



Tree Safety Policy for Ruskin Land, Wyre Forest

1. Scope

This policy has been prepared to ensure that the Guild of St George (hereafter referred to as "The Guild") can meet its legal and moral duties as a landowner, with specific reference to the risk posed to people and property by trees on Ruskin Land. The policy provides the basis of safety inspection that is also consistent with The Guild's charitable objectives.

It is expected that all consultants, contractors and concessionaires, event organisers who are working on this land, on behalf of The Guild will recognise and comply with this policy.

This policy has been written with reference to the *Common Sense Risk Management of Trees: Guidance on trees and public safety in the UK for owners, managers and advisers* (2011) published by the National Tree Safety Group, the Health and Safety Executive and is based on the principles of the Quantified Tree Risk Assessment Method.

2. Introduction

Trees play a vital role in society: as a source of raw materials for craft and design and as a source of sustainable fuel. Trees are also great healers of the human spirit and body, providing tangible benefits to our psychological and physical health. Trees additionally have their own intrinsic value and contribute to air quality, flood protection and mitigation, climate control. In short, they make a significant contribution to the resilience of all life on earth.

As with all living organisms, trees have the potential for physiological failure caused by internal or external factors. Perhaps most importantly, due to their physical size, they have the potential to fail and cause harm to people or property.

As responsible landowners, the Guild of St George has a duty to assess the hazards¹ and manage any risk that trees under its custodianship may present, and to do so in a proportionate manner that balances actual risk with the many benefits that the trees confer.

3. Risk Management Approach

The law recognises that there are limited financial and staff resources available, and consequently all trees cannot be inspected at once, or every year. To use resources effectively it is necessary to prioritise inspections. To enable prioritization Ruskin Land has been divided into Zones based on their Target value². Zone boundaries will be reassessed following any significant changes to physical infrastructure or of land management that could lead to an increase in footfall. Zone categories are based on the definitions used by the Quantified Tree Risk Assessment (QTRA)³ method as this provides a useful internationally recognised benchmark.

Inspection frequency of zones will be based on their Target value. Trees within the zones will be inspected based on a combination of tree Size⁴ and the Target value. Table 1 below provides the framework for inspection frequency.

Further to scheduled inspections, additional inspections may be carried out in areas in advance of planned events where there is an expectation of higher than normal footfall or if structures are to be installed and in Zones with a target value of *X or higher* following any significant storm.

Tree safety inspections will include an assessment of the main stem, primary and secondary branches up to the minimum size of branch outlined in table 1 and all formal tree safety inspections will be recorded using the form in Appendix 2

Persons carrying out tree safety inspections will be competent to do so that they may accurately assess the Probability of Failure ⁵. A person undertaking the inspections must inform the Guild if they identify any Unacceptable Risk ⁶ or is concerned about a tree and feel that a higher level of inspection is required. Persons carrying out tree inspections should indicate where they have identified anything that they are unsure about and feel a higher level of inspection.

The Guild or its agents will act on recommendations from tree surveys. Action may include monitoring, further detailed inspections, arboricultural works or other mitigation such as lowering the target value by, for example, re-routing of paths.

Anyone carrying out organised work, commercially, voluntarily or otherwise will be required to carry out their own risk assessment of the places they are working including a visual inspection of trees to identify any obvious defects such as hanging branches and inform the Guild of any concerns that may present an unacceptable risk to those working. The Guild will not accept any liability for the quality of externally commissioned tree safety assessments. Further Guidance can be provided on request

Mark Cleaver

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Notes:

Hazard, Risk & Risk Assessment

A hazard is something that has the potential to cause harm. Risk is the likelihood that the hazard actually causes harm and the potential extent of the harm. To aid the assessment of risk presented by trees, it is useful to consider three key factors : the *Target* value (comprising location, intensity of use, value of property that could be struck by the falling tree or branch etc.); the *Probability of Failure* (structural weakness, disease or decay, exposure to weather, species, ground condition etc.); and *Size* (i.e. a larger/heavier piece of wood will generally do more harm than a smaller piece).

Target and Size are two directly measurable factors that can be used when assessing the risk from trees; probability of failure requires judgement based on knowledge and understanding of a range of factors that can cause whole or partial tree failure.

To aid the assessment of risk and provide a benchmark for that risk in Ruskin Land, the Guild has adopted the principles of the Quantified Tree Risk Assessment Method (QTRA). This method uses an algorithm to quantify risk based on the two measurable factors (Target and Size) along with an assessment of Probability of Failure. The calculated risk is cross referenced with the Health and Safety Tolerability of Risk Framework (see 6 below) providing confidence in decision making.

Target Values

If a large tree situated in the middle of a wood where no person ventures and there is no built property of value, nothing can be harmed if the tree fell. By contrast, if the an equal size tree was situated in the middle of a town square, if the tree fell, it would most certainly cause harm. In both situations, the hazard is the same. To help differentiate the likelihood of harm and therefore appropriately prioritise where we should be inspecting trees, we can give a value to the location based on the potential “Target”

QTRA

“The Quantified Tree Risk Assessment (QTRA) system applies established and accepted risk management principles to tree safety management. The system moves the management of tree safety away from labelling trees as either ‘safe’ or ‘unsafe’ and thereby away from requiring definitive judgements from either tree assessors or tree managers. Instead, QTRA quantifies the risk of significant harm from tree failure in a way that enables tree managers to balance safety with tree values and operate to predetermined limits of tolerable or acceptable risk.” <https://www.qtra.co.uk/cms/index.php?section=4>

Size

Size plays an important role in assessing risk. Simply put, a large branch will do more damage than a small one. As Size increases, so does potential Harm. If risk of Harm also decreases with declining target value, then it is reasonable to increase the minimum size of tree that needs to be inspected as Target values decrease.

Probability of Failure

Trees have evolved for millennia as self-optimizing organisms which have adapted to environmental stresses to ensure that their structures remain strong and healthy and can support a canopy of leaves or needles, necessary for the photosynthesis that feeds the tree. This process has ensured that trees, through evolution, have become resilient. As such, failure on an individual basis is infrequent. This helps to explain why it is important to include a probability of failure (PoF) in any risk assessment as the sheer presence of large trees alone does not in itself suggest that risk is high. To accurately assess the probability of failure the assessor should understand the ecology of individual species, characteristics of the wood, associated fungi, ground conditions and adjacent changes in land use as this can affect stability

Unacceptable Risk

It is impossible to remove all risk from life, indeed, it is undesirable to do so. However, there needs to be some method to assess when acceptable levels of risk become unacceptable. The Health and Safety Executive provide some clear guidelines on this through the Tolerability of Risk Framework.

https://www.hse.gov.uk/foi/internalops/hid_circs/permissioning/spc_perm_37/

Through carrying out tree safety assessments based on the QTRA method using target and size categories along with PoF, the assessment outcome is a quantified risk ratio that can be measured directly against the HSE framework thereby indicating where a risk is unacceptable and the extent to which it is necessary to reduce the risk to as low as reasonably possible.