



Tree Risk Management Policy

Introduction

The risk associated with trees is extremely low however, as a local authority, Credition Town Council (CTC) must ensure public safety, whilst at the same time maintaining a natural and environmentally diverse landscape. CTC has a formal policy outlining how and why it manages the risk from trees on its land, ensuring it is relatively safe for people to visit and can reasonably expect not to be harmed.

Policy Scope

This policy relates to trees growing on land owned or under the responsibility of CTC. It does not cover trees within private ownership or in the ownership of another local authority.

This policy is designed to address the risks posed by the failure of trees, or parts of trees, with the potential to cause damage or injury and will provide an audit trail of action taken in response to potential risks posed by trees. By following this policy, CTC can demonstrate it has met its responsibilities and duty of care as a tree owner.

A prioritised system will be followed whereby those trees posing the greatest risk will be assessed and managed first.

Benefits of Trees

The benefits trees and open spaces are well documented. These include:

- Contributing to wellbeing and quality of life
- Mitigating of the effects of climate change
- Bringing communities together
- Enhancing community security - reducing anti-social behaviour/crime levels
- Encouraging walking - significant improvements in air quality
- Lowering risk of surface water flooding
- Improving the perception of the local area
- Psychological and physical health benefits
- Ecosystem services
- Essential wildlife habitat.

Trees can help to bring social benefits as well as attracting economic benefits and visual interest throughout the year.

Risk from Trees

Each year between 5 and 6 people in the UK are killed from a falling branch or tree, and around 3 people are killed each year by trees in public spaces (Health and Safety Executive (HSE)) Therefore, trees pose a very low risk to people and property. The HSE states that this level of risk equates to about 1 in 10 million deaths for those trees in or adjacent to areas of high public use, categorising the risk as “broadly acceptable”.

Unfortunately, the media attention relating to tree failure heightens the concerns from the public. Despite the low risk, CTC has a duty under the Health & Safety at Work Act 1974 to ensure the risks associated with trees are managed in a reasonable practicable manner.

Other legislation relevant to the management of trees includes, for example the Occupiers' Liability Acts 1957 and 1984, the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 (CRoW), the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981, the Marine and Coastal Access Act 2009, as well as legislation relating to Sites of Special Scientific Interest, planning issues and Tree Preservation Orders.

Tree Management & Replacement

CTC aims to encourage biodiversity and ensure its tree population is both varied and sustainable. Trees will only be removed when there is a demonstrable arboriculture, safety or legal reason. When planting a replacement tree, the council will select trees appropriate for their location.

Site Zoning

All trees under the responsibility of CTC will be zoned according to the risk they could pose to people or property, as recommended by HSE. The zones will be based on two features:

- Proximity of trees to people and property (Lonsdale 2010)
- Usage of the land – what is the likelihood of damage or injury occurring (how often are people or property within falling distance of the tree?)

Zones will be identified as Low, Medium & High and will be continually reviewed to ensure that they reflect the current situation on the ground and will be updated on an ad hoc basis as site usage changes, or situation changes.

HIGH ZONE: Main roads, high public use (car parks, open spaces etc.), risk to residential and business properties, high use footpaths. Trees adjacent to busy railway lines, school playgrounds and play areas.

Inspected formally every 1-2 years and inspected reactively in response to enquiries. Also subject to informal observation during normal Council activities.

MEDIUM ZONE: Lower use roads, regular public use (public open spaces), regularly used footpaths, intermittently used car parks (rarely full). Trees adjacent to domestic gardens and/or low use outbuildings.

Inspected formally every 2-3 years and inspected reactively in response to enquiries. Also subject to informal observation during normal Council activities.

LOW ZONE: Low use footpaths, trees alongside waterways, low use open spaces, adjacent to low use outbuilding.

A formal walk or drive by (overview) group inspection, every 5 years, around the perimeter of the site and along any routes of access such as footpaths and inspected reactively. Trees only to be assessed individually if the group 'overview' inspection identifies an obvious hazard. Also subject to informal observation during normal Council activities.

Scheduled Inspections

Tree inspections need to be undertaken in areas owned and managed by CTC. The frequency of inspection will be determined by the site zoning criteria detailed above (See Appendix One).

Following a formal inspection, if a tree on council owned land poses a significant risk, work to make the tree safe or fell the tree will be undertaken. In some cases, an identified risk may not warrant immediate action and instead the tree will require ongoing monitoring.

A tree inspection will take into account the following criteria:

- Species
- Height
- Age category
- Physical condition
- Recommended action required
- Priority of work required
- Usage zone.

Informal Annual Survey

The National Tree Safety Group suggest that people with good local knowledge/ familiarity with local trees are suited to carrying out informal observations. To ensure public safety, trees on council-owned land will be informally surveyed on an annual basis by an officer or town council member. This will take place between scheduled inspections to identify any obvious defects/changes following the last inspection.

If a tree is identified as requiring formal inspection, an arboriculturist will be instructed to carry out an assessment of the individual tree.



SITE ZONING AND ASSOCIATED INSPECTION PROGRAMME

Location	Identified zoning factors	Site Zone	Inspection requirement
Peoples Park	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Risk to residential property • Regular public use • Regularly used footpaths 	High Zone	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Formal inspection every 2 years* 2. Regular tree checks if weather may have affected trees after storms, including broken branches/limbs and tree heave 3. Informal walk of site every autumn to check for obvious defects/changes. 4. Reactive inspection in response to enquiries. <p style="color: red; font-size: small;">*due to mature nature of trees and close proximity to property, it is important for council to consider whether every 2 years would be sufficient. This will be considered annually or as required.</p>
Upper Deck	<p>Medium Zone:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lower use roads • Regularly used footpaths • Open spaces with regular use 	Medium Zone	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Formal inspection every three years 2. Informal walk of site every year to check for obvious defects/changes. 3. Reactive inspection in response to enquiries.
Stonypark	<p>Medium Zone:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Regularly used footpaths (on walking route to school) • Open spaces with regular use (adjacent to school playing field) 	Medium Zone	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Formal inspection every three years 2. Informal walk of site every year to check for obvious defects/changes. 3. Reactive inspection in response to enquiries.