

DEVELOPMENT OF TREE MANAGEMENT 2005-2009

REACTIVE MAINTENANCE

The original process was;

- Enquirer (Resident, Councillor or Council Officer) requests work to a tree.
- Arboricultural Officer assesses what work is appropriate to the tree.
- Arboricultural Officer advises client officer, if appropriate.
- Arboricultural Officer issues work.
- Tree works contractor undertakes work.
- Tree works contractor submits invoice.
- Arboricultural Officer checks a percentage of invoiced work.
- Arboricultural Officer approves invoice.

There are a number of disadvantages to this system.

- Only those trees enquired about receive attention
- Nearby residents often telephone a request when they see the tree team working near their house, thus starting the above process again
- Arboricultural Officer spends disproportionate amount of time on a few trees
- Tree team spend a lot of time moving from site to site, rather than dealing with all the required tree work in the vicinity
- In one financial year over 350 instructions were issued to the tree works contractor, covering work to more than 1000 trees.

PLANNED TREE MAINTENANCE

Most trees do not require maintenance every year, and the Council does not have the resources to maintain every tree every year. Most of the work the Council undertakes to its trees is the same; ie raising crowns over roads and footpaths, reducing crowns away from buildings and gardens, removing dead, dying and dangerous trees. Work to a single tree itself does not take a great deal of time, disposing of the waste and moving on to the next job does.

Planned cyclical maintenance is the way forward; these cycles will be every three years for the majority of the Council's trees. To achieve this requires limiting the work at any one time to a geographical area. Council wards are a convenient geographical area. Most wards do not have many trees; some have many. Conveniently, from the tree surveying undertaken to date, 6 wards appear to have many trees, 12 appear to have relatively few. Therefore, it would be possible to maintain trees in 2 large wards and 4 small wards every year. Work to trees in these areas would be to an agreed standard, as specified with the tree works contractor.

The Council also has 12 principal parks. All the parks have been surveyed, and urgent work identified has been carried out. Maintenance in these parks could also be every three years, so 4 parks a year would be maintained.

Advantages to this system include:

- All trees on a site are maintained to the agreed standards;
- Reactive enquiries inspired by the appearance of the tree team are dealt with immediately;
- Tree works contractor spends more time working on trees, less time sitting in traffic; and
- Arboricultural Officer issues one works order for a ward, minimising paperwork for the Council and the contractor;

Work to reduce risks posed by trees with decay would fall outside this system, and would be undertaken as soon as judged to be appropriate, usually within 1 month of problem identification.

An obvious disadvantage to this system is that until the cycle was into its third year, there would remain a reactive element, in that work.

Residents, Councillors and Officers may be reluctant to wait up to 3 years for routine tree work. It is hoped that an explanation of the reasons why work will be delayed will address such concerns.

The proposed maintenance schedule would look like this

Financial Year	Many tree Wards	Fewer tree wards	Principal Parks
Year One	Exwick Whipton Barton	Cowick, Mincinglake, Newtown, St Loyes	Northernhay, Rougemont, St Thomas Pleasure Ground, Topsham Recreation Ground
Year Two	Alphington Priory	Pennsylvania, St James, St Thomas, Topsham	Belle Isle Park, Bury Meadow Park, Heavitree Pleasure Ground, Pinces Gardens
Year three	Pinhoe St Davids	Duryard, Heavitree, Polsloe, St Leonards	Belmont Park Bull Meadow Park Southernhay Green St Bartholomews Cemetery

The proposed tree management system encompasses

- Stock Survey, plotting and recording all tree stock. Trees and woodlands are plotted on a GIS and detailed data is linked to this from a database.
- Inspection regime, with audit and quality control, to guide risk management and decision-making. Inspection intervals are set by the database, based on a range of criteria.
- Remedial and Maintenance work – some programmed but largely reactive, with a method of recording actions taken in relation to individual trees. Ward work – All trees within a ward are managed on a three year cyclical basis, allowing a cost –effective planned approach. (See Appendix I) Planned maintenance and Reactive work are co-ordinated and prioritised on a weekly basis.
- Planting work. The tree planting programme is developed through the year in response to further information becoming available
- Customer care and Work Co-ordination. A call-centre approach to enquiry management has been trialled since 2008. This has been very effective in linking all tree enquiries to one management centre, allowing more efficient use of resources by
 - Co-ordinating and prioritising responses to enquiries
 - Managing workflow
 - Ensuring enquiries are managed through to an end process where enquirers are informed of the outcome
 - Providing information and tree management responses in context with other criteria such as the Tree and Parks and Open Spaces Strategies, future planting schemes, and prioritisation of work
 - Pro-active links to Planning issues such as TPOs, Conservation areas and tree management in relation to developments
 - Direct links to the local Tree Wardens