty that can develop from this arrangement will help us respond in an emergency.	Section 7.3
3.	We recommend you use this list of questions for all potential contractors.	Section 7.3.2

3. Background

We took forward the Tree Safety Project to encompass the whole subject of Tree Safety Management on FC managed land. We prepared a policy in 2003 in consultation with:

- forest districts (FD) who have locally developed systems;
- Estate Management Division; and
- Safety, Health and Environment Officers and lawyers to discuss the legal aspects of tree safety.

In particular we used the Forestry Commission – Practice Guide, *'Hazards from Trees'* (David Lonsdale).

We have now (2013) updated this policy to make sure it continues to deliver a system of management that meets current best practice and remains both practical and can be delivered in the field. The guidance has been amended to more closely reflect the National Tree Safety Group (NTSG) publication [Common Sense Risk Management of Trees](#). It also continues to have the overriding objective of controlling the risk to people who work with trees or who may be close to them.

The term 'Tree Safety' that we use in this booklet relates to the management of hazards arising from trees on the whole FC estate. This includes trees next to:

- highways;
- railways;
- properties;
- formal recreation facilities; and
- the wider forest including land we lease to others, where we keep an interest in managing the trees.

Please remember to take this guidance in the context of very few accidents related to tree safety that occur on an estate with over 50 million visitors each year and the many millions of vehicles which pass by our estate every day.

However, there is a risk of tree failure and we must have systems in place, from a moral and legal perspective, to make sure that risk is controlled as far as is reasonably practicable.

The NTSG in their publication stress an approach that is in proportion to the risks presented and we should remember that **where there is no target there is no risk**.

The NTSG believes that one fundamental concept should underlie the management of risks from trees. It is that the evaluation of what is reasonable should be based upon a balance between benefit and risk. This evaluation can be undertaken only in a local context, since trees provide many different types of benefit in a range of different circumstances.

The NTSG position is underpinned by a set of five key principles:

1. trees provide a wide variety of benefits to society;
2. trees are living organisms that naturally lose branches or fall;
3. the overall risk to human safety is extremely low;
4. tree owners have a legal duty of care; and
5. tree owners should take a balanced and proportionate approach to tree safety management.

4. Legislation

4.1 Occupiers liability

The Forestry Commission is, in law, the occupier of the forest it manages.

In England and Wales, responsibilities are set out in the Occupiers' Liability Act of 1957 and 1984. The 1957 Act deals with liability relating to visitors who enter our land or premises either by invitation or by permission. The 1984 Act deals with liability relating to others, including trespassers. In Scotland, the Occupiers' Liability (Scotland) Act 1960 makes no distinction between different categories of visitor, so that the occupier has an equal duty of care towards all of them.

Where a tree is hazardous because of decay or structural weakness and shows external signs of this, the occupier of the land on which it stands is normally responsible for any personal injury or other damage it causes by breaking or falling. This liability arises from the common duty of care that the occupier owes to those people who enter their land or are near it.

The dedication of land under the CRow Act in England and Wales has had no impact on our policies as trees are regarded as natural features, so there is no additional duty of care on us.

The law of ownership on highway and boundary trees is complex and where there is doubt about ownership, you must ask your land agent for advice. Work with and foster good working relationships with your Highways Authorities and other partners, doing this will help you resolve questions about ownership.

Occupiers should therefore make regular inspections of trees that, due to their type and position, could put people or property at risk. It is reasonable to obtain specialist advice on interpreting symptoms and assessing tree safety, and to take reasonable steps to reduce risk where needed. If you seek specialist advice, you must follow it. If you do not, it might be seen as negligence if anything were to go wrong later.

4.2 Health and safety

The Health and Safety at Work Act 1974 (HASAWA) is the primary piece of health and safety legislation. The HASAWA places a duty on employers (including us in the Forestry Commission) to operate ('our undertaking') in such a way to make sure, so far as is reasonably practicable, that even those not in our employment, such as the public, are not exposed to risks to their health and safety.

The Forestry Commission 'undertaking' includes growing trees and encouraging recreation through providing facilities and so the Forestry Commission has a duty to protect people from hazardous trees so far as is reasonably practicable.

Additionally, the Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations state, 'That every employer shall make a suitable and sufficient assessment of:

- *the risks to the health and safety of their employees to which they are exposed whilst they are at work; and;*
- *the risks to the health and safety of persons not in their employment arising out of, or in connection with, the conduct by them of their undertaking'.*

4.3 Environmental factors

4.3.1 The Wildlife and Countryside act 1981

The act gives protection to native species (especially those at threat), controls the release of non-native species, enhances the protection of SSSIs and builds upon the rights of way rules in the National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act 1949. The Act is split into four parts covering 74 sections, it also includes 17 schedules.

When considering issues relating to tree safety, particularly remedial works, managers must ensure that the terms of the W & C Act and the regulations it enables are not compromised. Of particular note is the Conservation (Natural Habitats, &c.) Regulations 1994 that cover the main European protected species (EPS) which may be affected by forest operations. These are:

- all 17 species of bat;
- dormouse;
- wildcat;
- otter;
- sand lizard; and
- great crested newt.

Please refer to your specific country guidance for more information on EPS, particularly if you are planning remedial work on trees.

- [England](#); and
- [Scotland](#);

Additionally, you may need to look at the regulations – [European Protected Species Regulations](#).

5. Our tree safety management policy

Unit managers have responsibility for the land that they manage. Much of that land is either:

- directly accessible to the public under land reform legislation (Scottish Outdoor Access Code) in Scotland; or
- by permission; or
- CRoW dedication in England and Wales; or
- adjacent to public highways, other public rights-of-way (PROWs) and neighbouring properties.

Our woodland sites are increasingly being managed for social and environmental benefits with expanding responsibility for land and trees in urban and semi-urban areas. While trees, if suffering from certain mechanical defects, represent a hazard in areas where there are people and property. It is therefore important for managers to be aware of tree-related hazards and the level of risk.

This FC policy shows unit managers their responsibilities for:

- assessing the risk of hazards from trees leading to the identification of 'usage zones';
- determining what inspection level and frequency, if any, is required; and
- making sure any necessary remedial works are carried out to manage the risk.

The NTSG describe this approach as being 'defendable, rather than defensive'.

5.1 Preventative management

To make this work, we have to make our staff more aware of their tree safety responsibilities and what is involved in carrying these out. We must make sure that not only do we stay vigilant, but through planning processes, such as Forest Design Plans (FDP) and Operational Assessments, we take the opportunity to make sure our woodlands develop without compromising safety and still achieving our wider objectives.

5.2 Tree safety management

Tree safety management is taking reasonable steps to identify trees that represent a significant risk to people or property and dealing with them accordingly. You should do this in a way that minimises the loss of any wider benefits to people or wildlife.

We can list the objectives for tree safety as:

- to control risks to people who work with trees or who may be close to them;
- to avoid the unnecessary removal, or disfigurement, of amenity trees, or of trees with high wildlife value; and
- to conserve the habitats that trees provide, including those that are old and decaying.

Accepted industry practice in balancing these objectives is through risk assessment. In tree safety, risk assessment is now well established. The system we describe here follows best practice.

5.2.1 Risk assessment

These are critical questions that you need to answer when deciding whether to inspect trees and whether remedial action is needed.

- Can you reasonably foresee a problem?
- What is the likelihood of it happening?
- What will happen if it does?
- Is it reasonable to protect against it?
- What are the implications of remedial action – are other benefits compromised?

No tree is entirely safe, given that even a mechanically 'perfect' specimen could be damaged or uprooted by an exceptionally strong wind. It is therefore usually accepted that hazards are only recognisable from distinct defects or other failure-prone characteristics of the tree or site.

You can assess the level of risk by considering the following.

- Who or what could be harmed or damaged, such as, the public, neighbours, workers, vehicles and buildings. This will determine the **Usage Zones** (Section 6.1.1).
- The hazard severity – the worst likely outcome:
 - multiple fatal injuries;
 - fatal injuries;
 - major injuries;
 - minor injuries; and
 - building or vehicle damage. (See also Section 4.2 Health and Safety).
- The likelihood of it happening assuming that there are no controls in place. This should take into account the probability of failure, based on the type, position and severity of the defect, the species or cultivar of the tree and the nature of the site.

Key Each Forest District will need to have in place a formal Risk Assessment (RA) for Tree Safety as detailed in Supporting Documents (Section 9).

The basis of FC Tree Safety Management will be the Risk Assessment. This RA will detail the requirements on units to categorise the estate into Usage Zones (UZ).

Key UZ 1 –inspect each year. You may be able to reduce this frequency where for example young crops present no risk (<10 years old). You must support this frequency with a note on your tree safety file.

Key UZ 2 – inspect at least 5-yearly, again this could be extended, but your decision needs to be supported.

- UZ 3 – no formal inspection required, however unrecorded informal observations may take place as part of normal operations. Remedial tree work carried out should be recorded.

6. Control measures

Our control measures to reduce the risk from hazardous trees will be regular inspections of trees. We will inspect trees that, because of their position and type, could place people or property at risk.

You will need to make three decisions.

1. Do I need to inspect these trees?
2. How frequently and at what level do I need to inspect these trees?
3. Are remedial actions balanced and in proportion to the risk identified?

6.1 Deciding which trees to inspect

You will need to inspect a tree or group of trees depending on the use of the area they are in. You will inspect areas where **people, vehicles or other properties are continuously or frequently close to potentially hazardous trees.**

6.1.1 Usage Zones

To deliver a systematic and practical approach to tree safety management, taking into account the substantial numbers of trees involved, we will expect managers to zone their estate using the criteria of how near are the trees to people, vehicles and property. This will allow you to set priorities and to target inspections to where there is a practical risk.

For example, there might be a large block of planted woodland containing the following features:

- a public road;
- several forest rides and footpaths regularly used by the public;
- an amenity site with car park, visitor centre and campsite; and
- a boundary adjoining private property such as a housing estate.

You could zone this block as follows:

Usage Zone 1

This zone would reflect a need for frequent inspections and would include the areas that are within falling distance of a busy road. You cannot base this decision on standard road classification as many unclassified or 'B' roads may be locally busy. Consider the volume of traffic on the road particularly at peak times. This same category of zone would also work for the rail network, housing estates, the amenity and car parking areas where people or property are close to trees for much or all of the time. You may need to formally bring trees into your current recreation facility inspection procedure – see [Section 6](#) of OGB 42 – [Managing recreation](#). If you adopt this approach you must make sure that your recreation staff are trained and have full support and advice to enable them to make competent judgements.


Usage Zone 2

Areas which are within falling distance of lightly used public roads could be classed as UZ 2. Regularly used tracks and footpaths could also fall into this zone. Depending on the use and

hazard it may be enough to inspect these zones and follow up with remedial action where needed, at infrequent intervals.

Usage Zone 3

These areas would include the parts of our estate away from known access routes. We think it is reasonable not to carry out formal inspection of the trees in these areas.

 Using this pattern, managers will zone their units into three Usage Zones.

Usage zone	Level of public usage	Site examples*
1	High	Areas within falling distance of busy and moderately used public roads, railways, neighbouring properties, amenity areas and car-parks. Well used way-marked trails and PROWs.
2	Medium	Areas within falling distance of other lightly used public roads, way-marked trails, PROWs and tracks, paths and desire lines.
3	Low	Away from known access routes.

* See *Supporting Documents (Section 9)*.

6.2 Deciding how frequently and at what level to inspect.

The usage zone is based on the likelihood of people, vehicles or other valued property being injured or damaged when a tree fails. To determine a reasonable frequency and level of inspection, bearing in mind the level of public usage as determined by the Usage Zone, you will have to consider two questions.

- How likely is the failure?
- And how severe will it be if it does fail?

A competent person needs to visit a site to decide on the severity of a hazard and the probability of failure. It is based on factors such as:

- species;
- age;
- size;
- history; and
- exposure.

Remember that you will need to do routine inspections in areas where people or property could be at risk from tree failure frequently enough to detect any hazards that may have recently developed. Hazards from older trees develop rapidly and you will need to inspect them at least each year or more on high usage sites. You should also make inspections as soon as is practicable following severe weather that might have caused damage to trees. You may need to take specialist arboricultural advice on how often to inspect specific trees where you note a progressive deterioration.

In the FC we will use a visual assessment to decide on the hazard severity and potential for failure a tree or stand.

The NTSG give some helpful guidance on appropriate levels of tree inspection.

6.2.1 Informal observations

Informal observations of trees contribute to wider management and tree safety. In some circumstances, informal observation may be reasonable and appropriate. People with good local knowledge who are familiar with local trees and their surroundings are generally aware of them, including potentially dangerous situations that may arise from them. Given the general extremely low risk posed by trees, public safety can be addressed as part of the property's wider management.

Choosing to manage the risk by informal observation is not a reason to do nothing. The decision to rely on informal observations must sit within a management framework that acknowledges, responds to, and acts upon, any defects reported by informal observers.

Typically, where owners rely on informal observation, they look at their trees in relation to their health and structural condition, and act upon anything that poses unacceptable risks. Similarly, staff responsible for managing or maintaining the property, do not go out of their way to assess the trees. They are instructed to be aware of the trees' health and condition as part of their other daily tasks and to identify structural weakness or actual failure that poses an imminent threat to public safety which would be very apparent to a non-expert.

Reports of tree-related safety problems arising from informal observations by staff or the public should be acted upon. Initially, this may take the form of a formal inspection by a competent member of staff or an external inspector. This may then result in no further action being required, or in tree surgery, felling or implementing measures to manage the area within falling distance of the tree.

6.2.2 Formal Inspections

In a formal inspection, someone visits the tree with the specific purpose of making an inspection that is not incidental to other activities. The spectrum of formal inspection ranges from survey work for tree inventories, to health and condition assessments. These may be carried out through 'drive-by' and 'walk-over' inspections or ground-based visual checks. Drive-by and walk-over inspections are accepted types of reasonable risk assessment under certain circumstances. **Do not rely on drive-by inspections in busy urban areas.** Initial drive-by inspections can, when appropriate, help you decide where tree management, walk-over or detailed inspection might be necessary. Walk-over inspections may not identify hidden features, such as fungal fruiting bodies tucked in the tree's roots.

Simple formal inspection, through ground level visual checks during walk-over surveys, provides a useful, cost-effective means of identifying clear and present signs of immediate instability (uprooting or other structural failure). This is an important means of identifying when pressing action is needed, including further specialist inspection.

6.2.3 Detailed Inspections

Given that most trees present an extremely low risk, it is unreasonable to expect that every tree in a given area should receive a detailed inspection; to do so would be grossly disproportionate to the benefit gained in reducing the risk. The need for detailed inspection typically applies only to

individual, high-value trees which have been identified from informal observation or formal inspection, as giving high-priority concern in well-used zones. The detailed inspection is normally prioritised according to the level of safety concern. It usually entails an initial ground-level, visual assessment by a competent specialist looking at the outside of the tree for signs of structural failure. In a few special cases, further detailed investigations may be required, involving one or more of the following:

- soil and root condition assessments;
- aerial inspections of upper trunk and crown; or
- other procedures to evaluate the nature of suspected decay and defects, including using specialist diagnostic tools.

Detailed inspections are therefore unusual, typically reserved for trees valued for their heritage, amenity or habitat, and which you suspect of posing a high level of risk, as already identified through owner-interest or a previous formal or informal assessment.

6.2.4 Who can carry out tree inspections?

Who can make informal observations?

People with good local knowledge, who are familiar with local trees are suited to carrying out informal observations. Typically, this does not require a tree specialist, but rather those closely associated with a property, such as the owner, gardener, other employee or agent, who understands the way the property is used (areas most and least frequented) and the extent of the danger, should they find a tree that is falling apart or uprooting. Reports of problems by staff or the public are a fundamental part of informal observations and you should act on them.

Who can make a formal inspection?

Formal inspections do not necessarily require specific qualifications but do require general tree knowledge, and the ability to recognise normal and abnormal appearance and growth for the area. Inspectors need the capacity to assess approximate tree height and falling distance from the tree to the area of use and when to ask for a detailed inspection. They also need to be able to recognise obviously visible signs of serious ill-health or significant structural problems, such as substantial fractured branches or a rocking root plate which, were they to cause tree failure, could result in serious harm.

Who can do a detailed inspection?

Detailed inspections require an appropriately competent person, experienced in this. Whoever is commissioning the detailed inspection should satisfy themselves that the inspector has suitable qualifications, experience and professional indemnity and public liability insurance.

A specialist involved in conducting a detailed tree inspection should be able to demonstrate the reasonable basis for allocating risks according to priority, and identify cost-effective ways of managing those tree-related risks.

🔑 Unit managers must use the following methods to decide on their inspection frequency.

6.2.5 Usage Zone 1

We can assume that trees within Usage Zone 1 will be inspected at least each year or in line with more frequent recreation facility inspections, there may also be informal observations as part of normal management. However, where trees due to their species, age and site pose no practical risk, then you can reduce the inspection frequency to a level based on a visit to the site, recording your reasoning on the risk assessment to support your decision.

6.2.6 Usage Zone 2

Trees within Usage Zone 2 should be formally inspected at least every five years and there may be informal observations as part of normal management. If you wish to extend this frequency, then you will need to support your decision and record it on your risk assessment.

6.2.7 Usage Zone 3

No formal inspection is required although there may be informal observations.

- 🔑 **In those areas requiring infrequent or no formal inspection you will need to have a general fault recording system to deal with tree safety issues that rise through normal estate management.**

After severe weather, complete an inspection as soon as you can, setting priorities according to the Usage Zone.

- 🔑 **Staff carrying out formal inspections must recognise the limits of their knowledge and should engage appropriately trained and skilled arboricultural consultants or contractors to complete detailed Inspections on high value trees presenting a risk.**
- 🔑 **Units must confirm through land agents the status of trees within leasehold agreements. It is usual for FC to have retained the commercial interest in the trees and we therefore assume responsibility for tree safety.**

7. Implementation

We have now decided which trees to inspect and how often. In this next section we look at carrying out these inspections, doing the remedial work, and how to record what we have done.

7.1 Method of inspection

Initially, it is enough to look for external signs that may show that there is a hazard. If there is no significant hazard, you won't need to do anything more. If there is evidence of a hazard, you will need to investigate further. We suggest you use a specialist where:

- the tree is high value, such as for amenity or wildlife, and you believe that it cannot be made safe without significantly reducing its value;
- where the symptoms are not conclusive, or the tree has particular environmental or aesthetic value;
- where there are no signs of decay, but where adjacent trees have failed there may be internal structural weakness; and
- where investigation of the signs and hazard assessment may well require specialist knowledge and experience.

Where you seek expert advice, follow it!

For formal inspection we think it reasonable to view trees from the ground. Do not use tree climbing techniques for this formal inspection.

Training for all unit staff involved in tree inspections is available through [Learning & Development \(L&D\)](#). Inspectors must be trained and hold LANTRA Basic Tree Survey and Inspection certificates.

If the inspector cannot properly identify significant features from the ground then you must bring in a specialist arboriculturalist. This is particularly important where the risk is high or the tree is valuable. Managers should consider training one or two members of their team to a higher level to allow them to act as internal consultants. This will reduce the need to use specialist arboricultural consultants, and will give us a higher level of expertise.

You can also have point inspections where an individual tree or group of trees presents a hazard greater than the Usage Zone as a whole. This allows you to restrict the level of frequency to that point.

We suggest that basic inspections will be carried out with other inspections, like recreational facility checks and Operational Assessments. Where recreation facility inspections are carried out more than once a year, you should focus one of your inspections each year on tree safety issues.

Units must have a risk assessment for people carrying out tree inspections. A site-specific risk assessment should be done for roadside tree inspections – see Section 9.

7.1.1 Partnerships

Many of our greatest concerns about tree safety are linked to public highways, including PROWs. County Council Highways Departments and Transport Scotland have a responsibility to inspect roads and rights of way and the vegetation on them. Although their focus will be different to ours there may be some duplication. There are advantages to both parties in entering a partnership to exchange information and have clear responsibilities.



We recommend that units hold annual meetings with Highways Authorities to discuss the exchange of inspection information, work programmes, road closures and if possible to establish boundaries of responsibility. They should also use this opportunity to discuss the control of vegetation around FC car park entrances and exits. Remember that if you are checking the entrance or exit to car parks, you must do this from driver height.

This may not be easy as although County Highways effectively own part of the verge, this is not uniformly applied and could create confusion. An example to help simplify the question of ownership is in the Forest of Dean. The unit manager has agreed with Gloucestershire County Highways that their responsibility covers any vegetation within two metres of the road surface. This may work elsewhere.

7.2 Recording

We do not want this guide to be too prescriptive as each unit has its own systems, this is particularly relevant to recording.



All units must keep the following records:

- a tree inspection file see Section 9;
- a record of inspections, required actions and timescales see Section 9;
- a record of completed remedial actions;
- all work completed must be signed off and dated, this shows our commitment to safety and good contract management;
- a resumption system for required actions; and
- a record of all reported faults, remedial actions and resumptions that occur outside the inspection process such as reports from the public, neighbours and staff, this will allow us to demonstrate a responsible attitude towards tree safety more generally – an example of best practice is included in Section 9

There is great benefit in using GIS for mapping zones and recording information and attributes within each zone, see Section 9;

Only keep records at Zone level rather than for a stand or individual tree, although there is some merit in filing records at forest design plan level.

7.3 Remedial Action

To make our remedial action cost-effective we should aim as often as we can to use ongoing forest operations, such as thinning and clearfelling. One way of achieving this is to put timescales to any identified works. A simple solution would be to identify works either as:

- **immediate** (as soon as practical);
- **within a contract period**, such as **three months**; or
- to be **integrated** into future work programmes.

Unless trees are of particular value to our wider objectives, we expect that the vast majority of remedial works would be through felling.

If the tree can be made safe by felling or limbing work done from the ground then we expect that a unit's direct or contract resources could do the work. There will be specific training requirements and you will need a separate risk assessment if you are using a high pruning saw or a powered high pruner. When more advanced tree surgery techniques, involving tree climbing, are required, you should use specialist arboricultural contractors.



We recommend that units retain arboricultural contractors by letting framework contracts – see OGB 3a [Buying goods, works and services](#) (Scotland) and OGB 3aa [Buying goods, works and services](#) (England) – allowing urgent work to be completed under a formal agreement. Experience shows us that the loyalty that can develop from this arrangement will help us respond in an emergency.

Additionally, you may need to apply for a licence for work for certain species – see Section 9.

7.3.1 Engaging arboricultural contractors

Contracts should be managed using Operational Guidance Booklet No.3c – [Contracts and contract management](#). When drawing up work schedules for arboricultural work we would remind managers that the safety guidance and safe operational techniques may not be consistent with traditional 'on-ground working'. Please consult the relevant [FISA](#) guides and the latest Code of Practice from the Arboriculture Association – [Tree Work at Height](#). The arboriculture industry also uses terminology with which we may not be familiar; this may make the description of work difficult and may compromise value for money.

Making sure the contractors you select are competent is essential and you should aim to use Arboricultural Association approved contractors as these will have been checked regularly for compliance with recognised standards. You may not always be able to do this, so we have included a list of questions in Section 7.3.2 that will help you decide on a contractor's competence. These questions were prepared for an HSE seminar by Liam McKeown of Treevolution.

7.3.2 Some questions to ask a potential contractor



We recommend you use this list of questions for all potential contractors.

1. Health and Safety at Work Act (HASAWA)

Q: Does the contractor have a health and safety policy?

Q: What arrangements does the contractor have for managing health and safety?

2. Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations (MHSWR)

Q: Does the contractor carry out risk assessments and if so are they recorded?

Q: Can the contractor provide sample generic and site-specific risk assessments?

Q: What system of work is the contractor planning, for example mobile elevated work platforms (MEWP) or roped access?

Q: How does the contractor propose to protect property and people?

3. Provision and Use of Work Equipment Regulations (PUWER)

Q: Do the contractor's staff hold relevant certificates of competence, examples are, chainsaw use, tree climbing and aerial rescue, stump grinders, chippers and MEWPs?

4. Lifting Operations and Lifting Equipment Regulations (LOLER)

Q: Does the contractor have written records of 'thorough examination of arboricultural equipment'?

5. Personal Protective Equipment Regulations (PPE Regs)

Q: Do the contractor's staff use the correct PPE, such as when using chainsaws and when tree climbing?

6. Codes of Practice

Q: What codes of practice will the contractor be working to, examples are, [FISA](#) safety guides and *A Guide to Good Climbing Practice*?

7. Insurance

Q: Does the contractor hold:

- public liability insurance?
- professional indemnity insurance? and
- employers liability insurance?

8. Tree Care Organisations

Q: Is the contractor aware of UK tree care organisations, such as the Arboricultural Association, International Society of Arboriculture, Forestry Contractors Association and if so, is the contractor a member of any of these?

9. Arboricultural Association Approved Contractor

Q: Is the contractor an Arboricultural Association **Approved Contractor**?

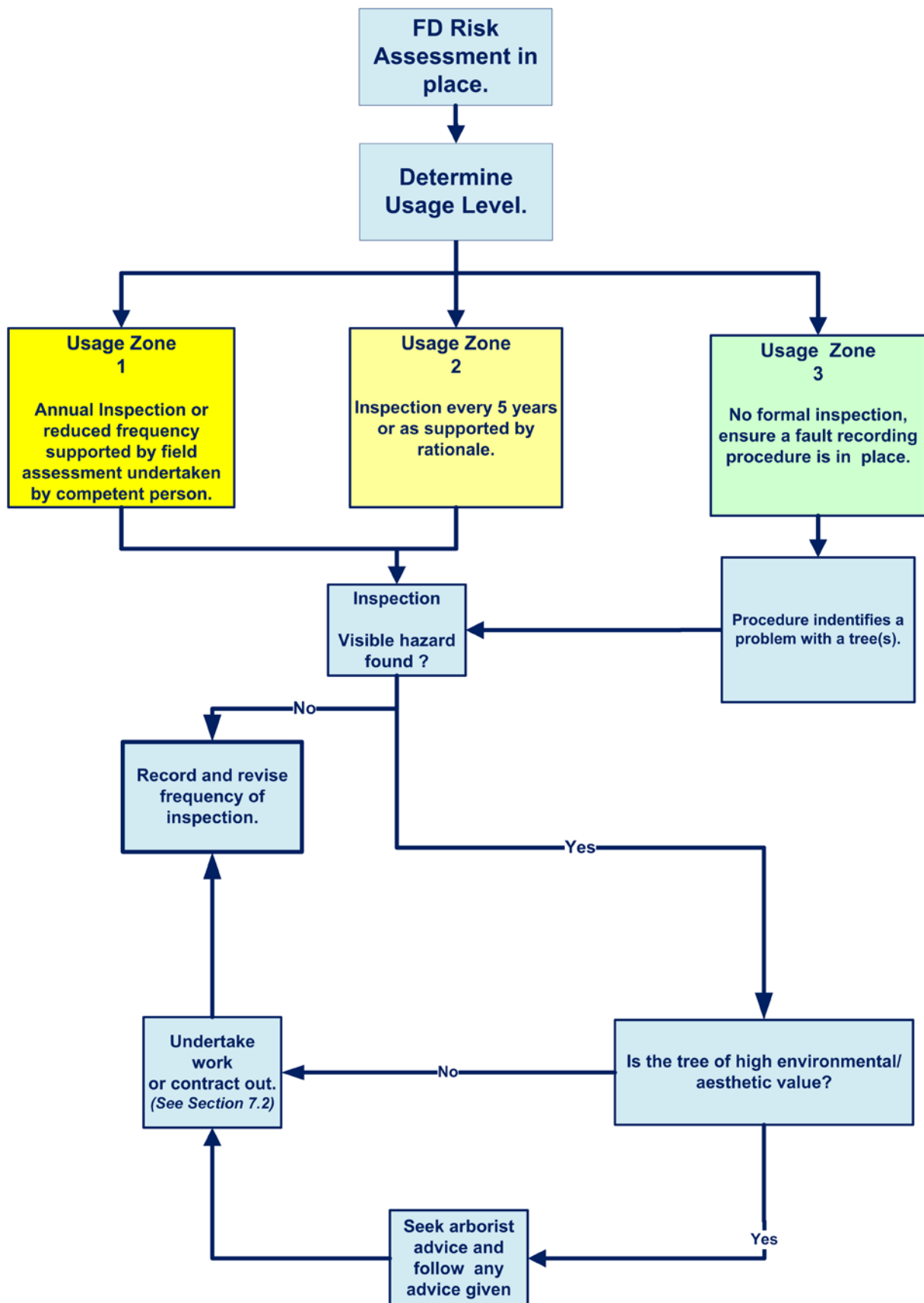
You may need additional training for managers in the supervision and management of this type of operation – see Section 8.

7.4 Decision Support System

To support you we have provided a Decision Chart which may help you to decide on the necessary actions for your situation. See Figure 7-1.

Figure 7-1 – Tree safety decision chart

Tree Safety Decision Chart



8. Training

It is possible to recognise signs of weakness without in-depth training. However, it is important to make sure that staff can recognise signs of possible weakness and initiate remedial works as needed.

- 🔑 Learning and Development (L & D) include in their prospectus a course to cover the principles and delivery of tree safety management. This course offers a cost option to provide a nationally recognised qualification through LANTRA Awards Certification and all unit managers must make sure that any staff involved in tree safety attend this course**

No staff should undertake any responsibilities for tree safety management before attending this course or one which we have verified as achieving the same, or a higher, standard. Some work will require the use of specialist (arboricultural) contractors and managers will need additional training in the supervision and management of this type of operation. Currently L & D can arrange for arboricultural training consultants to provide, a seminar entitled, 'Engaging Arboricultural Contractors' or tailored events to suit your specific needs, if you think this will be useful, please contact Learning and Development.

9. Supporting documents

We have placed a series of documents on our intranet site that will help you in this work.

The table below lists them for you and gives you a link to follow to each.

1. [Job risk assessment](#)
2. [Hazardous tree inspection risk assessment](#)
3. [Hazardous tree operations risk assessment](#)
4. [Example risk assessment](#)
5. [Tree or area inspection form](#)
6. [Annual inspection record sheet](#)
7. [Guide for determining tree safety zones](#)
8. [Sources of advice](#)
9. [Tree hazards: recognition and recommendations](#)
10. [Traffic management – example guide](#)
11. [Safety at Street Works and Road Works Handbook](#)
12. [Checklist](#)
13. [Traffic Signs Manual – Chapter 8](#)