

# Heighington Parish Council

## Tree Management Policy

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## **1. Introduction and purpose**

- 1.1 Heighington is partly rural, and trees play a vital role in the natural environment: enhancing the landscape, providing shelter, improving air quality, providing valuable habitats for wildlife and increasing residents' wellbeing.
- 1.2 This policy confirms Heighington Parish Council's ("the Council") approach to the management of trees on land owned by the Council. It ensures there is a clear, consistent and structured approach to the management of its trees, ensuring the safety of people in their vicinity.
- 1.3 Trees included in the scope of this policy are those on land at Station Road recreation ground and at Potterhanworth Road sports ground. There are no trees located on land at the Jubilee Hall.
- 1.4 This policy does not apply to trees located on land owned by Lincolnshire County Council, North Kesteven District Council, or any other organisation or individual.

## **2 Inspections**

- 2.1 A formal 3-year inspection (Tree Condition Report) will be carried out by a qualified arborist commissioned by the Council (unless the need arises for more frequent inspections). The inspection will look at the health, structure, safety, and overall condition of each tree, and make recommendations for any works or monitoring, as required.
- 2.2 Council will arrange for a local tree surgeon to complete an inspection annually, accepting that this will not be a qualified arborist assessment.
- 2.3 Council staff or members will complete a regular (monthly) visual inspection of our trees. This will be from ground level only. A record of these visual inspections will be kept.
- 2.4 Ad hoc inspections will be completed by Council staff and/or a tree surgeon (as required) following exceptional weather conditions such as high winds or storm or following reported acts of vandalism. A record of these inspections will be kept.

## **3 Reporting**

- 3.1 The Tree Condition Report will be shared with Council. Any remedial work identified will be authorised and undertaken in line with the priorities identified in the report.
- 3.2 Any problems identified following a monthly or ad-hoc inspection will be reported to the next Full Council meeting if appropriate. Any matters identified which appear to be urgent or are deemed a Health & Safety risk, will be dealt with under the appropriate delegated authority and then reported to the next Council meeting.

## **4 Tree works**

- 4.1 Council will establish a budget each year to cover inspections and remedial works.
- 4.2 Tree works will be carried out in the following circumstances:
- Where there is deemed to be significant risk to the public.
  - Where there is deemed to be significant risk to property.
  - To comply with the Highways Act 1980 Section 154, where trees overhang the highway.
  - Where work is required to prolong life or promote development of good tree structure.
  - Where a dead, dying, diseased or otherwise dangerous tree is identified.
- 4.3 The Council will not fell or prune trees on Council owned land:
- For cosmetic reasons.
  - Solely to alleviate problems caused by natural and/or seasonal phenomena such as dropping of leaves, seed, fruit, berries, nuts or sap.
  - Due to bird droppings.
  - To improve access to light.
  - To improve a view.
  - Where the trees are causing interference with television or satellite reception, unless complainants have taken other measures to improve reception without success and it can be proven that pruning will improve reception.
  - Where the trees are causing interference with security cameras/sensors.
- 4.4 Consideration will always be given to the impact of any tree pruning or felling on local wildlife. Tree pruning or felling will only take place outside the bird nesting season of February to August<sup>12</sup>, unless matters of public safety dictate otherwise. Where any protected species (such as bats or badgers) are found in the vicinity of planned works, compliance with the relevant legislation and guidance surrounding the protection of the species will be followed.
- 4.5 In considering any action the Council will take account of the amenity value of the trees concerned.
- 4.6 The council will ensure all tree works are carried out to the prevailing British standards for tree work. Tree pruning will only be undertaken where there is sound justification for the work following the principles at 4.2. Where pruning is undertaken it will be in accordance with good arboriculture practice to ensure minimum harm to the tree and every effort will be made to ensure the general shape and character of each tree is maintained.
- 4.7 The Council will give consideration to any complaints and requests regarding trees on its property, taking into account its Tree Management Policy and/or advice from a qualified Arborist.
- 4.8 Any trees that have a Tree Preservation Order (TPO) or are in a Conservation Area will require the prior approval of North Kesteven District Council before any works are undertaken. (Please note that none of the Council's trees currently have a TPO or fall in a Conservation Area).

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<sup>1</sup> As per Natural England.

<sup>2</sup> Under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981, birds and their nests are protected by law. It is illegal to intentionally disturb or destroy a bird's nest, eggs, or young. This includes tree surgery work that could harm or disturb active nests.

## **5 Tree planting**

- 5.1 The Council recognises the role of tree planting in promoting biodiversity and encourages the planting of appropriate species in appropriate locations, taking account of the anticipated maintenance needs throughout the trees' life.
- 5.2 Where possible, if existing mature trees have had to be removed due to disease or damage, a new tree will be planted, although this may not necessarily be in the same location. This will be of a suitable type for the environment and species (or variants of them) native to the UK or near continent will generally be preferred.
- 5.3 Tree planting in new locations will have regard to the surroundings. Consideration will be given to the proximity of buildings or structures that might be overshadowed or could suffer from root damage from newly planted trees. Where planting is in proximity to other trees or habitat, such planting will have regard to the existing ecology so as to enhance rather than damage it.