



Tree Risk Management Strategy

for
Minehead Town Council
Council Offices
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The following Tree Risk Management Strategy and associated procedures have been adopted by:

| | |
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1. INTRODUCTION

The benefits of trees are widely recognised and valued on a local, national and international scale. The social, economic and environmental benefits provided by trees are fundamental to our wellbeing and quality of life. The presence of trees enhances an area's visual amenity, creates a sense of place, plays an important role in fostering social cohesion and reduces negative social behaviours. By mitigating the effects of climate change, assisting with climate adaption and filtering pollutants trees create a healthy environment.

The trees that are managed by Minehead Town Council and form part of this strategy, make a significant contribution to the range of benefits to the various sites on which they are growing. Providing high amenity value as well as historical and cultural reference to the past and a wide range of other ecosystem services important to the well-being of those living in the area.

Trees, by their nature, are dynamic living systems growing adaptively in response to the environment around them. It is entirely normal and natural for trees to shed parts and eventually to fall, however the overall risk to the public from falling trees is extremely low. In the UK the chance of an individual being killed, by a falling tree or part of a tree, in any given year is about one in 10 million.

Despite the extremely low risk posed by trees, tree owners and managers owe a duty of care. At Common Law, under the Occupiers' Liability Acts of 1957 and 1984, this duty is owed to all people who might be injured by our trees. The Acts require Minehead Town Council to take reasonable care to avoid acts or omissions that cause a reasonably foreseeable risk of injury to persons or property.

At Criminal Law, under the Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974, the duty is also placed on Minehead Town Council as employers to ensure, so far as is reasonably practicable, that in the course of conducting their undertaking, employees and members of the public are not put at risk.

As owners and managers of trees, Minehead Town Council understands:

- we owe a duty of care¹
- that we must act where a danger is foreseeable
- the duty must not amount to an unreasonable burden² upon us or force us to act as the insurer of nature³.

¹ Health and Safety at Work Act 1974

² Lambourn v London Brick Co Ltd [1950]

³ Noble v Harrison [1926]



2. STRATEGY OBJECTIVE

Our objective is to conserve and enhance the numerous values provided by Minehead Town Council trees, while ensuring that those members of the public visiting and using the various public amenity sites and those used as places of worship are not exposed to unnecessary risk.

To meet our objective, we aim to:

- ensure that the potential for harm associated with trees within our control is adequately assessed and controlled
- conserve the benefits provided by the presence of our trees
- provide guidance to those with responsibility for safety on our site.

Minehead Town Council has therefore adopted a proactive procedure that includes periodic surveys and risk assessment.

3. TREE SAFETY MANAGEMENT PROCEDURE

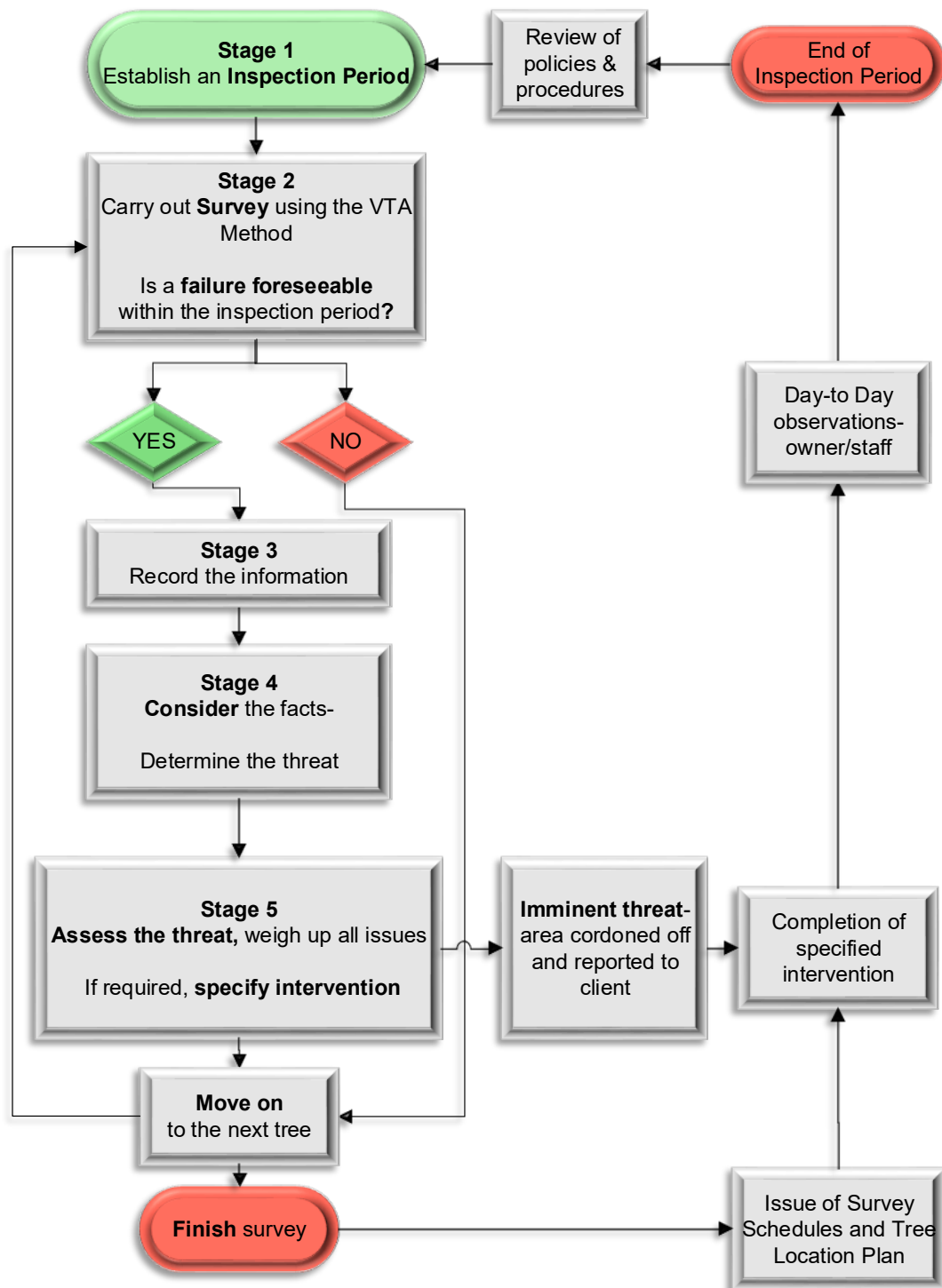
All trees on the various sites included in the strategy with the potential to cause harm shall be periodically surveyed.

Zoning the site to help prioritise resources was considered. However, due to the nature size and use of the individual sites and number of trees, it was deemed unnecessary.

Any changes to site usage and occupancy levels shall be reported to the appointed tree consultant immediately, to ensure any appropriate reassessment of the trees and frequency of inspection for the site.

Our procedure shall follow the steps described in Section 4 and depicted in Figure 1, ensuring a systematic and consistent approach to our tree surveys and risk decision making processes.

Figure 1- The tree safety management procedure, adapted from The Sleep Tight Protocol by Jeremy Barrell.



4. GENERAL ARRANGEMENTS

Stage 1

Prior to surveys being undertaken, the survey period is established.

The survey period is based on the nature of our site, the condition of trees and the varying levels of visitor concentrations. The survey period may also allow for alternating leaf-on / leaf-off survey timings.

Our appointed surveyor is Simon Scotting Tree Consultants. In addition to surveying, Simon Scotting Tree Consultants will remain as our point of contact throughout the survey period.

Stage 2

Surveys shall be undertaken by a suitably qualified and experienced professional, holding a minimum Level 4 qualification in Arboriculture and the certificate in Professional Tree Inspection.

Surveys shall be undertaken using the Visual Tree Assessment (VTA) Method (Mattheck & Breloer 1994) and take place during suitable weather conditions, avoiding periods of poor visibility.

The survey shall be solely focussed on determining whether any trees have the potential to fail (in whole or part) and cause harm within the survey period.

Stage 3

Only trees with critical defects⁴ shall receive further inspection and be recorded on a Survey Schedule. The information recorded will take the form of 'negative reporting' and only information relevant to the decision-making process shall be collected. A separate note shall be recorded if further investigations are required. Where necessary recorded trees will also be plotted on a Tree Location Plan.

At the surveyor's discretion, trees without critical defects may also be recorded. Reasons for recording these trees generally include tree prominence and their proximity to potential targets.

Trees not recorded in a survey schedule are considered to pose a low threat to safety for the duration of the stated survey period.

Stage 4

The relevant facts shall be considered to determine the level of threat posed by the potential failure. The threat (risk of fatality) shall be expressed either quantitatively (1/15,000 for example) or qualitatively (high, moderate or low).

⁴ A critical defect is a defect compromising the tree's structural integrity, rendering it more likely to fail.

Stage 5

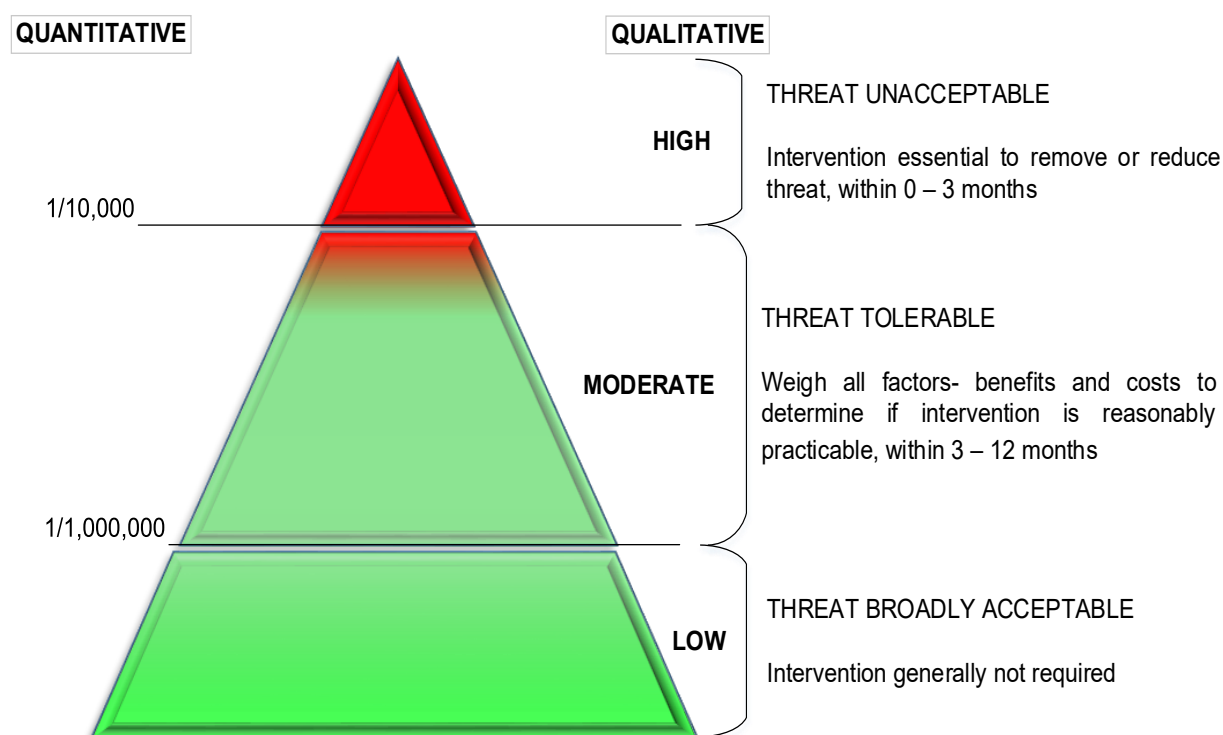
The level of threat shall determine whether intervention is required to reduce or remove the threat. All threats falling within the unacceptable region will have intervention measures specified, see Figure 2.

Intervention options for threats falling within the tolerable region shall be weighed against the tree's benefits and costs, in terms of time, trouble and money. This shall determine whether further reduction of the threat level is reasonable and practicable.

The issues influencing the specifying of intervention measures shall be recorded on the Survey Schedule. Where intervention measures are specified, a time frame for their completion shall also be provided.

Low-level threats are considered broadly acceptable and therefore will not generally require intervention measures.

Figure 2. Quantitative and qualitative expression of threat, adapted from the Tolerability of Risk Framework (HSE 2001)



Where an immediate threat to safety is observed, the danger area shall immediately be cordoned off and the issue reported to Minehead Town Council.

Simon Scotting Tree Consultants will provide Minehead Town Council with completed Survey Schedules and a Tree Location Plan within a reasonable timeframe from finishing their survey.

Minehead Town Council agree to act on all specified intervention measures within the stated time frames.

In addition to the periodic surveys, Minehead Town Council and our employees shall look at the estate's trees as we go about our daily routine. We shall either take action to deal with any safety issues within a suitable timescale or/and report any concerns, and any passed on to us by the visiting public to Simon Scotting Tree Consultants to follow up.

5. EMERGENCY ARRANGEMENTS

Minehead Town Council has arrangements in place to deal with emergencies for trees specifically on their land. Included are measures that will tackle fallen trees and dangers from standing trees.

In the case of an emergency Minehead Town Council are available 24 hours a day and will respond as soon as reasonably practicable to ensure that adequate resources are made available to clear the problem.

Minehead Town Council Amenities, should be contacted

During normal office hours: calls should be directed to:

01643 707213

Outside normal working hours: calls should be directed to:

07443 359212

Simon Scotting Tree Consultants is retained to provide advice and support.

Following a severe weather event, the site shall be assessed for safety prior to opening to the public. A walk over survey shall be undertaken by staff with the basic level of training in tree safety, to check for obvious dangers. Where a danger is observed the zone shall remain closed until the Amenities Manager for Minehead Town Council, or Simon Scotting Tree Consultants have been contacted and advise otherwise.

All tree failures shall be recorded on a Tree Failure Log for analysis and to ensure that our tree stock records remain up to date. The Tree Failure Log shall include the following data:

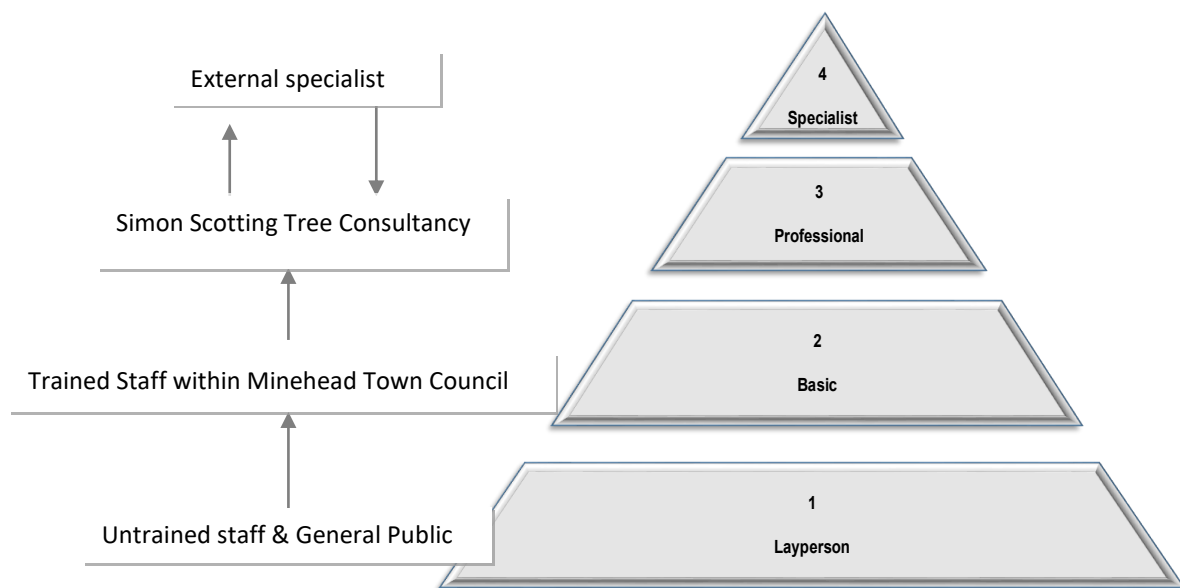
- Tree location and/or number
- Time and date of failure
- Tree species
- Nature of failure
- Weather at time of failure
- Detail of harm caused as result of failure

In the event of a whole or partial tree failure resulting in an injury, the failure scene shall be preserved to allow detailed internal and external investigation.

6. CHAIN OF COMMUNICATION / LEVELS OF SURVEYS & INSPECTIONS

Figure 3 illustrates our chain of communication and survey levels to proactively manage the threat from trees and respond to reports of concern.

Figure 3 – Chain of communication and survey levels





Survey levels and roles explained:

| Survey level | Skill level | Role |
|--------------|--------------|--|
| 1 | Layperson | Untrained members of staff or the public reporting observations or concerns as they may arise. |
| 2 | Basic | A trained in-house or external person able to carry out basic VTA. May initially respond to any reported concerns to confirm the presence of a threat or VTA symptom. No management decisions are made at this level; observations are reported to the named point of contact at Level 3 |
| 3 | Professional | An in-house or external person holding professional qualifications in Arboriculture and the certificate in Professional Tree Inspection. Undertakes the periodic surveys & inspections, acts as a point of contact to respond to reports of concern. All risk management decisions are made at this level. |
| 4 | Specialist | A person able to use advanced diagnostic equipment to aid management decisions. Information gained from the specialist is reported back to Level 3 for final decision making. |



7. IMPLEMENTATION OF INTERVENTION WORKS

Standards of work

All tree works should be carried out to BS 3998 *Recommendations for Tree Work* as modified by more recent research. It is advisable to select a suitably qualified contractor either from the local authority list or preferably one approved by the Arboricultural Association. The Arboricultural Association's Register of Contractors is available free from their website www.trees.org.uk/ARB-Approved-Contractor-Directory

Trees subject to statutory controls

If trees are covered by a Tree Preservation Order (TPO) or located in a conservation area, it will be necessary to consult the Local Planning Authority (LPA) before any works, other than certain exemptions, can be carried out. The works specified in the schedules are necessary for reasonable management and should be acceptable to the LPA. However, tree owners should appreciate that the LPA may take an alternative point of view and have the option to refuse consent.

Statutory wildlife obligations

The Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 as amended by the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 provides statutory protection to birds, bats and other species that inhabit trees. All tree work operations are covered by these provisions and advice from an ecologist must be obtained before undertaking any works that might constitute an offence.

8. PROCEDURE REVIEW

To monitor and improve its effectiveness, Minehead Town Council shall review this procedure at the end of each inspection period or after any tree related incident.

The procedure shall also be subject to on-going internal audits by Minehead Town Council 's Town Clerk and Amenities manager.

In addition to monitoring and improving its effectiveness, the objective of auditing is to ensure sufficient resources are being allocated.

During reviews and auditing the following performance criteria and indicators shall be used-

| Performance criteria | Performance indicator |
|--|---|
| Fatalities or significant injuries suffered from falling trees or parts of trees | None suffered |
| Tree surveys are undertaken within one week of the previous survey period end date | Minimum of 90% of surveys completed within 1 week |
| Completed survey schedules received on time- within 1 week of their completion | Minimum of 75% received within 1 week of completion |
| High Risk intervention recommendation completed within the stated timeframe | 100% of required intervention work completed |

All survey schedules and audits shall be provided in electronic format. If appropriate, hard copies shall be retained and stored in the main office. Electronic copies, in PDF format, shall be stored on Minehead Town Council's computer system.



9. BIBLIOGRAPHY

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