

City of Edinburgh Council
Parks and Greenspace · Forestry Service

Tree policies: summary

This document provides a brief summary of the policies by which our tree management decisions are made, effective from January 2014. A fuller explanation of these policies can be found in our “Trees in the City” document, available to download from our website.
www.edinburgh.gov.uk

Policy 1 – Survey timescales

Trees in Council ownership will be inspected for safety, on a cycle between one and five years according to size, targets, condition and survey recommendation for each tree. This information will be recorded on the Council’s data base.

Policy 2 – Inspector competence

Tree inspections will only be undertaken by people who are qualified, experienced and competent to undertake the Visual Tree Assessment (VTA) method of survey.

Policy 3 – Active management of all trees

The Council will take steps to bring all of its trees under active, appropriate and informed management.

Policy 4 – Work priority

The Council prioritises tree work according to the individual tree’s health and safety risk, taking in to account current available resources. Tree works will normally be completed in safety priority order.

Policy 5 – Overhangs: right of abatement

The Council accepts the right of householders to remove overhanging branches, subject to compliance with Tree Preservation Orders and/or Conservation area status.

Policy 6 – Applications to prune Council trees

The Council will consider applications from private owners to alleviate amenity reduction or nuisance problems on the basis that they will fund the works, that the works will be agreed with the Council beforehand, that a suitable arboricultural contractor is appointed, and that each case will be considered on its individual merits.

Policy 7 – 10-day inspection target

For non-emergency tree-related safety issues a Trees & Woodlands Officer will aim to carry out a tree inspection within 10 working days of receipt and the customer notified thereafter within 5 working days of what action the Council intends to take

Policy 8 – Claims for damage

Claims made in writing to the Council in relation to alleged damage caused by a council owned tree will be acknowledged within 10 working days of receipt.

Policy 9 – Reasons for tree works

The Council will not carry out works to trees, or fell them, unless it is necessary to do so. When works are carried out, the reasons for the work will be documented and recorded.

Policy 10 – Disposal of arisings

Where practicable, all arisings (logs, branches etc.) from tree works in high amenity areas will be removed. In woodland situations however standing dead wood, logs and chippings may often be left on site, where this can be done safely, to enhance biodiversity and increase wildlife habitats.

Policy 11 - Ivy

Management of ivy and trees: The Council will control ivy on trees where it is having a significantly negative effect.

Policy 12 – Stump removal

The Council will seek to remove stumps promptly where practicable and appropriate. In woodland locations, stumps will generally be left to decay in situ.

Policy 13 – Sight lines

The Council will undertake work to a tree in its ownership to maintain clear sight lines (where reasonably feasible) at junctions and access points.

Policy 14 – Trip hazards

The Council will undertake measures to make safe an unacceptable trip hazard in streets, roads or the public highway caused by the growth of a council owned tree.

Policy 15 – Obstruction of highways

The Council will undertake measures to make safe any unacceptable carriageway obstruction due to trees in streets, affecting roads or the public highway caused by the growth of council owned trees.

Policy 16 – Clearance over carriageway

The Council will undertake work to a tree in council ownership to maintain a minimum 5.5 metres clearance over the carriageway – where reasonably feasible.

Policy 17 – Dangerous private trees

The Council will undertake measures to make safe any unacceptable carriageway risk due to private trees in a dangerous condition, within falling distance of roads, or the public highway.

Policy 18 – Clearance over footpaths

The Council will undertake work to a council owned tree to maintain a minimum (where reasonably feasible) 3.0 metres height clearance over a footpath associated with a street, road or highway.

Policy 19 – Street lights

The Council will undertake work to a tree in its ownership to ensure that it does not unduly obstruct the streetlight zone of illumination.

Policy 20 – BS:5837

The Council will ensure that all construction and development, including temporary installations and placement of movable equipment, near to trees follows BS:5837 (2012) “Trees in relation to design, demolition and construction - Recommendations” and that the most recent National Joint Utilities Group “Guidelines for the planning, installation and maintenance of utility apparatus in proximity to trees” are followed where carrying out works in root protection areas cannot be avoided.

Policy 21 – Road signs and traffic lights

The Council will undertake work to a tree in its ownership to ensure that trees do not unduly obstruct traffic signals or street signs.

Policy 22 – Antisocial behaviour

Where a Council owned tree or woodland is associated with criminal activity and/or anti-social behaviour, measures to alleviate the problem will be implemented on a site-by-site basis in consultation with the Police, communities and neighbourhood teams.

Policy 23 – Vandalism

The Council will investigate reports of vandalism to a council owned tree or woodland and try to correct any damage where appropriate and within available resources.

Policy 24 – Tree height

The Council will not prune or fell a Council owned tree simply because it is considered to be 'too big' or 'too tall'.

Policy 25 – Leaf fall

The Council will not prune or fell a Council owned tree to remove or reduce leaf fall or remove fallen leaves from private property.

Policy 26 – Shade

The Council will generally not prune or remove trees in cases where they cause a reduced amount of light to fall on a property, other than in exceptional circumstances.

Policy 27 – Birds

The Council will not prune or fell a Council tree to remove or reduce bird droppings from trees, or remove bird droppings from private land.

Policy 28 – Fruit

The Council will not prune or fell a Council owned tree to remove or reduce the nuisance of fruit/berries or nuts, or remove such fallen fruit from private land. However, where fallen fruit is leading to significant anti-social behaviour problems it will consider measures to reduce the problem, including whether a phased removal and replacement with alternative species is reasonable

Policy 29 – Honeydew

The Council will not prune or fell a Council owned tree to remove or reduce honeydew or other sticky residue from trees.

Policy 30 – Pollen

The Council will not prune or fell a Council owned tree to remove or reduce the release of pollen.

Policy 31 – Telephone wires

The Council will generally not prune or fell a Council owned tree to remove or reduce interference with telephone wires.

Policy 32 – TV reception

The Council will generally not prune or fell a Council owned tree to prevent perceived interference with TV / satellite installation / reception.

Policy 33 – Pests

The Council will not prune or fell a Council owned tree to remove or reduce incidence of perceived pests such as bees, wasps, or wild animals.

Policy 34 - Drains

The Council will not prune, fell or cut the roots of a Council owned tree to prevent roots entering a drain that is already broken or damaged.

Policy 35 – Damage to property

In the event that a Council tree is causing damage to property, a Trees & Woodlands Officer will aim to respond within 10 working days and, if appropriate, remedial works will be undertaken.

Policy 36 – Overhangs

The Council will generally not prune or fell a tree in Council ownership to alleviate the nuisance of overhanging branches.

Policy 37 – Views

The Council will generally not prune or fell a Council owned tree to improve the view from a private property.

Policy 38 – Emergency 1 hour attendance target

The Council's Forestry Service will aim to attend emergency tree incidents within 1 hour of its report to assess the situation and start the process of making the site safe.

Policy 39 – Making safe

If a tree is reported as dangerous, but after inspection the risk to the public is assessed as not high then the tree will be made safe depending on the degree of risk identified at the time of inspection by a Council Trees & Woodlands Officer.

Policy 40 – Planting

The City of Edinburgh Council will endeavour to maintain its tree stock and increase current tree numbers by planting. The Council will look to increase and improve its tree cover within available resources as part of an annual tree planting programme, paying particular attention to historic street tree and park planting.

Policy 41 – Planting aftercare

The Council will endeavour to maintain newly planted trees appropriately to ensure they have the best chance of establishing.

Policy 42 – Dutch elm disease

The Council will monitor the continued spread of Dutch elm disease by undertaking an annual survey of the city's elm trees, starting each June. The Council will carry out a sanitation felling programme designed to reduce the spread of the disease, and will advise private owners of what action needs to be taken by them.

Policy 43 – Veteran trees

The Council will manage veteran trees sympathetically according to good arboricultural practice in respect to veteran trees, striking a balance between public safety and biodiversity.