



- Living with Trees -

South Dublin County Council's

Tree Management Policy

2026 - 2031

Contents

Foreword	5
1.0 Introduction	6
1.2 Trees across South Dublin County Council	7
1.3 Trees & Social Heritage	8
1.4 Why have a Tree Management Policy?	8
1.5 Why Trees are Important	9
1.6 Impact of Climate Change and Trees	10
1.7 Trees and the Urban Environment	12
1.8 Vision.....	13
1.9 Aims of the Tree Management Policy.....	13
1.10 Action Plan.....	14
1.11 Policy Monitoring and Review	14
2.0 Tree Management	15
2.1 Tree Maintenance Service.....	15
2.2 Tree Management Programme	16
2.3 Tree Management System.....	16
2.4 Tree Survey	16
2.5 Reactive and Emergency Works	17
2.6 Public Awareness, Education & Engagement.....	17
2.7 Prioritising Tree Work	17
2.7.1 Response to Enquiries	17
2.7.2 Inspections	18
2.7.3 Tree Risk Management.....	18
2.7.4 Priority Rating System for Tree Works	19
3 Tree Maintenance	20
3.1 Public Information on Tree Works	21
3.2 Reasons for Tree Pruning and Felling	21
3.3 Tree Pruning	22
3.4 Topping of Trees	23
3.5 Removal of Trees.....	23
3.6 Stump Removal	24
3.7 Quality of Work.....	24
3.8 Unauthorised Pruning, Removal or Damage to Council Owned Trees	24
3.9 Arrangement or Payment for Street Tree Maintenance by Residents	25
3.10 Timber and Green Waste Use Policies	25

3.11 Nesting Birds.....	25
3.12 Autumn Leaf Fall Management	26
3.13 Pest & Disease Control.....	26
3.14 Ivy on Trees.....	27
3.15 Tree Sculpture	27
4 Tree Planting / Replacement Planting.....	28
4.1 Right Tree Right Place	28
4.2 Tree Planting	28
4.3 Design of Street Tree Planting Schemes	29
4.4 Species Selection	30
4.5 Replacement Tree Planting.....	30
4.6 Use of Tree Guards.....	31
4.7 Post Planting Maintenance Programme	31
4.8 Sponsored Memorial Tree Planting	31
Tree of Hope.....	32
Memorial Tree.....	33
5 Felling & Pruning Policies	35
5.1 Obstruction of Street Light	35
5.2 Obstruction of Road Traffic Sight Lines, Traffic Signals or Street Signs	35
5.3 Obstruction of Roads, Cycleways and Footpaths	35
5.4 Trip Hazard	36
5.5 Trees in Conflict with the Built Environment	37
5.6 Trees and Drains	37
5.7 Trees, Riverbanks & Watercourses	37
5.8 Trees and Utilities.....	38
5.9 Valuing Trees and Compensating for Tree Damage	38
5.10 Street Trees Overhanging Neighbouring Properties / Roots Encroaching into Gardens.....	39
5.11 Trees Overhanging Private Property from Neighbouring Private property ..	39
5.12 Dangerous Trees in Private Ownership.....	40
5.13 Trees Touching or Causing Direct Damage to Property.....	40
5.14 Trees Blocking Natural Light.....	41
5.15 Obstruction of a View	41
5.16 Tree Considered Too Large	41
5.17 High Hedges.....	42
5.18 Driveways and New Entrances.....	42

5.19	Tree and Solar Panels.....	42
5.20	Trees Affecting TVs, Satellite Reception and CCTV	43
5.21	Trees Affecting CCTV.....	43
5.22	Crime and Anti-social Behaviour	44
5.23	Leaf Fall.....	44
5.24	Sticky Deposits from Honeydew	44
5.25	Bird Droppings.....	44
5.26	Fruit / Berries / Nuts / Blossom.....	45
5.27	Tree and Poisonous Berries	45
5.28	Wild Animal / Insect Pest.....	45
5.29	Pollen.....	46
5.30	Tree Root Pruning	46
5.31	Trees Located Along Private Boundaries Within Parks & Open Spaces	46
5.32	Trees Located Within Gardens of Council-Owned Housing	46
6.0	Trees and Development.....	47
6.1	Tree Retention and Aftercare on Development Site	47
6.2	Trees on Development Sites	47
6.3	Development of the Built Environment (including Residential Extensions or Annex Developments) in Close Proximity to Established Trees.....	48
6.4	Tree Planting on Development Sites	49
6.5	Tree Preservation Orders (TPO).....	49
7.0	Living With Trees - Action Plan 2026-2031.....	51
8.0	Appendices.....	53
	Appendix 1: Sample List of Tree Species Suitable for Street Planting.....	53
	APPENDIX 2: National Joint Utilities Group (UK) Guidelines for the Planning, Installation and Maintenance of Utility Apparatus in Proximity to Trees.....	55
	THE PROHIBITED ZONE	55
	THE PRECAUTIONARY ZONE	56
	THE PERMITTED ZONE.....	56
	Appendix 3: Code of Practice For Pre Works Inspections of Trees for Nesting Birds	57
	Table 1. Pre Works Inspection Checklist for Bird Nesting Activities	58
	Table 2: Site inspection form for documenting searches for bird nesting activity associated with tree and shrub work undertaken in the bird nesting season (March 1 – August 31)	59
	Appendix 4: Extract from Design Manual for Urban Roads and Streets	60
	Appendix 6: References and Sources of Information	61

Foreword

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1.0 Introduction

South Dublin County Council acknowledges the vital role of trees as a strategic asset within the County's Green Infrastructure. Trees contribute significantly to the visual character, ecological integrity, and environmental quality of our urban and suburban areas. They deliver a broad range of economic, social, and environmental services, including supporting biodiversity, enhancing public realm, and contributing to climate change mitigation. The Council will manage and promote the County's tree population as an integrated urban forest resource, supporting sustainable communities and resilient ecosystems.

The implementation of the Tree Strategy and the delivery of a multi annual tree management programme is captured as part of South Dublin County Council's 7 Goals in the Corporate Plan 2025-2029:

Corporate Plan 2025 - 2029

Climate Leadership - Lead a just transition towards net zero.

Protect and enhance our green infrastructure and biodiversity

A Better Place – Deliver the infrastructure and facilities required to serve our growing population.

- Promote and enhance the built environment while protecting our natural and cultural heritage, upholding the principles of universal design
- Manage the county's parks and open spaces to deliver economic, environmental and social benefits that cater to the full diversity of our communities.

The Councils County Development Plan 2022-2028 includes an objective to increase the County's tree canopy:

G15 Objective 3: To ensure compliance with the South Dublin Climate Change Action Plan and the provisions of the Council's Tree Management Strategy.

- Increase the County's tree canopy cover by promoting annual planting, maintenance preservation and enhancement of trees, woodlands and hedgerows within the County using locally native species and supporting their integration into new development.
- Identify suitable sites for new urban trees including Miyawaki style mini woodlands, where feasible.
- Support the implementation of a co-ordinated regional approach to the maintenance of trees and support the work of the Regional Steering Group on Tree Management to which South Dublin County Council is a participant.
- Promote the establishment of tree trails in public parks across the County.
- Promote the planting of new woodlands and forestry within appropriate open space and park locations within the County.

- To plant trees in tracts of open grassland to act as an oasis for biodiversity.
- To recognise the value of mature trees in terms of carbon sequestration and amenity over saplings.

The Tree Management Policy establishes a strategic framework to guide South Dublin County Council in the effective management and sustainable development of its tree stock. It serves as a reference point for Elected Members, staff, stakeholders, and the wider public, facilitating informed engagement and promoting a consistent, transparent approach to tree-related matters. The Policy enables a proactive and systematic methodology, supporting the long-term health of the tree population and contributing to a greener, more resilient environment for all who live, work and visit the County.

1.2 Trees across South Dublin County Council

South Dublin County contains approximately 1,750 hectares of parkland and public open space, which play a significant role in enhancing quality of life. Trees are integral to the structure and visual character of these spaces, providing shade, screening, and landscape definition that supports a wide range of recreational uses. Parkland trees also serve as important habitats, particularly where woodland formations occur, contributing to biodiversity and ecological resilience of the area.

The Council recognises the value of these assets and seeks to manage trees in accordance with site-specific conditions, age, species, and health. Routine maintenance activities take place year-round including deadwood removal, formative pruning, clearance of low branches, and the removal of trees that have reached the end of their safe and useful life. Where appropriate and supported by available resources, new planting is undertaken in an effort to continue expanding the Tree Canopy across the County.

While some parks have limited planting capacity due to competing demands for recreational space, larger parks offer greater potential for introducing diverse tree species, individual specimen trees, and urban woodland areas. Tree-lined avenues remain a defining feature of many parks. The absence of spatial constraints allows for the inclusion of trees with varied form, habit, and ornamental value, including exotic species where appropriate to the character or heritage of the site.

Commemorative planting schemes also form part of the County's parkland landscape, supporting cultural and historical recognition. A notable example is the Famine Commemorative Arboretum in Corkagh Park, established in 1995, which features 150 tree species, representatives of countries to which Irish people emigrated following the Great Famine.

1.3 Trees & Social Heritage

Trees are amongst the most important and significant features in the urban and rural landscape. They are a part of our history and culture and have been worshipped, celebrated and revered in myth and folklore. Some trees are remarkable for their age, size, scientific, ecological or botanical interest or are valued for their intrinsic beauty while trees associated with historic events or landmark trees can be special to local interest and affection. There are a number of trees within the administrative area of South Dublin, on both public and private land, which have helped shape the County's cultural landscape and character.

South Dublin Libraries Local Studies section refers to the wonderful heritage of ancient trees in South Dublin County preserved in literature and folklore and indeed some these remarkable trees still survive and grow here. Trees associated with kingship, mythical trees, a hanging tree, saint's trees and venerable old trees have all been recorded here:

<https://localstudies.wordpress.com/2012/09/19/remarkable-trees-of-south-dublin-county/>

One of the trees referred to in the folklore record is the Balgaddy Bush. It lay on the boundary between the parishes of Clondalkin and Lucan, at a crossroads, a location redolent of folklore. The Balgaddy Bush or similar was replanted on the roundabout next to the area.

Trees are also recorded in our local place names demonstrating their importance both locally and County wide:

- **Lucan** (Irish: *Leamhcán*, meaning "place of elms")
- **Terenure** (Irish: *Tír an Iúir*, meaning "land of the yew tree")

1.4 Why have a Tree Management Policy?

South Dublin County Council is responsible for the management and maintenance of trees located in public spaces including streets, parks, and open spaces. The County is home to over 73,000 Street Trees as well as in excess of 125,000 trees located in out Parks and Open Spaces. With continuous development taking place and the ongoing effort to expand the County's Tree canopy coverage, it is anticipated that the tree population will continue increase into the future.

Mature and ageing tree populations are a notable feature in long-established areas such as Rathfarnham, Terenure, Templeogue, Tallaght, Clondalkin, Palmerstown, and Lucan. Sustained maintenance is required to ensure the long-term health, safety, and viability of these trees.

'Living with Trees', now in its third iteration, represents the continued strategic shift towards more integrated, proactive, and sustainable urban tree management. It reflects the Council's commitment to safeguarding one of its key natural assets through structured inspection, planned maintenance, and informed planting programmes. The aim is to deliver a more efficient, cost-effective, and responsive tree management service for the whole County.

Core objectives include:

- Enhancing tree health, safety, and longevity through improved management practices
- Implementing a cyclical, planned maintenance programme
- Optimising resource allocation to improve service delivery and value for money
- Increasing tree canopy cover across the County

1.5 Why Trees are Important

Trees are living, long-lived organisms that form a vital part of South Dublin County's landscape. They contribute significantly to the environmental quality, character, and identity of the County and provide wide-ranging benefits across social, environmental, economic, and health domains. The presence of trees enhances the public realm, improves quality of life, and supports the resilience and sustainability of the urban environment for current and future generations. The multifaceted value of trees can be categorised as follows:

Environmental Benefits

- **Air Quality:** Trees improve air quality by absorbing pollutants such as carbon dioxide, sulphur dioxide, and nitrogen dioxide, while releasing oxygen through photosynthesis. A single mature tree can produce sufficient oxygen annually for up to ten people. Trees also capture airborne particulates, further enhancing local air conditions.
- **Flood Risk Management:** Tree canopies intercept rainfall and reduce surface runoff, helping to mitigate flood risks, particularly in built-up areas.
- **Noise Barrier:** Trees can function as effective natural sound barriers, reducing ambient noise—especially from road traffic—in densely populated urban settings.

Climate Change Mitigation

- **Carbon Sequestration:** Trees serve as carbon sinks, absorbing and storing carbon dioxide from the atmosphere, thereby contributing to climate regulation and mitigation efforts.
- **Habitat Provision:** Trees, especially mature and decaying specimens, offer valuable habitats for a wide range of fauna including birds, bats, and invertebrates.
- **Habitat Connectivity:** Trees support ecological corridors by linking fragmented habitats across parks and open spaces, facilitating wildlife movement and enhancing biodiversity.

Social Value

- **Sense of Place:** Trees contribute to the unique character and identity of an area, framing streetscapes, landmarks, and public spaces.

- **Connection to Nature:** Through seasonal changes, floral displays, and leaf colouration, trees foster a direct and meaningful connection between people and the natural environment.
- **Cultural and Community Linkages:** As long-lived features of the landscape, trees form part of the social and historical fabric of communities, enhancing civic pride and reinforcing local identity.

Economic Benefits

- **Property Value Enhancement:** Studies indicate that the presence of trees can increase the market value of residential and commercial properties by between 5% and 18%.
- **Support for Local Economies:** Tree-lined streets and village centres attract greater footfall, improving the attractiveness and economic vitality of retail and commercial areas.
- **Energy Efficiency:** Strategically placed trees can reduce heating and cooling costs by providing shade, windbreaks, and contributing to the regulation of local microclimates.

Health and Wellbeing

- **Physical Health:** Trees support public health by encouraging outdoor activity, providing shade in recreational areas, and improving air quality.
- **Mental Health:** Research demonstrates that exposure to green spaces and treescapes can reduce stress, enhance mood, and improve overall mental wellbeing.
- **Emotional and Sensory Experience:** Seasonal changes, colours, blossoms, and natural aromas generated by trees contribute positively to emotional wellness and personal enjoyment of public spaces.

1.6 Impact of Climate Change and Trees

The Council will aim protect and increase the county's overall canopy cover to mitigate the effects of climate change.

As the impacts of climate change become increasingly evident, the role of trees in urban environments such as South Dublin County is of growing strategic importance. Predicted climate patterns for Ireland include warmer, wetter winters—with increased flood risk—and hotter, drier summers. In this context, the planting and long-term management of trees will be essential in supporting urban resilience.

This policy recognises the critical role of trees in moderating urban temperatures, contributing to stormwater management, and delivering health, social, and economic benefits. While flooding is not currently a primary issue in South Dublin, the ability of trees to absorb and recycle significant volumes of water may become more relevant as climate pressures intensify.

However, trees are not only part of the solution—they are also vulnerable to the effects of climate change. Altered weather patterns, along with increasing

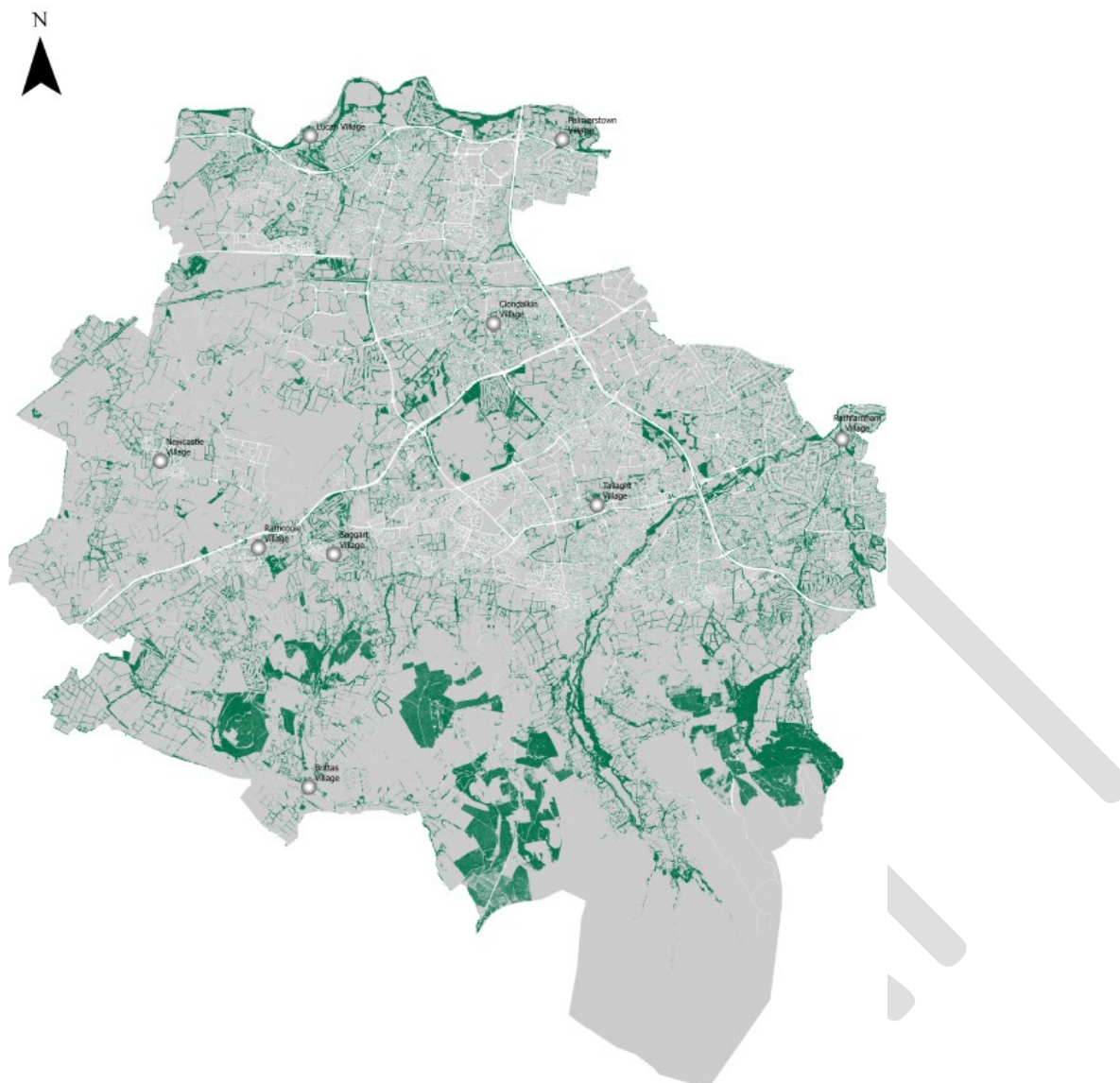
international trade, have heightened the risk of pest and disease outbreaks. The emergence and spread of conditions such as ash dieback and bacterial canker in horse chestnuts demonstrate the potential threats to Ireland's tree population. (Please see Appendix 6 which outlines the Councils approach to managing Ash Die Back)

In response, the Council acknowledges the need for greater species diversity in tree planting programmes. A diversified tree stock will help reduce the vulnerability associated with monocultures and increase the resilience of the urban forest. Ensuring the continuity of canopy cover in the face of emerging threats is a key objective of this Tree Management Policy.

The 'Dublin Tree Canopy Study' undertaken by the School of Geography, University College Dublin and published in March 2017 provides an analysis of data from an aerial survey of the tree cover for the Greater Dublin Region within the lands managed by the four Dublin local authorities and the Office of Public Works. Canopy cover is simply a measure of the physical coverage of the combined tree canopy cover over the land. The survey data is analysed in terms of the environmental services (biodiversity, air quality, water management) provided by the tree cover across the county.

The report indicated that "A tree canopy cover of 15% would make Dublin comparable to other European cities. Currently cover across the county is **10%** but there are large variations between local authorities."

In regard to the South Dublin Administrative Area the report found "South Dublin County Council (SDCC) displays a strong urban/rural divide in terms of canopy cover. Rural areas contain approximately double the canopy cover per unit area compared to its urban areas, due in part to the presence of forested areas in the south Dublin Mountains and areas adjacent to the river Liffey. SDCC's urban areas are impoverished in terms of tree canopy, with approximately two thirds of urban SDCC having less than 10% canopy cover. Areas of particular need of tree planting are Adamstown, City West, Firhouse, Jobstown, Tallaght, Palmerstown, Perrystown and Walkinstown." In the period since this survey, the most up to date maps indicate that SDCC now has a tree canopy coverage of 14%.



Bluesky Data demonstrating tree canopy coverage across South Dublin County As of 2025, this equates to 14% coverage.

South Dublin County Council’s Climate Change Action Plan promotes the use of trees and vegetation as measures to manage air pollution, drainage and flood mitigation etc. Actions aim to develop, agree and embed principles of sustainable and best practice tree planting and management in South Dublin. The residents of South Dublin are also encouraged to support the Council’s actions to increase tree canopy cover by planting trees in private gardens thus expanding the County’s Tree Canopy.

1.7 Trees and the Urban Environment

Although trees make a valuable contribution to the urban landscape, the growing conditions within towns and cities can be particularly challenging. In the public realm, trees often face significant constraints on healthy root development due to competition with underground utility infrastructure, compacted soils, road and

footpath foundations, and exposure to urban pollutants such as vehicle emissions, salt, and de-icing agents.

Physical damage to tree roots is a common consequence of roadworks, footpath reconstruction, and trenching associated with utility installations. In addition, trees are frequently impacted by mechanical damage from vehicles—particularly skips, high-sided vehicles, and improper parking on verges—as well as from acts of vandalism. Such damage can lead to poor structural development, reduced health, or even tree loss.

Improper tree management practices also contribute to poor outcomes, including incorrect pruning techniques, failure to remove stakes and tree ties in a timely manner, and a lack of follow-up maintenance. Verge parking is an increasing issue, resulting in soil compaction, root damage, and degradation of the surrounding public realm.

Despite these pressures, many urban trees continue to grow and provide value, although often with reduced life expectancy and compromised structure. These ongoing challenges reinforce the necessity of a strategic, proactive approach to tree planning, planting, and maintenance—ensuring that urban trees are supported to thrive within a complex and demanding environment.

1.8 Vision

This Tree Management Policy supports South Dublin County Council’s mission:

‘To be a place that meets the needs and ambitions of everyone in South Dublin,’

Our vision is for our trees to thrive in a well-managed, safe, sustainable environment for the benefit of current and future generations.

1.9 Aims of the Tree Management Policy

The overarching objective of South Dublin County Council’s Tree Management Policy is to ensure the safe, sustainable, and proactive management of the County’s tree population. This includes enhancing biodiversity, supporting landscape quality, and improving the overall quality of life for residents and visitors—now and into the future.

These aims will be delivered through the following strategic actions:

- Establishing and maintaining a clear, programmed approach to tree maintenance, management, and planting;
- Protecting and enhancing long-term tree canopy cover across the County;
- Ensuring the application of ‘right tree, right place’ for all new tree planting.

- Promoting the role of trees in defining the local character and visual identity of South Dublin's urban and suburban landscape;
- Acknowledging the ecological, aesthetic, social, cultural, and economic value of trees;
- Engaging, informing, and educating the community on the importance of trees in the public realm;
- Continuing the proactive management of the Council's tree stock in accordance with best practice;
- Allocating appropriate resources to support sustainable, professional tree management;
- Providing transparency and clarity around tree-related decision-making processes;
- Balancing the potential risks and nuisances associated with trees against their broader environmental and social benefits; and
- Recognising trees as living assets that form an integral part of the County's Green Infrastructure.

1.10 Action Plan

An Action Plan has been developed to guide the implementation of this Tree Management Policy up to 2031. The Plan outlines the key actions required to support and deliver the Policy's vision and strategic objectives. It sets out defined responsibilities, target outcomes, and indicative timeframes to ensure a structured and accountable approach to delivery.

1.11 Policy Monitoring and Review

This policy will be subject to annual monitoring to assess progress against the Action Plan and to pick up any emerging issues. A more thorough review of the policy will be undertaken every five years to adjust and incorporate any new changes in legislation, local policy, working practices or technical developments which may arise.

2.0 Tree Management

The Council will seek survey all Council owned and managed trees, so that the collected information can be used to manage the tree resource in a planned and efficient way:

The Council will undertake comprehensive surveys of all trees that are owned and managed on Council land. The information gathered through these surveys will form the foundation for a structured and efficient tree management strategy. This proactive approach enables the development and implementation of long-term management plans, the creation of informed work schedules, and the prioritisation of necessary tree works.

Effective tree management is vital to a Local Authority for a range of environmental, social, and economic reasons. Trees, being a significant asset to the County, contribute to biodiversity, improve air quality, mitigate the effects of climate change, and enhance the overall visual character of public spaces. Proper management also ensures that trees remain safe for the public, especially important in high-use areas such as parks, streets, and near buildings or roads.

Several key factors influence how trees are managed. Legislative requirements, such as the Wildlife Act 1981, place clear responsibilities on the Council to manage tree risk and protect wildlife habitats. In addition, the Roads Act 1993 places clear responsibilities on the Council to manage tree risk and protect wildlife habitats. Further, public expectations and feedback from constituents and Councillors can shape management priorities, especially regarding the preservation of valued local trees or concerns about potential hazards. Health and safety considerations are paramount, as unmanaged or unhealthy trees can pose serious risks to people and property, particularly in adverse weather conditions.

In balancing these influences, the Council aims to manage its tree stock responsibly, sustainably, and transparently—ensuring that trees continue to provide benefits for current and future generations while minimising risk and complying with all relevant legal and policy obligations.

2.1 Tree Maintenance Service

The Council's tree maintenance service will aim to provide a professional and reliable service to the public, Council members and other Council services. The key roles of the Council's tree maintenance service are:

- To manage inspections and surveys of trees under Council ownership and management.
- To develop and maintain the computerised tree management system.
- To plan and monitor all planned and reactive tree works
- To compile and deliver a 3 year programme of tree maintenance works.

- To deal with public enquiries and complaints on tree related matters.
- To provide professional advice to other Council services and Council members.
- To communicate with community stakeholders.

2.2 Tree Management Programme

The Council will continue to conduct a cyclical programme of tree maintenance

The scheduled maintenance of street trees is carried out in accordance with the Council's approved three-year Tree Management Programme (TMP). Prior to implementation, each programme is presented to the relevant Area Committee Meetings for review and approval which is then made available on the Council's website. The development of each programme considers previous work schedules, estate listings, and feedback received from constituents, Councillors, and Council departments. Before any works begin in a given area, a full inspection of the trees is undertaken to assess their condition and determine the required maintenance, which is then scheduled accordingly.

Planned maintenance is the Council's preferred approach for ensuring that trees remain safe, healthy, and well-managed. Since the adoption of the Tree Management Policy, the maintenance programme has shifted focus toward carrying out pruning and removal works on a road-by-road or estate-wide basis, rather than responding solely to individual requests. This strategic approach aims to improve the efficiency and productivity of tree maintenance crews and to support a proactive cycle of pruning, prioritising areas where intervention is most necessary.

It should be acknowledged, however, that throughout the course of the programme, the Council continues to carry out numerous individual tree works to address urgent or unforeseen issues not initially identified within the scope of the TMP. (see Section 2.5)

2.3 Tree Management System

The Council will continue to utilise its computerised, GIS-based tree management system to support the mobile mapping, surveying, and management of all street trees across the county. This integrated system provides a detailed, centralised record of each individual tree and allows the Council to track the complete history of any tree, including past inspections and all maintenance or works carried out.

2.4 Tree Survey

South Dublin County Council is estimated to be responsible for the management and maintenance of over 73,000 street trees and 125,000 trees in our Parks and Open Spaces. To date, more than 73,945 tree surveys have been completed.

Accurate and up-to-date information is essential for the effective management of the county's tree population and for enabling a structured, proactive approach to tree care.

The county-wide street tree survey programme continues to collect detailed data on each tree's location, species, age, size, condition, maintenance history, and specific management needs. This information is recorded within the Council's computerised tree management system, which serves as a central resource for monitoring and maintaining the urban tree stock. This data will support more informed decision-making, improve risk management, and help prioritise maintenance actions for the county's trees.

2.5 Reactive and Emergency Works

While the goal is to reduce the volume of reactive works over time through the implementation of a cyclical maintenance programme, there will always be a need for reactive interventions. These works are essential for managing immediate risks to public safety and typically involve the removal of dead trees, hazardous branches, and obstructions affecting sightlines or public infrastructure. Reactive works are undertaken in response to reports from other Council departments, local residents, elected members, or observations made by Council staff while working or travelling within the county.

The Council also maintains an emergency response plan for severe weather events. Tree maintenance crews are on standby 24 hours a day to respond to tree-related emergencies, ensuring a rapid and effective response to urgent safety concerns.

2.6 Public Awareness, Education & Engagement

The Council will aim to engage with the general public, schools, resident groups and environmental non-governmental organisations to promote a better understanding of the management, care and value of trees and to increase public awareness of their importance in promoting well-being, environmental sustainability and improving quality of life.

Where practicable, the Council will promote awareness and appreciation of trees through encouraging and facilitating the involvement of local communities, schools and other stakeholders in tree planting, management and educational activities. This will include organising events for National Tree Week in March and Tree Day in October, particularly in association with schools and community groups throughout the county as well as initiatives such as Ranger Lead walks and tree talks.

2.7 Prioritising Tree Work

2.7.1 Response to Enquiries

The Council's Customer Contact System serves as the first point of contact for public enquiries and complaints, including those related to trees.

Tree-related emergencies are referred immediately for action in line with the Council's emergency procedures. An emergency is defined as a tree that is at immediate risk of collapse or one that causes an obstruction requiring urgent attention.

For non-emergency tree enquiries, the Council informs customers of the relevant policy within 10 working days of receiving the enquiry. If a site inspection is required, the customer is advised that it will be carried out within 60 working days.

2.7.2 Inspections

The Council actively works to mitigate risks associated with public trees through a structured and proactive approach to tree management. All trees in public ownership are routinely inspected to assess their health, structural condition, and any potential safety concerns. These inspections are part of a cyclical programme, designed to identify and address risks before they develop into more serious issues. The frequency of inspections is determined by available resources and the severity of any previously identified risks within specific areas.

Where inspections identify the need for tree works, each case is categorised based on urgency and potential hazard. Required works are prioritised and scheduled as part of the Council's Tree Maintenance Programme, ensuring that the most critical issues are addressed first. All findings from inspections are recorded in the Council's electronic tree management system, which allows for consistent monitoring and informed decision-making.

In addition to routine inspections, the Council maintains a 24-hour emergency response for tree-related incidents, particularly in severe weather conditions. This ensures that immediate risks—such as trees at risk of collapse or those obstructing infrastructure—are dealt with promptly in accordance with the Council's emergency procedures.

Through these combined efforts, the Council aims to protect public safety, preserve the urban tree population, and ensure a responsible, risk-aware approach to tree management across the county.

2.7.3 Tree Risk Management

The Council is committed to developing a proactive, risk-based approach to tree management, centred on regular inspections and informed by the potential hazard each tree presents to its surrounding environment. This system prioritises tree risks based on the likelihood and impact of failure, ensuring that resources are directed where they are most needed to safeguard public safety.

While trees are managed for their many benefits—amenity, environmental, social, and heritage—their management must remain proportionate to the actual level of risk they pose. It is both normal and natural for trees to shed branches or, in rare cases, fall. Research from the UK Centre for Decision Analysis and Risk Management estimates the annual risk of an individual being killed by a falling tree or tree part at around one in 10 million. Although this risk is extremely low, public perception may differ, particularly following high-profile incidents or severe weather events.

The Council recognises both its moral and legal duty of care to minimise risk to the public and staff through the adoption of reasonable and proportionate safety measures. This involves balancing the need for public safety with the many values that trees provide. Some level of risk is unavoidable in environments where trees are present, and this is managed through careful assessment and professional judgement.

To support this, the Council continues to develop and implement a structured, good-practice approach to tree inspection and maintenance. This approach promotes tree health, diversity, a balanced age structure, and enhanced public amenity—while also identifying hazards early and enabling timely, cost-effective interventions. All required works are prioritised and carried out based on the level of risk identified through ongoing surveys and recorded in the Council’s tree management system.

2.7.4 Priority Rating System for Tree Works

To enable efficient use of resources, tree works will be prioritised and programmed based on the Priority Category as shown below. In each category a list of maintenance actions that would normally fall into that priority has been given as guidance in terms of what may be listed. However, until the tree has been inspected and the relevant information has been recorded its true priority cannot be established. It is strongly emphasised that these categories and figures are only guidelines which are applicable under normal circumstances. The occurrence of emergencies, storms and other events beyond our control must take priority over programmed work. This would result in scheduled work being delayed.

The following categories will be used when prioritising tree works:

Tree Maintenance Priority	
Priority	Type Of Maintenance
<p>Priority 1: Emergency Works</p> <p>Response to trees that are perceived to pose imminent danger to people or property</p> <p>Target completion - within 24hrs</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Making safe of storm damaged trees in adverse weather conditions • Making safe of large limbs snapped and hung up in the trees canopy

	<p>The speed at which scenarios like this after tended to will be influenced by the severity and proximity to people, vehicles and property.</p>
<p>Priority 2: High Priority Works</p> <p>Works on trees that are not considered high risk but where remedial work is required</p> <p>Target completion – action immediately or within 3 months</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dead, dying, diseased and dangerous in high pedestrian and traffic flow areas • Tree branches below 2.5m causing obstruction over high pedestrian flow footpaths • Tree branches below 4.5m causing obstruction over high traffic flow roads • Tree branches causing damage to property • Trees with root plate movement
<p>Priority 3: Medium Priority Works</p> <p>Improvement works that are considered desirable to enhance street scene or public space. Works to abate nuisance caused by Council trees</p> <p>Target completion – action within 12 months</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Crown thinning of trees close to public lighting • Crown lifting/ removal of low branches over footpaths and roadways • Pruning of trees near buildings to prevent damage from occurring • Snapped limbs/branches on public open space with low pedestrian access • Works which promote the effective establishment of newly planted trees
<p>Priority 4: Low Priority Works</p> <p>Target Completion – action when resources allow within 24 months +</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All other general tree maintenance work that is causing no risk of harm to persons or property.
<p>Priority 5: No action / Unnecessary Works</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This category consists of trees that have been inspected and considered healthy and safe with no works required at this time of inspection regime

3 Tree Maintenance

The Council maintains trees in public spaces, including streets, parks, and open areas, in accordance with recognised industry standards, including BS 3998:2010 – Tree Work – Recommendations. All arboriculture works are carried

out to ensure trees remain in a safe condition and do not pose a foreseeable risk to people, property, or infrastructure.

Street tree maintenance involves the inspection, pruning, removal, and replacement of trees, and is guided by the Council's approved three-year Tree Maintenance Programme. Before any physical works are carried out, comprehensive surveys are undertaken for each location. These surveys assess the condition of individual trees and identify any works required to maintain their health, structure, and safety.

Where possible, recommended works focus on preserving tree health and prolonging lifespan. However, if a tree is found to be in poor condition or poses a significant risk, it may be scheduled for removal. Following the completion of surveys, maintenance works are delivered either by the Council's in-house Tree Crews or by qualified contractors appointed through public procurement processes, all in accordance with relevant industry standards, including BS 3998:2010 – *Tree Work – Recommendations*.

3.1 Public Information on Tree Works

The Council operate on a programme of cyclical tree maintenance across 3 year periods. Each 3 year Tree Maintenance Programme (TMP) is presented to members during the appropriate Area Committee meetings and is compiled taking into account submissions by constituents and Councillors as well as analysing previous programmes. Once these lists are approved, and before the programme begins, the relevant details are published on the Council's website for the public to view. It is important to note that while the primary focus during this time is the 3 Year Programme, the Council are actively involved in tending to individual trees when and where required.

Tree removals, in particular, can be a sensitive and sometimes contentious issue. When a tree is identified for removal – and the works are not deemed an emergency – the Council takes steps to notify the public in advance. Trees may be flagged for removal through routine surveys or as a result of requests from residents or public representatives.

To inform residents and help reduce enquiries, advance notice is provided for non-emergency removals. This typically includes distributing leaflets to homes directly affected – generally the properties on either side and opposite the tree. The notice period will vary depending on the urgency and local significance of the tree. No advance notice is issued for the removal of dead trees or those posing an immediate safety risk.

3.2 Reasons for Tree Pruning and Felling

The Council will, wherever possible, try to avoid removing a tree or undertaking unnecessary pruning works where there is no good arboriculture reason. It has a

duty to manage the tree population for the benefit of the wider community and in accordance with good arboriculture practices.

The Council will undertake tree works to fulfil its legal obligations to ensure the safety of the public and properties. Tree works will be undertaken:

- Where an inspection has identified visible decay, fungal brackets indicating possible root and trunk decay or any other defect that would lead to the tree failing.
- A tree is dead or visibly in decline.
- To alleviate scenarios where trees are physically touching buildings such as contact with walls, windows and gutters.
- Where road signs, traffic signals, street lights, and sightlines for vehicles and pedestrians are obscured.
- Evidence has been provided that the tree is a contributing factor in causing structural damage that cannot be reasonably addressed by an alternative solution and proactive tree management has had no mitigating effect.

Tree removal or pruning will not be undertaken where:

- Trees are perceived to be too large.
- Satellite dish TV reception is interrupted.
- Sunlight may be blocked from reaching properties or gardens.
- Views are obstructed.
- Seasonal or naturally occurring events happen, e.g. falling leaves, fruit, seeds or berries, honeydew sap, bird droppings, pollen allergies.
- Insects or other non-hazardous wildlife are present.

A more detailed breakdown of the above works is available under Section 5 – Felling and Pruning Policies

3.3 Tree Pruning

The specification of works required by a tree depends on a wide variety of factors including, but not limited to, location, species type, size, aspect etc. Poor or unnecessary pruning can do more harm than good since each cut has the potential to change the growth of a tree, cause damage or allow the entry of wood decaying organisms. Therefore no branch should be removed without a good reason. Older trees do not tolerate pruning as well as younger trees and substantial pruning can be very damaging. The effect of pruning also varies between species and some are not naturally tolerant of cutting. In general, minimal pruning works will be undertaken in order to sufficiently manage a tree. This may often only involve removing the lower branches to increase clearance for pedestrians and vehicle traffic and/or cutting back the branches from adjacent buildings.

Works specified are done so to manage both the health and safety of the public as well as sustaining the longevity of the tree. In addition, the same approach to

maintenance cannot be applied to all tree types and sizes. For example, young immature trees, in particular, can benefit from pruning in their formative years. Works should be carried out in accordance with British Standard BS 3998: 2010 Tree Work – Recommendations as required throughout the early years of a tree’s life in the landscape. It involves removing crossing branches and potentially weak forks to encourage a good natural shape, reduce health issues and reduce the need for major pruning when the tree is mature.

3.4 Topping of Trees

The Council will avoid undertaking certain types of actions should there be evidence to suggest it may cause more harm than good. Topping of trees (reduction in height) causes large wounds, exposing trees to decay pathogens and causing their long-term decline, as well as being unsightly and potentially unsafe. Topping is therefore only considered where trees have serious defects, that cannot be reasonably addressed otherwise, and their short-term retention is essential or highly desirable.

It is often the view of residents that removing the crown or 'topping' a tree or trees will improve light levels or views or improve reception to TVs, satellites etc.. Whereas this may be true in the short term, any pruning, but especially 'topping', will cause decline in some species or rapid growth in others. Regrowth resulting from 'topping' will often be denser than the original crown and be weakly attached to the branches it develops from. Wounds associated with topping are often large and are more likely to be colonised by wood decaying fungi. 'Topping' is not good practice and can lead to dangerous trees in the future. For these reasons the Council will not 'top' trees.

3.5 Removal of Trees

Trees are removed only when deemed absolutely necessary. The criteria for tree removal are:

- tree is dead, dying or is considered hazardous due to its poor structural or biological condition. Hazardous conditions may exist above and/or below ground and may include significant root, trunk or crown decay, split trunks and crotches, and large dead limbs.
- The tree has declined beyond the point of recovery and is no longer meeting the functional or aesthetic requirements of a street tree.
- Fatally diseased trees (eg. Ash dieback, Fireblight Disease) may be removed before they reach the primary threshold in order to prevent the spread of disease to healthy trees or to remove trees before they deteriorate further, where there is potential for a high priority risk rating
- To allow space for development of nearby trees that may be more desirable for retention

- To make way for any approved engineering or building works when unavoidable construction work will immediately compromise the stability or viability of the tree.
- Tree proven to be causing significant structural damage that cannot be reasonably addressed by an alternative solution and proactive tree management has had no mitigating effect.
- Where a tree is located in close proximity to a public lighting column and the long term viability of the tree if retained in its location would be compromised by a requirement for ongoing maintenance in order to maintain the effectiveness of the adjoining street light.

3.6 Stump Removal

When a tree is felled by the Council, it is not always possible to remove the stump immediately. Under these circumstances a short tree stump is left as a temporary measure. The stump is usually left at around 1m high so that does not constitute a trip hazard in the intervening period.

3.7 Quality of Work

All tree works will be undertaken in accordance with British Standard BS 3998: 2010 Tree Work - Recommendations and current Health & Safety requirements. All staff undertaking tree works shall be competent with appropriate training, experience and qualifications. Any tree surgery contractors engaged to work on Council owned trees shall be competent and adequately qualified, trained, experienced and appropriately insured.

Any tree work carried out should be essential to the long term retention of the tree in its current position rather than simply for appeasement reasons. The Council will aim to maintain a natural silhouette to a tree unless it can be shown to be in the best interests of the long term health of the tree to do otherwise. The Council will not normally consent to pruning works that are greater than the standard set out by the Arboricultural Association or industry best practice, generally accepted to be crown reductions and thinnings of no greater than 30% by volume.

3.8 Unauthorised Pruning, Removal or Damage to Council Owned Trees

The Council will seek to prosecute anyone found to be carrying out unauthorised work or causing damage to its trees without permission and where appropriate apply the maximum penalty.

The unauthorised removal of trees affects the amenity of an area and destroys the many positive benefits of trees in a locality. This type of activity is referred to as Criminal Damage to Public Property. Any instances of this will be reported to An Garda Siochana for investigation.

All Council staff operate from vehicles displaying the Council's logo and tree contractors operating on behalf of the Council are required to erect signage which refers specifically to South Dublin County Council. If a person is observed pruning, removing or causing damage to a Council owned tree and it is suspected that the action is being carried out without the Council's consent, the matter must be reported by the observer to An Garda Síochána in the first instance and the Council notified.

Unauthorised damage, pruning or removal of a Council owned/managed tree may be prosecuted by An Garda Síochána under the Criminal Damage Act 1991.

Unauthorised works or damage to Council-owned trees may result in a charge being levied. This charge will reflect the amount of damage sustained and where the life/safety of the trees is undermined, it will include the cost of total tree replacement and compensation for loss of tree value. These charges will be drawn up by professional parks staff and each case will be assessed on an individual basis using a recognised tree valuation system (eg. CAVAT or Helliwell)

3.9 Arrangement or Payment for Street Tree Maintenance by Residents

The Council will not enter into any arrangements where members of the public pay for, or contribute towards the cost of tree maintenance works. We will also not allow tree surgeons engaged by members of the public, access to climb trees under our stewardship. Except in the case of overhanging branches any unauthorised works to Council owned trees carried out by any person would be treated as criminal damage.

3.10 Timber and Green Waste Use Policies

A large quantity of wood and woodchip is produced each year from pruning and felling trees. Wherever possible, the wood debris from tree work is converted and recycled into woodchips for use as a mulch in planted areas, surfacing for woodland paths within the Council's parks and open spaces or used in the development of Mini Woodlands. Larger sections that can't be processed by the woodchipper are recycled according to the condition and species of timber. Timber and green waste generated from tree works in woodlands is usually left in situ to create wildlife habitats.

3.11 Nesting Birds

The Council will carry out inspections of trees prior to tree works for bird nests during the period of March 1 – August 31, comply with the relevant legislation and seek expert advice from relevant organisations where necessary.

The Wildlife Act 1976 (as amended 2000) is the principle legislation protecting nesting birds in Ireland. The Act makes it an offence to kill, injure or take any wild bird and to take, damage or destroy any nest that is either in use or being built.

Section 40 of the Act prohibits cutting of vegetation on uncultivated land between March 1st and August 31st. However, it is accepted in practice that street trees require year round maintenance to ensure the Health and Safety of Road users, this allows for tree maintenance works to be carried out during the closed period subject to compliance with best practice protocols in regard to pre-works assessment of trees for active nests or nesting birds. Where an active nest or nesting birds are observed, no tree works should be carried out. Instead, the location will be listed and returned to post Bird Nesting Season.

The primary reason for a year round programme of street tree maintenance is to ensure public safety and minimise tree hazards. Phenological and biological research also indicates that a number of tree species including cherry and walnut are best pruned in mid-summer to avoid introduction of disease while maple and horse chestnut will bleed sap extensively if pruned during early season growth.

Appendix 5 outlines the Code of Practice for Pre Works inspection of trees for Nesting Birds. The Council's tree maintenance crews or contractors engaged by the Council, will be required to thoroughly check trees for nesting birds during the nesting period (March 1 – August 31) and take appropriate measures to prevent disturbance prior to the commencement of routine works.

3.12 Autumn Leaf Fall Management

The Council's street cleaning contract includes leaf sweeping during the autumn period. Leaves are removed from public roads and footpaths throughout the county. This usually begins in September and extends to the end of January each year.

Residents are responsible for dealing with leaf-fall on their private property. Leaves from private gardens, drives or pathways should not be swept into the road but should be disposed of in a responsible manner. Options may include:

- Home composting
- Collection from your home via the brown bin
- Taking them to the Civic amenity for recycling

Resident Associations, Tidy Towns groups and community groups may wish to compost leaves to create beneficial leaf mould which is a valuable resource and can be used to enrich soils.

3.13 Pest & Disease Control

The Council will work with the Department of Agriculture to investigate signs of pests and diseases and where practicable, will respond in accordance with current best practice

In the last few years, several new pests and diseases have emerged in Europe as significant risks to tree health and plant biosecurity. Due to Ireland's island status, there is a better chance of remaining free of many pests and diseases not currently

found on the island. However, the growth of global trade in plants and the increasing movement between countries of plant material increases the risk of new pests and diseases entering Ireland. There is also a risk of exotic pests arriving in dunnage and timber packaging through our ports. The predicted changes in climate may increase the risk of these pests and diseases spreading. Small changes in temperature or weather patterns, due to climate change, can enable organisms to become established in areas where previously they would have struggled to survive.

While this issue is generally managed by the Department of Agriculture, SDCC will take action where required and engage the relevant authorities.

3.14 Ivy on Trees

The Council will seek to retain an acceptable level of ivy on trees where the inspection for decay or defects is not compromised

The Council acknowledges the considerable value of ivy (*Hedera helix*) as a habitat and food source for wildlife. Unless ivy has established on young or weak trees, where it may compete for water and nutrients and suppress healthy growth, it causes little harm. However, where ivy has taken hold on mature trees, especially those close to roads and public areas, judgements must be made on its retention based on the health of the tree and the possibility of cavities or defects being hidden from view as well as its increased vulnerability to wind damage. In these situations, removal of ivy may be deemed necessary for risk management purposes.

3.15 Tree Sculpture

Tree Sculpture will be explored where appropriate, to allow trees to continue to make a contribution after they have reached the end of their safe useful life span and to provide an interesting feature in the landscape.

4 Tree Planting / Replacement Planting

South Dublin County Council acknowledges the important role of street trees in enhancing the urban environment and is dedicated to planting new trees to preserve the visual appeal of South Dublin for future generations. A database of potential tree planting sites will be maintained, and an annual tree planting programme will be carried out, subject to available resources.

4.1 Right Tree Right Place

The principle of planting the *right tree in the right place* will guide all new and replacement tree planting initiatives.

Careful selection of both tree species and planting locations is vital to reduce the risk of future nuisance and avoid unnecessary maintenance costs. All proposed planting sites will be inspected to determine their suitability, taking into account factors such as underground and overhead services, visibility lines, signage, traffic signals, available space for future growth, and more.

When positioning new street trees, the Council will specifically aim to:

- Prevent future obstruction of public lighting by ensuring that the mature tree canopy is ideally more than 5 metres – and no less than 3 metres – from any lighting column
- Maintain a minimum clear footpath width of 1.2 metres, ensuring pedestrian accessibility is not compromised by tree growth
- Prioritise sufficient soil volume at planting sites to support healthy tree development and long-term survival

4.2 Tree Planting

The Council plans its annual tree planting programme based on the resources available within the allocated budget. Since 2015, an annual planting schedule has been in place.

Priority areas for new planting include locations where trees have been previously removed or where there is a recognised need to enhance overall tree canopy cover. Requests for new trees from Councillors and local residents will be considered as part of the programme. These requests will be assessed and prioritised based on the existing tree presence on the street, including trees in front gardens and nearby properties.

Residents or residents' associations wishing to plant trees or shrubs in Council-managed streets, roadside verges, or open spaces must first obtain permission from the Council before starting any planting projects.

The planting programme will take place between November and March, which is recognised as the optimal period for planting bare-root and root-balled trees. All planting will be carried out by trained personnel or under proper supervision, followed by appropriate post-planting maintenance.

All tree planting works will comply with the Council's Tree Planting Guidelines and adhere to relevant British Standards, including BS 8545:2014 – Trees: from nursery to independence in the landscape – Recommendations.

The majority of new trees planted will be advanced nursery stock, typically with a stem girth of 12–16 cm and a height of 3–5 metres. Choosing this more mature tree size has been shown to significantly reduce the likelihood of vandalism.

4.3 Design of Street Tree Planting Schemes

Over time, many of our streets have been planted with trees across multiple generations, often without a coordinated or well-considered design. While this informal approach can sometimes succeed, in other cases it has resulted in overcrowding, the use of unsuitable species, or poor placement—ultimately diminishing the quality and enjoyment of the street environment. As such, it is not always appropriate to replace a tree in the exact same location.

Where there is a significant need for new or replacement tree planting within a streetscape, the Council's preferred approach is to develop a tree planting plan tailored to the specific character, scale, and function of the area, while also considering local interests. The design of any new planting scheme should complement the existing landscape character and contribute positively to the local environment.

Tree species will be carefully selected based on their suitability in scale and form, their visual and ecological contribution, and their ability to thrive in the given space. Planting density and species selection will be guided by available space to ensure each tree has the conditions needed to grow into a healthy, mature specimen. Where appropriate, such plans may involve community consultation before final approval and implementation.

The Design Manual for Urban Roads and Streets (2013) outlines how street trees are an integral part of street design as they contribute to the sense of enclosure, act as a buffer to traffic noise / pollution and enhance place. A traffic calming effect can also be achieved, where trees are planted in continuous rows and their canopies overhang, at least in part, the vehicular carriageway. Street trees can also be used to enhance legibility by highlighting the importance of connecting routes and distinguishing one area from another through variations in size and species selection.

See Appendix 4

4.4 Species Selection

The selection of tree species for street planting is primarily based on their suitability to the planting location and the surrounding landscape character. In contrast, parks and open spaces allow for a broader range of species, chosen for their suitability to the setting, biodiversity value, and visual appeal.

Street tree selection is guided by several factors, including the tree's mature size, water requirements, crown shape, and ongoing management needs. The species used in Council-led planting programmes are chosen based on local policy, arboricultural expertise, and practical experience. A suggested list of suitable species for street, open space, garden, and native tree planting is included in Appendix 1. This list is not exhaustive; other species may also be considered where they have demonstrated suitability for specific locations.

To protect against the risk of disease or other environmental threats, the Council recognises the importance of species diversity. Over-reliance on a single species increases vulnerability, so the resilience of the tree population will be strengthened by planting a wider variety of trees. However, where a particular species forms a distinctive avenue or visually unified group along a street, replacement trees will match or closely resemble the existing species to maintain visual continuity.

In addition to increasing species diversity, the Council will prioritise the planting of large-canopy tree species wherever site conditions allow. These trees provide significantly greater environmental and social benefits compared to smaller species. As such, the preference will always be to plant the largest appropriate tree for a given location.

The Council also supports and encourages the planting of fruit trees in suitable locations such as parks, community spaces, and school grounds to promote engagement, education, and local food production.

4.5 Replacement Tree Planting

The Council aims to ensure, subject to available budget resources, that every tree felled should be replaced to ensure that over the years, the County retains its tree stock for future generations, although it is not always practical or prudent to replace a tree in the same location or with the same species that was previously planted.

The Council is committed to maintaining and renewing the county's tree population for the benefit of future generations. Subject to available budget resources, the Council aims to ensure that every tree felled is replaced, wherever possible. However, it may not always be practical or appropriate to replant a tree in the exact same location or with the same species.

Where the original site is assessed as suitable for replanting, a replacement tree of an appropriate species may be planted. However, because tree stumps are added

to a stump removal list and time is needed for the decay of underground root material, there may be a delay of 3 to 5 years between removal and replanting.

All replacement planting will be carried out during the dormant season (typically between November and March) to ensure the best possible conditions for successful establishment.

4.6 Use of Tree Guards

The Council does not install mesh tree guards around street trees or trees in public open spaces. Based on long-term experience, tree guards often become targets for vandalism, collect unsightly litter, and in some cases, cause more harm than good. The structure of the guard itself can be used as leverage, making it easier to break the trunks of young trees.

To reduce the risk of vandalism and improve tree establishment, the Council's preferred method is to plant trees with a robust stem girth, typically 14–16 cm, and support them with a low staking system positioned approximately 1 metre above ground level. This approach has proven effective, as the combination of a stronger tree and low-profile support significantly limits the opportunity for damage.

4.7 Post Planting Maintenance Programme

Proper care and maintenance of newly planted trees is essential, particularly during the first few years when trees are most vulnerable. The highest risk of failure occurs within the first five years after planting. As part of Council procurement, the contractors engaged to plant the trees are also responsible for 24 months post planting maintenance to ensure the trees establish.

Residents are also encouraged to assist by watering trees located outside or near their properties, especially during dry or windy periods. A recommended amount is 10–20 litres per week.

Where available, watering can be done using the plastic irrigation tube that extends from the soil at the base of the tree—this tube directs water down to the tree's roots. Residents are asked to conserve water by using collected rainwater (e.g. via a water butt) or greywater from household use, such as water collected in a sink basin.

Ongoing maintenance will also include adjusting or loosening tree ties as needed, and removing stakes and ties once the tree is securely established and able to stand independently.

4.8 Sponsored Memorial Tree Planting

The Council has a protocol to address occasional requests to accommodate sponsorship of trees as memorials or to commemorate major life events. Due to potential sensitivities surrounding memorial tree plantings, any development of a scheme for sponsored memorial tree planting in public spaces would have to carefully consider the selection of suitable sites where the risk of vandalism or damage to the tree would be minimal. The process for planting a Memorial Tree or Tree of Hope is as follows:

Tree of Hope

South Dublin County Council will consider the planting of Trees of Hope within its parks and open spaces (to include areas under the control and/or maintenance of the Council) subject to the availability of suitable locations. Individuals or groups seeking to plant such a tree will be requested to adhere to the following terms and conditions:

1. The group/individual seeking a Tree of Hope must submit a written application to SDCC outlining the following:
 - The proposed location
 - The proposed specimen
 - Contact name and details of the primary applicant
2. Once this written application has been received, the relevant parties will meet at the site of choice to discuss and agree the final location for the tree. While the applicant(s) may have identified a particular site they deem as appropriate, SDCC reserve the right to alter/change/move location to suit existing services, maintenance schedules or conditions to ensure the tree can survive in a healthy environment and not pose potential issues now or into the future.
3. At this time, all parties will also discuss the variety of tree to be planted. SDCC operate a 'Right Tree, Right Place' methodology for tree planting and will assist when required in the selection of a tree. Tree species selection will be dictated by criteria such as, but not limited to site conditions, site location, proximity to buildings/roads/overhead cables etc. with the focus, again, on giving the tree the best chance possible at thriving.
4. Once these items are agreed, the individual(s) or group(s) will be allowed to proceed with the planting of a Tree of Hope.
5. SDCC respectfully request that no ribbons or decorations are placed on the tree as these can have adverse effects on the growth of the tree.
6. SDCC respectfully request that no memorial plates are placed on or around the tree

7. SDCC respectfully request that the group or individuals responsible for planting the tree remove all excess soil/waste etc. and leave the site as tidy and presentable as possible.
8. The Council reserves the right to remove or relocate a tree at any time should it be considered necessary.
9. Requests for the planting of a Tree of Hope should be sent in writing to the Administrative Officer, Environment, Water and Climate Change Directorate.

Memorial Tree

1. The group/individual seeking a Memorial must submit a written application to SDCC outlining the following:
 - The proposed location
 - The proposed specimen
 - Contact name and details of the primary applicant
2. Once this written application has been received, the relevant parties will meet at the site of choice to discuss and agree the final location for the tree. While the applicant(s) may have identified a particular site they deem as appropriate, SDCC reserve the right to alter/change/move location to suit existing services, maintenance schedules or conditions to ensure the tree can survive in a healthy environment and not pose potential issues now or into the future.
3. At this time, all parties will also discuss the variety of tree to be planted. SDCC operate a 'Right Tree, Right Place' methodology for tree planting and will assist when required in the selection of a tree. Tree species selection will be dictated by criteria such as, but not limited to site conditions, site location, proximity to buildings/roads/overhead cables etc. with the focus, again, on giving the tree the best chance possible at thriving.
4. Once these items are agreed, the individual(s) or group(s) will be requested to arrange to make a payment to the Council. Once this payment is received, planting will be arranged.
5. Applicants will be made aware of when the planting is taking place so they have the option to attend if they so wish.
6. SDCC respectfully request that no ribbons or decorations are placed on the tree as these can have adverse effects on the growth of the tree.
7. SDCC respectfully request that no memorial plates are placed on or around the tree

8. The Council reserves the right to remove or relocate a tree at any time should it be considered necessary.
9. Requests for the planting of a Memorial Tree should be sent in writing to the Administrative Officer, Environment, Water and Climate Change Directorate.

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5 Felling & Pruning Policies

To ensure that requests for tree works are dealt with efficiently and consistently, South Dublin County Council's policy in relation to the more common types of request is outlined below.

5.1 Obstruction of Street Light

The Council will undertake work to a tree in Council ownership/management to ensure that trees do not unduly obstruct the streetlight.

Tree pruning will be undertaken where reasonably feasible to address obstruction of a street light. In circumstances where the long term viability of the tree if retained in its location would be compromised by a requirement for ongoing maintenance in order to maintain the effectiveness of the adjoining street light, the tree may be removed. Alternative public lighting solutions should also be explored for areas of existing mature and established trees. Where a tree is removed from a roadside verge, due to proximity to a public lighting column, a replacement tree will not normally be planted back into the same verge. The Design Manual for Urban Roads and Streets (2013) recommends that new lights should be positioned away from trees, which in time may grow to envelop the lanterns or cast shadows which will render the lighting less effective.

New Tree Planting will not take place within 5m of a lamppost and existing trees will be maintained to ensure that lampposts can function effectively.

5.2 Obstruction of Road Traffic Sight Lines, Traffic Signals or Street Signs

The Council will undertake work to a tree in Council ownership/management to maintain clear sight lines, where reasonably feasible, at road junctions and access points and for traffic signals and street signs.

Where an ongoing pruning requirement arises as a result of sightlines, road signs or traffic signals being obscured by tree growth or regrowth, consideration will be given to the removal of trees to minimise ongoing repeat maintenance costs.

5.3 Obstruction of Roads, Cycleways and Footpaths

The Council will undertake work to a tree in Council ownership/management where it is causing an obstruction to a public highway, public footpath or cycleway, public right of way, access to property or public open space, where reasonably feasible.

Tree pruning to achieve the following height clearance is considered appropriate where reasonably practical and where it can be achieved without harming tree health or form:

- Pedestrian areas: 2.5m
- Cycleways: 3m
- Distributor roads / streets: 4.5m

Any works necessary to prevent an obstruction in the width of a public footpath due to the presence of a Council owned tree will be considered on a case-by-case basis.

If a privately owned tree or other vegetation is causing an obstruction to a footpath or road, powers exist under Section 70 of the Roads Act 1993 which enable the Roads Authority to deal with the matter. The section allows for the serving of notice on the landowner setting out remedial works to be carried out. Failing action by the landowner, the Roads Authority can arrange to have the necessary works carried out and seek to recoup the cost of the works from the landowner concerned.

5.4 Trip Hazard

The Council will seek to make safe a trip hazard on a public footpath or road caused by the growth of a Council owned/managed tree.

The roots of trees exploit the soil in various ways dependent on species, local conditions, and history of site disturbance. Pressure exerted by the radial growth of roots can deform the surfaces of footpaths, roads or other light structures, especially in the close confines of the urban setting. Damage occurs most commonly close to the tree and will diminish rapidly with distance. To constitute a trip hazard the deformation will be assessed by the Council. Where a hazard exists and is attributable to tree roots engineering options will be explored before root pruning or tree removal is undertaken.

It is often possible to repair paths to take account of adjacent trees and tree roots. Where roots protrude they can be root pruned, or the path can be re-laid around the tree with flexible material such as asphalt to provide a smooth surface or using reinforced concrete or other engineering solutions.

Where trees are considered to be causing damage to paths or footpaths, the Council will not normally consider tree removal except where there is a risk to public health which cannot otherwise be mitigated. Removal of the tree will usually be the last resort, accepting that in some circumstances where the tree is of low value or easily replaced, removal may be the most appropriate solution. The Council will seek to explore engineering options through internal consultation between the Public Realm and Roads Maintenance sections to reduce trip hazards before root pruning or tree removal.

5.5 Trees in Conflict with the Built Environment

The Council will not normally consider the removal of a tree where structural damage can be repaired or reasonably addressed through appropriate engineering solutions.

Trees in urban environments will, at times, come into conflict with people and infrastructure. This can lead to pressure for trees to be pruned or removed. A common concern among residents is the perceived threat posed by tree roots to nearby buildings or built structures. However, these concerns are often unfounded. The majority of trees growing close to buildings do not cause damage. Sound foundations are generally resistant to direct root intrusion. While lightly loaded structures with inadequate foundations may be affected by root or trunk pressure, in such cases trees are rarely the primary cause of the issue. In cases where structural damage can be repaired or reasonably mitigated through engineering or design solutions, the Council will not normally support the removal of a tree, unless it is in poor structural or physiological condition.

The Council acknowledges that trees under its ownership or management may sometimes be implicated in damage to nearby structures. However, it also recognises that trees are not always the causative factor. Nearby trees are often blamed prematurely, before full investigations are conducted. Other common causes of structural damage include poor foundation design, general construction failure, nearby excavation works, or structural alterations to adjacent properties.

Where a homeowner believes that a Council-owned tree is causing or has caused damage to their property, they are encouraged to contact the Council directly and outline their position. From here, the Council will evaluate each individual scenario on its own merits to identify the most appropriate way forward. Concerns over damaged property will need to be assessed as a Claim with the Council's insurers. However, the Council will explore the options available to it in terms of dealing with an alleged problem tree.

It is important to note that any action taken by the Council is independent of the insurer's determination of liability. The removal of a tree is not an admission of liability by the Council. Liability will be assessed solely by our insurers. Any concerns or queries over these assessments must be made with them directly.

5.6 Trees and Drains

Any concerns about the condition of public drains should be reported to the Uisce Éireann. Household owners are usually responsible for the maintenance of the drains within their own property boundaries.

5.7 Trees, Riverbanks & Watercourses

The Council liaise with relevant internal Council Departments and fisheries authorities when attending to works on or beside watercourses to ensure they are approached in a sensitive, productive and safe manner.

5.8 Trees and Utilities

Utility companies have certain legal rights to carry out works to public or privately owned trees to address health and safety problems and to maintain a clearance between trees and their apparatus. This may sometimes involve the loss of trees or removal of large parts of a tree leaving a misshapen and unbalanced crown and reducing the amenity value of the tree. Excavation works near to street trees brings considerable potential disturbance within the root zone of trees, often reducing their stability and long-term viability.

Prior to any works taking place, where works to trees are necessary as a result of proximity or conflict, the Council will encourage utility operators to adopt the most appropriate long term solution, giving consideration to tree health, local tree cover and visual amenity.

Utility companies must consult with the Public Realm section of South Dublin County Council in advance of any pruning, trenching or other works likely to affect Council owned trees, and will refer to the procedures and conditions of the Council's Roadmap system. They will also be responsible for being up to speed with the 'Living with Trees' policy and will agree to comply with all its actions as well as those conditions outlined by the Council.

It is important to note that if homeowners have concerns over trees in conflict with specific utilities they are required to contact the utility provider directly eg:

Drains and Water: Uisce Eireann
Electrical: ESB
Broadband: Specific to the area and provider

5.9 Valuing Trees and Compensating for Tree Damage

The Council will use a standard Amenity Tree Valuation formula to value all Council street trees and use this information to assist in the management of the tree stock.

In recent years there has been increased interest in quantifying the benefits of trees and translating them into financial terms. Several recognised formulae such as the CAVAT (Capital Asset Value for Amenity Trees) and Helliwell systems have been developed to allow authorities to prepare a valuation of their tree stock which can then be used to justify managing the trees as if it were a financial asset of the community. An amenity tree valuation system takes into account: tree size, longevity and condition, site suitability and other attributes to give a monetary

value used to help guide management decisions. This is a major step forward as traditionally, the management of trees and woodlands by local authorities has been seen solely as a cost, with no acknowledgement of the financial benefits that trees bring.

It is important to place a monetary value on South Dublin County Council's trees because of the contribution trees make to the economic, social and environmental landscape of the county. Assessing the value of each tree will enable a more effective and efficient level of understanding to be applied to a given tree or group of trees when deciding their future management or removal.

The Council will also use a standard amenity tree valuation system to provide the basis for calculating the replacement value of any trees that have been significantly damaged or removed and the Council will seek this level of compensation from organisations found to be responsible for such damage.

5.10 Street Trees Overhanging Neighbouring Properties / Roots Encroaching into Gardens

The Council will not normally prune trees that overhang neighbouring properties unless the trees are dangerous or are causing actionable nuisance.

The Council has no legal obligation to prune overhanging trees unless they are causing direct damage to an adjacent property or are imminently dangerous. This reflects the Council's position as an owner of thousands of trees and the resources available. Given that many thousands of Council trees overhang boundaries, it is not an effective use of resources to prune every overhanging limb.

Tree roots in gardens are a natural occurrence and root presence is unlikely to be affected by tree pruning. However, situations where a tree is genuinely generating root encroachment to an exceptional, severe and unreasonable degree are dealt with on a case-by-case basis.

Adjacent landowners are entitled to prune encroaching tree branches or roots back to the boundary of their property. However, excessive root pruning may destabilise the tree, which may lead to liability if the root pruning leads to the tree falling, dying or damaging property. Legally, they are required to retain the pruning's and offer them back to the Council but the Council is not obliged to accept them.

Please also refer to points 5.5 and 5.30.

5.11 Trees Overhanging Private Property from Neighbouring Private property

If a tree is growing on privately owned land, then the maintenance rests entirely with the landowner.

Wherever possible however, we would advise that the best way to resolve problems with trees or hedges growing in adjacent properties, is for property owners to talk to their neighbours and to try to come to an amicable agreement.

5.12 Dangerous Trees in Private Ownership

Owners of trees and woodlands have a statutory duty under the Occupiers Liability Act 1995 and the Roads Act 1993 to maintain their trees to ensure they are not dangerous or in a hazardous condition and that they do not pose a threat to the public.

Section 70 of the Roads Act 1993 obliges landowners and occupiers of land to take all reasonable care to ensure that the trees, hedges and other vegetation growing on their land are not, or could not become, a danger to people using or working on a public road. Examples of hazards might include dead or dangerous trees, or trees and hedges overhanging roads, blocking footpaths or obscuring road signs or sight lines i.e. the view of the road ahead.

Under this section, the Council can serve a written notice on a landowner or occupier requiring the carrying out of specified works within a period of time stated in the notice to ensure the safety of those using or working on a public road. An owner or occupier who fails to comply with a notice under this section shall be guilty of an offence and the Council may take the action specified in the notice or such other action as it thinks fit, including prosecution. Where the Council considers that a tree, shrub, hedge or other vegetation presents an immediate and serious hazard to persons using a public road, it may take immediate action to reduce or remove the hazard and seek the costs from landowners where the Council have to carry out the work.

It should also be noted that the Communications Regulations Act 2002 and the Electricity Regulation Act 1993 give authority to utility suppliers to prune trees.

5.13 Trees Touching or Causing Direct Damage to Property

If a tree in Council ownership/managed by the Council is touching your property (dwelling house, garage etc) the Council will take action to remove the nuisance.

The Council will cut back trees to provide 2m clearance from properties where they touch windows, walls, roofs or gutters to avoid damage. In many cases the solution will be for the Council to prune the tree, but in some circumstances, it may be more appropriate to fell the tree. If pruning is appropriate, we will endeavour to undertake works to stop the problem reoccurring within three years. A balance will be struck between the nuisance experienced by individuals and the benefits offered by the tree to the wider community.

5.14 Trees Blocking Natural Light

The Council will not normally prune or fell a Council owned tree to improve natural light in a property. Each case will be evaluated on its own merits.

Occasionally the council receives complaints about urban trees blocking light from properties or shading gardens. However, the seriousness of this effect is as variable as the perception of it and often the removal of the tree will have little effect on the amount of sunlight reaching the house or garden. An example of this is where the house is north facing and the tree is small or at a distance.

There is no right to light under the law and therefore the Council has no legal obligation to abate this perceived nuisance. However, situations where a tree is genuinely blocking daylight from habitable rooms to an exceptional, severe and unreasonable degree are dealt with on a case-by-case basis. A habitable room is defined as residential living rooms, bedrooms and kitchens (if they include a dining space and are larger than 12.6sqm). Bathrooms, toilets, landings and lobbies are excluded. Each case will be evaluated having regard for balancing the severity of the nuisance to the individual with the benefits of the tree for the wider community. Pruning will normally only be carried out where the tree is a significant contributory factor and there is a reasonable chance that pruning will improve the situation. Any decision to undertake tree works would take into account the health and significance of the tree, its contribution to wider public amenity, the orientation of the house, and whether the tree was already present when the occupier moved into the property. Shading of habitable rooms of property will be given more weight than the shading of the garden.

5.15 Obstruction of a View

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

There is no legal right to a 'view'. Vegetation and trees grow and, over time, contribute to the county's distinctive character. It would be impracticable to prune every tree that affected a view, and this would have a major negative impact on public amenity.

However, where there are historic vistas or area defining views appropriate tree maintenance will be considered to preserve the landscape character.

5.16 Tree Considered Too Large

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

Residents may sometimes feel apprehensive about the size of a tree and perceive it as dangerous. However, trees are not inherently dangerous simply because they are tall, appear large for their surroundings, or move in the wind. Tree movement during high winds is a natural and important adaptation that helps them withstand strong gusts. For a tree to be considered dangerous, there would need to be clear evidence of structural or health-related issues.

Presently, the Council follows a ‘right tree, right place’ approach when planting new trees, carefully selecting species and locations to ensure long-term suitability and minimise potential concerns related to size or placement.

5.17 High Hedges

There is currently no legislation in Ireland regulating the height of trees and hedges. The Council does not get involved in issues regarding the height of hedges on private lands unless they are hazardous to public road users. Residents with issues in relation to trees and hedges on neighbouring properties are encouraged to try to resolve the issues between the two parties or seek independent legal advice. Involvement in resolving tree and hedge disputes between private landowners is not considered part of the remit of the Council.

5.18 Driveways and New Entrances

The Council will not normally support either the removal of a tree or cutting of a tree’s roots for the construction of vehicle crossovers and/or alterations to residential driveway access.

When considering the widening of an existing access or creation of a new access to the public road planning permission is required (subject to any revised legislation). This process will be managed by the Planning Department.

5.19 Tree and Solar Panels

The Council will not normally prune or fell a Council owned/managed tree to facilitate installation or improve natural light to a solar panel.

The Council recognises the importance of renewable energy, both in terms of its environmental benefits and the value it provides to individual households. However, trees—particularly mature specimens—also provide significant environmental, aesthetic, and ecological benefits to the wider community. While solar panels primarily benefit a single property, trees contribute to the wellbeing of the broader public. As such, a balanced and proportionate approach is essential when resolving conflicts between solar panel performance and tree presence.

Where a homeowner believes that a tree is blocking or reducing the efficiency, or preventing the installation of their solar panels, the Council will carry out a site inspection to assess the situation, taking into account key factors such as proximity, orientation, and aspect. If it is clear that a Council-managed tree is having a significant impact, the Council may consider appropriate pruning measures to improve solar panel performance while retaining the tree in situ.

Each case will be assessed on its own individual merits.

While the Council fully supports the move toward renewable energy solutions, it must also safeguard the long-term value and contribution of trees to local amenity, biodiversity, air quality, and climate resilience. Property owners are encouraged to take into account the presence—and future growth—of nearby trees when selecting a suitable location for solar panel installation.

5.20 Trees Affecting TVs, Satellite Reception and CCTV

The Council will not normally prune or fell a Council owned/managed tree to improve TV/satellite reception, CCTV or doorbell camera sightlines where the trees in question would not otherwise require works.

The Council acknowledges that television, satellite entertainment and CCTV are important to residents. However, a balance has to be found between these and the local environment. The Council will encourage residents to seek reasonable alternative solutions to improve reception or sightlines rather than requesting tree pruning or removal.

Exceptions may include Garda CCTV, trees adjacent to CCTV cameras that monitor ATMs or within the field of view being covered to ensure that public security is not compromised. The installation of new CCTV cameras must take into consideration existing trees to prevent requests for unnecessary pruning works or the removal of trees to improve desired sightlines.

5.21 Trees Affecting CCTV

The Council will not normally prune or fell a Council owned/managed tree to improve CCTV or doorbell camera sightlines

Exceptions may include Garda CCTV, trees adjacent to CCTV cameras that monitor ATMs or within the field of view being covered to ensure that public security is not compromised. The installation of new CCTV cameras must take into consideration existing trees to prevent requests for unnecessary pruning works or the removal of trees to improve desired sightlines.

5.22 Crime and Anti-social Behaviour

Where a Council owned tree is associated with criminal activity and / or anti - social behaviour, measures to reduce the problem will be considered on a site-by-site basis.

Where a tree is associated with criminal activity and / or anti-social behaviour, steps to reduce the problem will typically require the coordination of a number of agencies including the Gardaí. Pruning or felling a tree is not always the answer to the problem.

5.23 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.

The loss of leaves from trees in the autumn is part of the natural cycle and cannot be avoided by pruning. The maintenance of gutters is the responsibility of the property / land owner and the Council is not obliged to remove leaves that may have fallen from Council owned trees. Where gutters are regularly blocked by fallen leaves gutter guards may be fitted to provide a low maintenance solution. The Council organises a street cleaning service which will sweep leaves from most streets and residential roads during the autumn period. The composting of leaves is encouraged as a way of environmentally recycling this valuable resource.

5.24 Sticky Deposits from Honeydew

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

Certain species of tree for example lime and sycamore are susceptible to aphids or other leaf-feeding insects. Honeydew is the sugary sap / sticky deposit which results from insects feeding and is subsequently colonised on surfaces by sooty mould fungi giving it a black appearance. Honeydew is a natural and seasonal problem and the severity varies from year to year depending on conditions. A balance between the inconvenience of honeydew deposits and the wider benefits of trees must be achieved and as such there is unlikely to be justification for the pruning or removal of trees due to honeydew deposits. Residents are advised to make their own arrangements to minimise the problem; regular car washing, covering the car or parking in an alternative location. Where honeydew affects cars, warm soapy water will easily remove the substance.

5.25 Bird Droppings

The Council will not prune or fell a Council owned tree solely to remove or reduce bird droppings.

Bird droppings can be unpleasant and a nuisance, but the problem is not considered a sufficient reason to prune or remove a tree. Roosting birds are a natural occurrence as is their production of droppings. Generally, felling a tree will not alleviate the problem as birds will relocate to another tree in the locality. Pruning or felling of trees will not be considered as a way of resolving such matters. Warm soapy water will usually be sufficient to remove the bird droppings. Nesting birds are protected under the Wildlife Acts 1976 and Habitats Regulations S.I. No. 293/2021 - European Union (Birds and Natural Habitats) (Amendment) Regulations 2021,

5.26 Fruit / Berries / Nuts / Blossom

The Council will not fell or prune Council owned trees solely to alleviate concerns caused by natural and/or seasonal phenomena such as fruit / berries, nuts or blossom which are legally outside their control.

Concerns arising over falling fruit, berries, nuts or blossom are natural and seasonal occurrences and not something the Irish legal system recognises as a 'legal nuisance'. Whilst we appreciate these problems, they are judged as a relatively minor inconvenience when considering the many benefits of having trees within an urban environment. Fruit trees such as apple, cherry and pear are welcomed in many locations for having the double benefit of spring blossom and autumn fruit. This makes fruit trees good for wildlife and a source of free food. However, where fallen fruit is leading to a significant anti-social behaviour problems the Council will consider measures to reduce the problem including whether a phased removal and replacement with alternative species is reasonable. If there is a hazard on the public footpath the Council's Public Realm section should be notified of the problem to arrange clearance.

5.27 Tree and Poisonous Berries

The Council has no general policy to remove trees bearing poisonous fruit / foliage (such as yew trees). However, where it is claimed or known that young children, under supervision, are likely to be exposed to poisonous berries or foliage, such cases will be investigated and appropriate action considered.

5.28 Wild Animal / Insect Pest

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

5.29 Pollen

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

5.30 Tree Root Pruning

The Council will carry out root pruning only when viable alternatives to severing the roots cannot be found and where an obvious and positive outcome can be achieved without any long-term damage to the tree.

Tree roots keep a tree healthy and upright. Most roots are found in the top 600mm of soil and often grow out further than the tree's height. If roots are damaged the tree may become unstable or may suffer irreversible harm and eventually die.

Root pruning is generally discouraged as a method of alleviating damage to adjoining property, such as infrastructure uplift or service-line disturbance. This is because the long term implications of sustained and heavy root pruning are unpredictable. The Council will perform root pruning on any tree wherever practicable before removal is considered. Approval of the Council is required before any tree root over 25mm in diameter is pruned.

Any construction, excavation or installation works being carried out in proximity to trees must be in accordance with British Standard (2012): Trees in relation to Design, Demolition and Construction – Recommendations and with the current NJUG (UK National Joint Utilities Group) Guidelines for the Planning, Installation and Maintenance of Utility Apparatus in Proximity to Trees.

5.31 Trees Located Along Private Boundaries Within Parks & Open Spaces

The Council will seek to develop long term management plans for trees in parks and open spaces in order to enhance the quality of the environment, maintain a succession of viable and healthy trees.

In general, the Council will cut back trees located within adjacent parks and open space areas to provide clearance from property boundaries. In some circumstances it may be more appropriate to fell trees.

5.32 Trees Located Within Gardens of Council-Owned Housing

Trees located within the residential gardens of Council-owned housing are to be maintained by tenants as part of their tenancy agreement, except in cases subject to the Housing Department's discretion.

6.0 Trees and Development

Mature trees can be an asset to a new development. They give a place a sense of character, as well as providing a ready-made landscape. Retaining trees is always desirable, though many trees are lost each year in the course of development. Some are removed due to their condition or because they are directly in the way of development. However, many are lost due to unsuitable protection during the construction phase.

6.1 Tree Retention and Aftercare on Development Site

The Council will use its powers to ensure that where it is conducive with the objectives of the County Development Plan, and other planning objectives there is maximum retention of trees on new development sites.

The Council is committed to continuously improve the way that tree, biodiversity and landscape issues are considered in relation to applications for new development. There is increasing pressure to both maximise available development opportunities and at the same time protect and enhance existing landscape and biodiversity features.

In the processing of planning applications, the Council will seek the retention of trees of high amenity / environmental value taking consideration of both their individual merit and their interaction as part of a group or broader landscape feature.

The Council will consider the use of Tree Preservation Orders in accordance with Departmental Guidelines for trees of exceptional amenity, landscape or heritage value.

On construction sites all work must be in accordance with British Standard 5837 (2012): Trees in Relation to Design, Demolition and Construction – Recommendations and with the Council's Guidelines for the Open Space Development & Taking in Charge.

The Council will promote the replacement of trees removed to facilitate approved planning and development of urban spaces, buildings, streets, roads, infrastructural projects and private development sites.

6.2 Trees on Development Sites

Tree Surveys and Arboriculture Impact Assessments, along with Tree Protection Plans are required early on in the planning application process for sites with existing

trees so that the positioning and grouping of trees of value can be incorporated into the design of the site. This assists in the retention of as many trees as possible.

Tree bonds are then routinely applied to existing trees on development sites which merit retention, in order to ensure their protection and retention. The Council has sequestered tree bonds, or parts thereof, from several sites where tree protection was inadequate and there was resulting damage to, or loss of trees, as a result.

6 .3 Development of the Built Environment (including Residential Extensions or Annex Developments) in Close Proximity to Established Trees

Where there are trees within a proposed planning application site or on land adjacent to it that could influence or be affected by proposed development, including street trees in the ownership or management of the Council, the planning application must include a detailed submission prepared by a suitably qualified Arboriculturist in accordance with British Standard 5837: 2012 ‘Trees in Relation to Design, Demolition and Construction – Recommendations’.

South Dublin County Council will consider the protection of existing trees when granting planning permission for minor and major developments and will seek to ensure the maximum retention, preservation and management of trees, groups of trees and hedges.

Where development is proposed it is essential that existing trees are considered from the very earliest stages of design and prior to an application for planning permission being submitted. Root systems, stems and canopies, with allowance for future movement and growth, need to be taken into account in all projects.

For all minor and major development applications where trees might be affected, the application must be accompanied by the information below prepared by a suitably qualified Arboriculturist (who through relevant education, training and experience, has expertise in the field of trees in relation to construction) in accordance with British Standard 5837: 2012 ‘Trees in Relation to Design, Demolition and Construction – Recommendations’:

- Tree survey
- Arboricultural impact assessment
- Arboricultural method statement
- Tree retention/removal plan
- Tree protection plan

Details of retained trees and Root Protection Areas shown on the proposed layout to include those of trees located within the proposed planning application site or on land or a street or roadside adjacent to an application site that could influence or be affected by the proposed development.

As part of the application assessment, the Council will apply a standard Amenity Tree Valuation formula to fully determine the costs associated with the removal, retention or replacement of specific trees associated with the development activity.

If the condition of a tree is declining and its life expectancy is short, tree removal may be considered to allow for the new development. Removal and replacement of trees will be at the cost of the applicant and a new tree or trees will be replanted as close as possible to the original tree.

Any tree works that are required prior, during or post completion will be completed by a suitably qualified arborist. The cost of any tree works shall be borne by the applicant. Any proposed works shall be agreed with the Council's Public Realm Section prior to the commencement of development.

6.4 Tree Planting on Development Sites

The Council will ensure that tree planting on development sites is adequate and appropriate by requesting that landscaping proposals and plans to include tree planting proposals are submitted as part of a planning application.

The Design Manual for Urban Roads and Streets (2013) outlines how street trees are an integral part of street design as they contribute to the sense of enclosure, act as a buffer to traffic noise / pollution and enhance place. A traffic calming effect can also be achieved, where trees are planted in continuous rows and their canopies overhang, at least in part, the vehicular carriageway. Street trees can also be used to enhance legibility by highlighting the importance of connecting routes and distinguishing one area from another through variations in size and species selection.

6.5 Tree Preservation Orders (TPO)

Making a Tree Preservation Order (TPO) is the primary mechanism available to a planning authority to ensure that trees of significant value are preserved. Section 205 of the Planning and Development Act 2000 provides the legal framework and procedures for making a TPO.

A Tree Preservation Order (TPO) enables local authorities to preserve any single tree or group of trees and brings them under planning control. Tree preservation orders are only made if it appears that a tree or group of trees need to be protected in the interests of amenity in the environment.

The establishment of a TPO brings the designated tree(s) under planning control and restrictions do apply. The permission of the planning authority must be sought before any tree with a TPO is lopped, topped or felled. When the authority proposes an order they have to publish a notice in one or more newspapers. Observations and submissions can be made to the planning authority within a period of not less than 6 weeks. Tree preservation orders are only made after careful consideration of all submissions and observations by the local authority.

There are currently four TPOs in place in south Dublin County as follows

Order	Location
Dublin County Council TPO 1973	St. Brigids (now Newlands garden centre), New Road, Clondalkin, Dublin 22
Dublin County Council TPO 1987	Beaufort Downs, Rathfarnham, Dublin 14
Dublin County Council TPO 1990	Townlands of Quarryvale and Brooklawn, Palmerstown, Dublin 10
South Dublin County Council (Coolamber Site) TPO 2015	Newcastle Road, Lucan

Note: TPOs are a planning function and therefore the responsibility of the Councils Planning Department.

7.0 Living With Trees - Action Plan 2026-2031

Objectives

- To continue to implement a proactive tree management programme
- To expand the tree canopy in the County
- To implement a public awareness and education programme

• Objective 1 - To continue to implement a proactive tree management programme				
<i>Ref</i>	<i>Action</i>	<i>Measurement</i>	<i>Who</i>	<i>When</i>
1.1	Complete surveying all street trees in County	Number of trees surveyed	Public Realm	Ongoing
1.2	Develop protocols with main utility providers on a regional basis for dealing with trees and utilities	Procedures and protocols agreed and with utility providers	Public Realm	2030
1.3	Present annual review of Tree Management Policy Action Plan	Annual Review completed	Public Realm	Annual
1.4	Review Tree Management Policy 2031-2036 and draft new Policy	5 Year Review completed	Public Realm	2031

• Objective 2 - To expand the tree canopy in the County				
<i>Ref</i>	<i>Action</i>	<i>Measurement</i>	<i>Who</i>	<i>When</i>
2.1	Develop an annual tree planting programme	Number of trees planted	Public Realm	Annual
2.2	Develop woodlands in parks and open spaces	Increased tree canopy	Public Realm	Annual
2.3	Use the Council's planning powers to retain and protect trees on	Annual review	Public Realm & Planning Department	Ongoing

	development sites and enforce as necessary			
2.4	Review existing Tree Preservation Orders	Annual Review	Public Realm	Ongoing
2.5	Use the Helliwell system to value all Council street trees	All trees have accurate value	Public Realm	As required
2.6	Agree procedures and protocols with partners to secure protection of Council-owned trees from avoidable damage	Procedures and protocols agreed with internal Council Departments and external agencies	Public Realm	Ongoing

Objective 3 - Prepare and implement a public awareness and education tree programme

<i>Ref</i>	<i>Action</i>	<i>Measurement</i>	<i>Who</i>	<i>When</i>
3.1	Promote Tree week and Tree day	No. of Tree week & Tree Day activities organised each year	Public Realm	Annual
3.2	Prepare a social media information campaign	No. of posts	Public Realm	Annual
3.3	Prepare an information video on trees and their importance	No of views	Public Realm	To be updated

8.0 Appendices

Appendix 1: Sample List of Tree Species Suitable for Street Planting

The selection of street trees is guided by their mature size, water demand, crown shape, future management requirements and suitability to the location. The following is a guide to the type of species considered appropriate for street planting. It is not an exhaustive list, and other trees may be equally suitable.

Tree Species Suitable for Street Planting

Latin Name	Common name
<i>Acer campestre</i> 'Elsrijk'	Field maple
<i>Acer campestre</i> 'Streetwise'	Field maple
<i>Acer platanoides</i> 'Globosum'	Maple
<i>Amelanchier arborea</i> 'Robin Hill'	Serviceberry
<i>Betula albosinensis</i> 'Fascination'	Chinese Birch
<i>Betula pendula</i>	Silver Birch
<i>Betula pubescens</i>	Downy Birch
<i>Carpinus betulus</i> 'Frans Fontaine'	Hornbeam
<i>Crataegus laevigata</i> 'Paul's Scarlet'	Hawthorn
<i>Sorbus aria</i> 'Lutescens'	Whitebeam
<i>Sorbus aria</i> 'Majestica'	Whitebeam
<i>Sorbus aucuparia</i>	Whitebeam
<i>Sorbus intermedia</i> 'Brouwers'	Swedish Whitebeam

Specimen Trees Suitable for Open Space Planting

Latin Name	Common name
<i>Acer pseudoplatanus</i> 'Spaethii'	Maple
<i>Betula pendula</i>	Silver Birch
<i>Betula pubescens</i>	Downy Birch
<i>Aesculus hippocastanum</i>	Horse chestnut
<i>Alnus cordata</i>	Italian alder
<i>Betula ermanii</i>	Erman's Birch
<i>Castanea sativa</i>	Spanish chestnut
<i>Cedrus atlantica</i> 'Glauca'	Blue Atlas cedar
<i>Cedrus libani</i>	Cedar of Lebanon

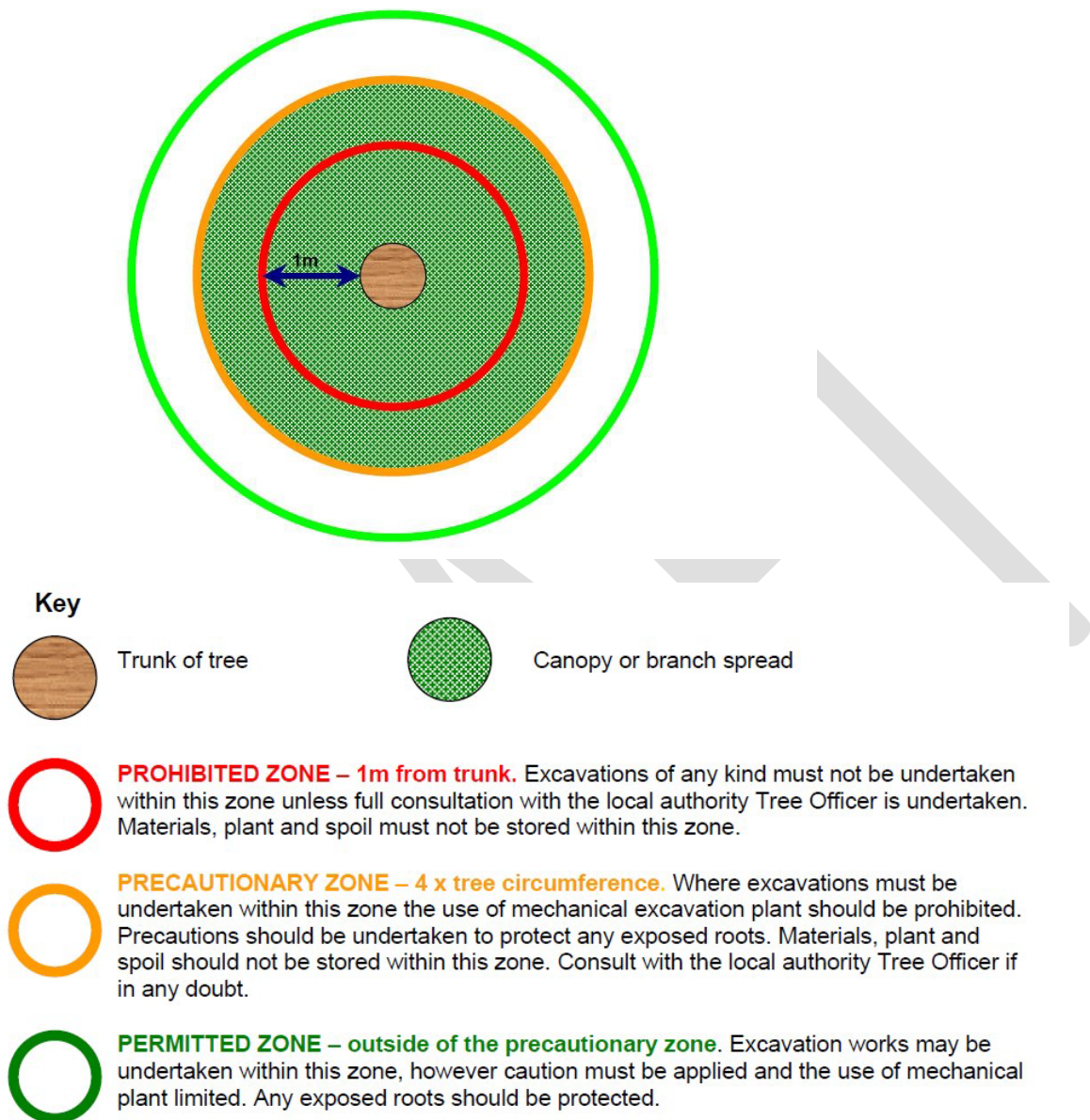
<i>Fagus sylvatica</i>	Beech
<i>Fagus sylvatica</i> 'Atropurpurea'	Copper beech
<i>Juglans regia</i>	Walnut
<i>Pinus sylvestris</i>	Scot's pine
<i>Platanus x acerifolia</i>	London plane
<i>Prunus</i> 'Shirotae'	Mount Fuji cherry
<i>Prunus padus</i>	Bird Cherry
<i>Prunus avium</i>	Wild Cherry
<i>Prunus</i> 'Yedoensis'	Yoshino cherry
<i>Pterocarya fraxinifolia</i>	Caucasian wingnut
<i>Quercus ilex</i>	Holm Oak
<i>Quercus robur</i>	English Oak
<i>Robinia pseudoacacia</i>	False acacia
<i>Tilia x euchlora</i>	Lime
<i>Tilia cordata</i>	Small leaf lime
<i>Crataegus laevigata</i> 'Paul's Scarlet'	Hawthorn
<i>Sorbus aria</i> 'Lutescens'	Whitebeam
<i>Sorbus aria</i> 'Majestica'	Whitebeam
<i>Sorbus aucuparia</i>	Whitebeam
<i>Malus sylvestris</i>	Crab Apple
<i>Ulmus</i> 'Lobel'	Elm

Trees Suitable for Urban Gardens

Latin Name	Common name
<i>Arbutus unedo</i>	Strawberry tree
<i>Acer palmatum</i> 'Atropurpureum'	Japanese maple
<i>Acer davidii</i>	Snake bark maple
<i>Acer griseum</i>	Paperbark maple
<i>Amelanchier lamarckii</i>	Snowy mespilus
<i>Crataegus orientalis</i>	Eastern thorn
<i>Cercis canadensis</i> 'Forest Pansy'	Redbud
<i>Malus</i> 'Golden Hornet'	Crab apple
<i>Malus</i> 'Royalty'	Crab apple
<i>Prunus</i> 'Amanogawa'	Cherry
<i>Sorbus vilmorinii</i>	Rowan

APPENDIX 2: National Joint Utilities Group (UK) Guidelines for the Planning, Installation and Maintenance of Utility Apparatus in Proximity to Trees

FIGURE 1 – Tree Protection Zone



PROTECTING ROOTS - DO'S and DON'TS

There are three designated zones around a tree each of which has its own criteria for working practices.

THE PROHIBITED ZONE

Don't excavate within this zone.

Don't use any form of mechanical plant within this zone

Don't store materials, plant or equipment within this zone.

Don't move plant or vehicles within this zone.

Don't lean materials against, or chain plant to, the trunk.

Do contact the local authority tree officer or owner of the tree if excavation within this zone is unavoidable.

Do protect any exposed roots uncovered within this zone with dry sacking.

Do backfill with a suitable inert granular and top soil material mix as soon as possible on completion of works.

Do notify the local authority tree officer or the tree's owner of any damage.

THE PRECAUTIONARY ZONE

Don't excavate with machinery. Where excavation is unavoidable within this zone excavate only by hand or use trenchless techniques.

Don't cut roots over 25mm in diameter, unless advice has been sought from the local authority tree officer.

Don't repeatedly move / use heavy mechanical plant except on hard standing.

Don't store spoil or building material, including chemicals and fuels, within this zone. **Do** prune roots which have to be removed using a sharp tool (e.g. secateurs or handsaw). Make a clean cut and leave as small a wound as possible.

Do backfill the trench with an inert granular material and top soil mix. Compact the backfill with care around the retained roots. On non-highway sites backfill only with excavated soil.

Do protect any exposed roots with dry sacking ensuring this is removed before backfilling. **Do** notify the local authority tree officer or the tree's owner of any damage.

THE PERMITTED ZONE

Don't cut roots over 25mm in diameter, unless advice has been sought from the local authority tree officer.

Do use caution if it is absolutely necessary to operate mechanical plant within this zone. **Do** prune roots which have to be removed using a sharp tool (e.g. secateurs or handsaw). Make a clean cut and leave as small a wound as possible.

Do protect any exposed roots with dry sacking ensuring this is removed before backfilling. **Do** notify the local authority tree officer or the tree's owner of any damage.

Appendix 3: Code of Practice For Pre Works Inspections of Trees for Nesting Birds

The Wildlife Act 1976 (as amended 2000) is the principle legislation protecting nesting birds in Ireland. The Act makes it an offence to kill, injure or take any wild bird and to take, damage or destroy any nest that is either in use or being built. In general terms, bird nesting in Ireland can be expected to take place between March 1 and August 31.

South Dublin County Council's tree maintenance crews and contractors operating on behalf of the Council are required to carry out pre works inspections of trees for wildlife and nesting birds in line with best practice recommendations. Table 1 provides a checklist for pre works inspections for nesting birds.

During the bird nesting season, the following general procedures should be observed:

- Work within dense vegetation shall be prohibited (unless directed by An Garda Síochána).
- Trees and shrubs being worked upon shall be single individuals that can be observed in full.
- Carry out the checklist "What to do before tree works" see Table 1.
- Complete site inspection form - see Table 2.
- If the selected tree/shrub is part of a group or immediately adjacent to tree/shrubs, these too should also be inspected for nests. For example felling one tree could expose a nest to a change in micro-climates or predators.
- If at any time, an active nest or a nest that is being built is observed, the tree/shrub must not be worked upon.
- If a nest is observed that it is quite clearly an old or abandoned nest (not maintained/falling apart or clearly not being used – time of year will be a consideration), the tree/shrub may be felled.
- In regard to larger mature trees it should be our aim to work on these trees out of the regular nesting season. However, if for health and safety reasons or perhaps responding to wind damage, work should continue with caution. The tree should be continually observed for nests and bird activities.
- Holes in the trunk/branches should be viewed with suspicion and all available measures (eg binoculars, hoist) should be employed to investigate such features further. If a tree is found in a dangerous condition that contains a nest, where possible the work should continue without disturbance to the nest and within the shortest possible time. Where there is possibility the nest may be physically disturbed advice should be taken from The National Parks and Wildlife Services (NPWS).
- Fallen trees and trailing branches in water bodies present nesting opportunities for waterfowl such as Coots and Grebes. Water side trees and vegetation should not be generally worked upon during the nesting season. If there is a necessity to work upon such trees or vegetation (e.g. health and safety issues) then first view the tree/branch/vegetation from as many aspects as possible to identify any nests, including under any waterside branching/vegetation.

- In case of shrubs particularly evergreen species such as Laurel (a favourite with blackbirds) as necessary separate the branches and look in the central areas of the shrub looking for nests.
- At times where formally grown shrubs or hedges are being clipped of current season's growth, an inspection that includes physically moving and separating and visually inspecting the areas to be cut should take place. Operations in such areas should only proceed with caution, with operators prepared to stop if they see anything that concerns them regarding bird movement or activity.

Table 1. Pre Works Inspection Checklist for Bird Nesting Activities

Assessment for Bird Nesting Activities	
Checklist of What To Do Before Tree Work	
Action	Tick when completed
1. Look at the tree from a distance, looking up and down the tree for indications of nesting.	
2. Slowly circle the tree, again inspecting for indications of nesting	
3. Move underneath the tree, again slowly circle looking for nests.	
4. Look on the ground for concentrations of white-coloured droppings, then check the vegetation above again.	
5. Holes in the trunk/branches should be viewed with suspicion and all available measures (e.g. binoculars, hoist) should be employed to investigate such features further.	
6. As you walk through an area, look for birds flying out of vegetation close to you and intensely scolding you; they may have a nest nearby.	
7. Sit quietly and watch for birds that may be bringing nest material or food repeatedly to one place. Birds tend to place their nests just on the undersides of the tree canopy and where branches join together.	
When an Active Nest is Found – Reschedule!	

Table 2: Site inspection form for documenting searches for bird nesting activity associated with tree and shrub work undertaken in the bird nesting season (March 1 – August 31)

Assessment for Bird Nesting Activities					
Date		Time			
Inspectors name					
Location					
Tree/shrub description					
Site Description					
Description of inspection technique	Ground Inspection		Hoist Inspection		
Visual evidence of bird nesting activity	Physical Observation		Physical Nests		Foodstuffs
	Nest Materials		Droppings		Cavities

Final Comments	
Signed	

Appendix 4: Extract from Design Manual for Urban Roads and Streets

Street trees are an integral part of street design as they contribute to the sense of enclosure, act as a buffer to traffic noise / pollution and enhance place. A traffic calming effect can also be achieved, where trees are planted in continuous rows and their canopies overhang, at least in part, the vehicular carriageway. Street trees can also be used to enhance legibility by highlighting the importance of connecting routes and distinguishing one area from another through variations in size and species selection. The planting of trees should be considered an integral part of street design.

In general, the size of the species selected should be proportionate to the width of the street reserve.

- Larger species, with a canopy spread greater than 6m will be best suited to wider streets, such as Arterial and Link streets.
- Smaller species with a canopy spread of 2–6m will be best suited to narrower streets such as Local streets.
- Designers may seek to vary this approach in keeping with the characteristics of a place.
- For example: Sparse planting may be more appropriate in a Centre, enhancing its urban qualities.
- Smaller species may be more appropriate where buildings are located in close proximity to the street edge carriageway (i.e. to take account of overshadowing and growth restrictions).
- Larger species may be desirable within suburbs, to enhance the greener character associated with these places.

To be effective, trees should be planted at intervals of 14 –20m. This may be extended periodically to facilitate the installation of other street facilities, such as lighting. Designers should also consider the impact of root growth. Tree roots may need to be contained within individual tree pits, continuous soil planting strips or using other methods to restrict growth under pavements/ toward services.

Appendix 6: References and Sources of Information

British Standard 3998:2010 Tree Work. Recommendations. London: BSI

British Standard 5837:2012 Trees in relation to Design, Demolition and Construction – Recommendations. London: BSI

British Standard 8545:2014 Trees: From nursery to independence in the landscape – Recommendations. London: BSI

London Tree Officers Association (2008). *The Risk Limitation Strategy for Tree Root Claims.* London: LTOA

McHugh, D and Gallagher, G (2004). *Trees, Forests and the Law in Ireland.* Dublin: COFORD

National Tree Safety Group (2011). *Common Sense Risk Management of Trees.* Guidelines on trees and public safety in the UK for owners, managers and advisers. Edinburgh: Forestry Commission.

National Joint Utilities Group (2007). *Guidelines for the Planning, Installation and Maintenance of Utility Apparatus in Proximity to Trees.* NJUG Publications Volume 4, London: NJUG

Trees and Design Action Group (2014). *Trees in Hard Landscape – A Guide for Delivery.* London: TDAG

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Tree Council of Ireland (2010). *Amenity Trees and Woodlands, A Guide to their Management in Ireland.* Dublin: Tree Council of Ireland