

<b>Report on</b>	Tree Risk Management Plan
<b>Date of Meeting</b>	8th October 2024
<b>Reporting Officer</b>	Mark McAdoo, Assistant Director: Environmental Services
<b>Contact Officer</b>	David Richardson, Neighbourhood Operations Development Manager

<b>Is this report restricted for confidential business?</b>  If 'Yes', confirm below the exempt information category relied upon	Yes	<input type="checkbox"/>
	No	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

<b>1.0</b>	<b>Purpose of Report</b>
1.1	To update members on a Tree Risk Management Plan for the Council managed estate.
<b>2.0</b>	<b>Background</b>
2.1	Council has responsibility for trees and areas of woodland and we recognise and value the benefit that they bring to both those living within our area and visitors to our facilities.
2.2	This tree resource is extremely varied and spread over many sites. Given its variety both in terms of species mix and maturity, we are also aware of its potential risk to safety if not managed properly. We believe this risk to be low and needs to be considered in balance with the many benefits that our tree resource provides.
2.3	The tree risk management plan will ensure we will undertake routine inspections of our tree resource in a targeted and cost effective way. Trees that are in the busiest locations and posing the highest risk e.g., those next to buildings, roads busy paths etc. will be inspected more regularly than those in less used places. All trees will be assessed according to their priority in relation to public safety.
2.4	This approach accords with current national guidance and allows a proactive management of our tree resource where tree safety is a priority whilst ensuring our tree resource is protected and enhanced for the benefit of everyone enjoying it.
2.5	The tree risk management plan proposes to formalise tree safety inspections across the Council estate including the routine inspections and subsequent remedial works required to manage risk within and around trees and woodland.
2.6	A copy of the tree risk management plan is included as an appendix for information.
<b>3.0</b>	<b>Main Report</b>
3.1	<p>The risk:</p> <p>While it may be acceptable that tree management should not seek to eliminate all risks of minor injuries, it should however not expose people to significant likelihood of death or permanent disability.</p>

	<p>Any residual risk is tolerable only in the following specific circumstances:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The likelihood is extremely low.</li> <li>• The hazards are clear and largely avoidable to users.</li> <li>• There are other obvious benefits.</li> <li>• Reducing the risks further would remove these benefits.</li> <li>• There are no reasonably practicable ways to manage the risk of injury.</li> </ul>
3.2	<p>What the law requires:</p> <p>Mid Ulster Council has a duty to do all that is reasonably practicable to ensure that people are not exposed to risk. This duty is established under the Occupiers' Liability (Northern Ireland) Order 1987 and the Health and Safety at Work Order 1978.</p> <p>The Occupiers' Liability Order provides that organisations such as the Council have obligations to have a duty of care for members of the public and staff in relation to its woodlands and trees. That duty of care includes taking reasonable steps to ensure their safety.</p> <p>The Health and Safety at Work Order places a duty on employers to operate in such a way as to make sure, as far as is reasonably practicable, that even those who are not in our employment are not exposed to risks to their health and safety. This includes contractors and visitors to our forests. The legislation creates an obligation for us to protect people from hazardous trees on our land so far as is reasonably practical.</p> <p>Additionally, the Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2000 provides: "That every employer shall make a suitable and sufficient assessment of the risks to health and safety of his employees to which they are exposed whilst they are at work and the risks to the health and safety of persons not in his employment arising out of, or in connection with, the conduct by him of his undertaking."</p> <p>Under the Roads (Northern Ireland) Order 1993, the Council is responsible for lopping any tree or cutting back any hedge growing on their property in certain circumstances causing danger or obstruction.</p>
3.3	<p>Tree safety management:</p> <p>Tree safety management involves taking reasonable steps to identify trees that represent a significant risk to people or property and dealing with them accordingly. The Council will fulfil its duties by completing appropriate risk assessments and putting in place necessary procedures to carry out inspections, report hazardous trees and ensure that actions have been taken to reduce the identified risks. This will be done in two stages by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Establishing visitor/target usage zones for the whole Council estate.</li> <li>• Carrying out visual tree assessments in each zone as per the inspection regime applied</li> </ul>
3.4	<p>The Council's Neighbourhood Services section will co-ordinate and manage the process across the entire Council estate including procurement and management of formal tree surveys, procurement and management of contractor(s), collation of a central database with GIS mapping layers for target usage zones, formal inspections and remedial works.</p>
3.5	<p>Neighbourhood Services in conjunction with the Corporate Training Manager will arrange a range of formal and informal training and briefing sessions for all relevant Council staff.</p>

3.6	Neighbourhood Services will also liaise with the Planning Department Environment and Conservation team in relation to any statutory Tree Protection Orders (TPOs) which are in place at Council sites as well as any registered Conservation areas across the district.
3.7	Each individual service area will be responsible for the following:
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• providing target usage zone information and tree species data (where relevant) for each site for which they are responsible</li> <li>• carrying out informal tree inspections on each of their own sites</li> <li>• ensuring that they have an in-date formal tree safety inspection by checking the information held centrally by Neighbourhood Services</li> </ul>
<b>4.0</b>	<b>Other Considerations</b>
<b>4.1</b>	<b>Financial, Human Resources &amp; Risk Implications</b>
	<p>Financial: The estimated cost of formal tree safety surveys across the entire Council estate is estimated at approximately £25k per year on a continuous annual cycle. Tree felling and remedial works currently cost approx. £50k per year, however with the roll-out of more formal tree inspections and the increase in number of storms this cost is anticipated to at least treble and this has been identified as a pressure for the Grounds Maintenance repairs and maintenance revenue budget for 2025/26. Whilst it is anticipated costs for more urgent works can be met from an increased revenue budget; where large scale works are identified as being necessary over a longer timeframe it will be for the relevant service area to secure the necessary capital funding required to complete these works.</p>
	<p>Human: Officer time within Neighbourhood Services to carry out procurement as referenced above, to compile a list of existing tree safety inspections, to prepare GIS mapping of the various zones within each site and to prepare a register of tree defects reported. Also officer time within each client department/service area to carry out informal inspections.</p>
	<p>Risk Management: The main risk is managing the process to ensure all sites and all tree assets are recorded accurately due to the current ongoing works in compiling a comprehensive asset register.</p>
<b>4.2</b>	<b>Screening &amp; Impact Assessments</b>
	Equality & Good Relations Implications: N/A
	Rural Needs Implications: N/A
<b>5.0</b>	<b>Recommendation(s)</b>
5.1	Members are requested to note the content of this report.

<b>6.0</b>	<b>Documents Attached &amp; References</b>
6.1	Appendix 1 – Mid Ulster District Council Tree Risk Management Plan