

# Tree Risk Management Guidance

Supplementary Document - Tree Strategy 2021-2031, Action Plan: Objective 1, 2 & 4.

## Blackpool Council

PARKS SERVICE



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## 1.0 Introduction

In accordance with the Tree Strategy 2021 – 2031, this document has been created in order to provide guidance when managing Blackpool Council's tree population. Trees do pose a risk to safety but generally the risk they pose is very low and this risk needs to be considered in balance with the benefits that they provide.

Therefore, a tree survey covering the entire borough will take into account the information presented within this document and aid in the management of our trees by:

- Assessing our current species diversity and population.
- Assessing the level of tree maturity.
- Assessing the location and density of trees.
- Provide a risk management for trees within specific locations.
- Provide management recommendations.
- Provide information on notable trees/woodlands that require TEMPO assessments.
- Enable the creation of a works programme based on risk priority.
- Enable the creation of an improved re-planting system for development sites and unpopulated areas based on new tree population data.

A tree survey will be carried out every 5 years and its data will be used to update the tree strategy and assist in evaluating the success of our objectives. It will allow us to take a proactive and responsible approach to managing our trees, enabling Blackpool Council to achieve its tree target of 10% within the Blackpool's Green and Blue Infrastructure Strategy 2019 – 2029.

### 1.1 Legal Position

We have a responsibility under the Occupiers' Liability Act 1957 & 1984 to take reasonable steps in order to make our land safe for trespassers and visitors. In practice, if a tree fails and causes damage to a person or property, then the owner of the tree is liable. We must ensure our trees are sustainably managed, ensuring that people are not exposed to unreasonable

risk from trees on council owned land and that our tree population meets the needs of the borough.

### 1.2 National Guidance

The Tree Risk Management Guidance is informed by the guidance produced by the National Tree Safety Group (NTSG) Common sense risk management of trees: Guidance on trees and public safety in the UK for owners, managers and advisors.

The NTSG position is underpinned by a set of five key principles:

- Securing the many benefits from trees to society.
- Acknowledging trees are living organisms that naturally lose branches or fall.
- The overall risk to human safety is extremely low.
- Tree owners have a legal duty of care.
- Tree owners should take a balanced and proportionate approach to tree safety and management.

A summary of the requirements from HSE: *Management of the risk from falling trees or branches*:

- The standards for managing the risk from trees, including risk assessment and where appropriate, routine checks by a competent person. Duty holders should have such systems in place to control risks from trees to their employees, contractors and members of the public.
- Handling these issues and approaching enforcement decisions in accordance with the principles and expectations of the HSE Enforcement Policy Statement (EPS).

## 2.0 Scope

This document covers how the risk from trees will be managed and highlights the following key details:

- Site zoning
- Frequency of inspections
- Level of inspections
- Level of competence required
- Timescales for carrying out essential remedial works
- Record keeping

The Tree Risk Management Guidance is a supplementary document to the Tree Strategy 2021 – 2031 and therefore, any issues relating light, TV signal, natural and/or seasonal phenomena etc. are addressed within the policy section of the Tree Strategy. Works to trees posing an unacceptable risk will be prioritised above those causing a nuisance to residents.

### 3.0 Performance Indicators

To ensure best practice and a clear methodology on managing our trees. The following rules of operation will be adhered to:

- Trees that are highlighted as high priority will be completed within their designated time frame.
- Appropriately qualified personnel, relative to the level and frequency of the inspection, will carry out tree inspections.
- Keep comprehensive records of inspections on all trees/groups/woodlands.
- Follow up on all informal observations within appropriate time frames.
- A tree failure log will be maintained for each failure and recorded.
- Specify works in accordance with current best practice as recommended in British Standard 3998: 2010- Tree work - Recommendations.
- Review the Tree Risk Management Guidance in line with the Tree Strategy 2020 – 2030.

### 4.0 Managing the Risk from Trees

The practices adopted for managing trees risks are based on best practice and arboricultural knowledge and therefore the specification at Appendix 1 has been highlighted for the routine 5-year survey.

#### 4.1 Site Zoning

Zoning is a means to define areas according to their use<sup>1</sup>. By prioritising the most used areas, it will allow inspections to be carried out efficiently, effectively and contribute to a cost effective approach to tree inspections.

For example, by using Blackpool Open Space Assessment 2019, a zoning effect can be indicated for parks and gardens by using the quality of open spaces (see figure 1), accessibility to parks and gardens (see figure 2) and play area quality scores (see figure 3).

An additional method for zoning is by highlighting certain criteria, such as and with examples in Table 1:

- Highway characteristics based on traffic volume, speed and emergency accessibility.
- Public areas and buildings based on occupancy e.g. high priority will be areas around schools, shopping areas, emergency and medical facilities where large diameter tree species are present.
- Seasonal use e.g. parks and gardens will have a higher number of visitors during the spring and summer periods.
- Tree population characteristics based on age and species. Discrete populations of trees that are mature to over mature or are known to be inherently prone to failure through their past management, species characteristics or as recorded through the tree failure log.

Table 1: Zoning and their examples of usage.

Usage	Criteria	Example
High	High volumes of traffic and likelihood of footfall	Large trees near dual carriageways, main roads and high use paths. Large mature trees near schools and private properties.
Moderate	Moderate volumes of traffic and likelihood of footfall	Trees on streets and minor roads. Good to fair quality ranked parks. Main paths.
Low	Low volumes of traffic and likelihood of footfall	Regardless of location, trees which are small or are in a good condition. Away from paths, roads or in a woodland.

<sup>1</sup> Tree size, species, age and condition will also be an important factor when focusing inspections and managing resources and determining re-inspection frequency.

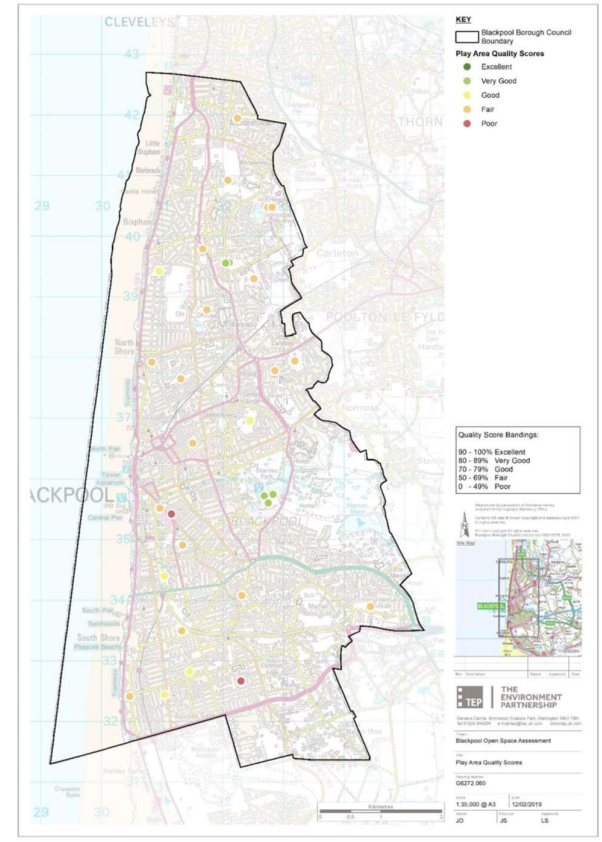
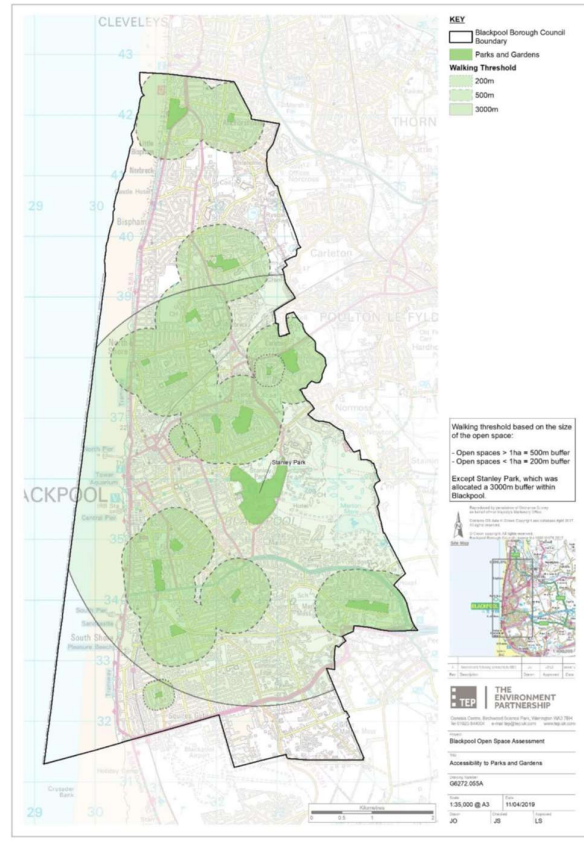
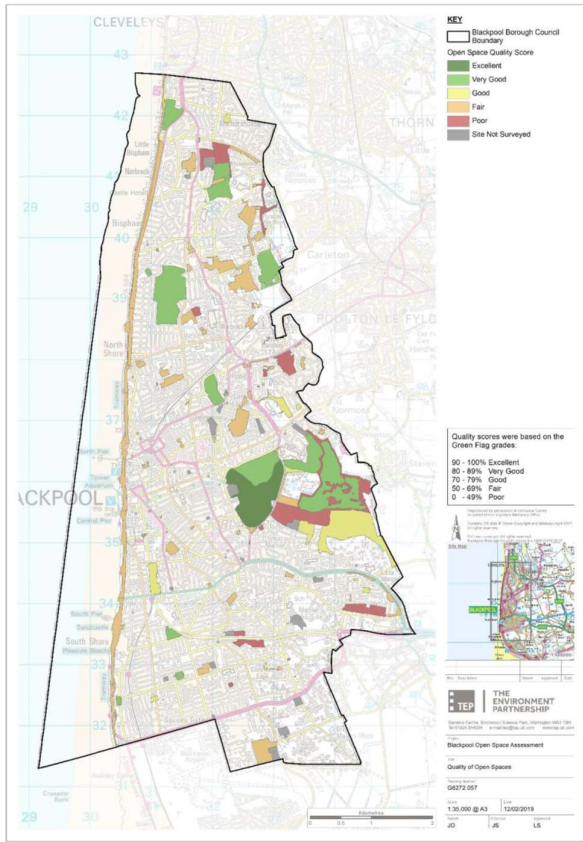


Figure 1: Locations of open spaces throughout Blackpool and their quality and therefore, an indication on how likely they are to be visited.

Figure 2: The green areas around the parks and gardens highlighting their accessibility and therefore, an indication on visitor levels.

Figure 3: The circles showing the quality of the play areas and therefore, an indication on family usage throughout the year.

## 4.2 Frequency of Inspections

The routine tree survey will be carried out every 5 years and will highlight works as a matter of priority, providing a works schedule from high, moderate to low.

As part of the routine inspections for parks and gardens and as specified in the Tree Strategy 2021 – 2031, Tree Warden Volunteers will be trained to assist with basic visual checks. This will be programmed in depending on the zoning and will help to assess if a formal inspection is required.

	Timeframe	Type
All Zones with priority order followed high, moderate & low	Every 5 years	Tree Condition Survey
	Throughout the 5 year period whilst carrying out the works identified from the survey	Working survey
	1 – 3 monthly	Highways/Tree Warden Volunteer observations
	An appropriate time upon receipt	After reports of concern/damage

## 4.3 Level of Inspection and Competence Required

**1. Informal observations:** These are observations/concerns reported to Blackpool Council by members of the public. Informal observations will be acted on within appropriate timescales.

No formal training just local knowledge and familiarity with trees in their area.

**2. Highways/Tree Warden Volunteer observations:** Trees of concern highlighted by highways officers/Tree Warden Volunteers and reported to Parks Service for a formal observation.

Highways will be offered in house training in order to identify potential defects and characteristics of failing trees. Tree Warden Volunteers will complete an AQA qualification as part of their volunteer package.

**3. Working survey:** These trees will undergo a VTA as part of the programmed pruning/remedial works which are carried out by Blackpool Council's tree team.

The team will have an understanding of trees and their potential defects, in line with their NPTC practical assessments and qualifications.

**4. Formal inspection:** An inspection from ground level with a VTA assessment, which will include checking the root plate, main stem/s, structural branches and canopy following best practice and industry guidance. This could be part of a planned inspection or after reports from informal/highway/Tree Warden Volunteer observations or a working survey.

The inspector will be qualified to a minimum of QCF Level 5-6, for example, FdSc Arboriculture, Dip Arb (RFS) the Professional Diploma in Arboriculture.

**5. Routine 5 year survey:** Undertaken by a professional consultancy company following best practice, industry guidance and the specification at Appendix 1.

The consultant should be qualified to a minimum of QCF Level 5-6, for example, FdSc Arboriculture, Dip Arb (RFS) the Professional Diploma in Arboriculture. In addition to been a member of the industry recognised professional bodies for example, Arboricultural Association or The Institute of Chartered Foresters.

#### 4.4 Timescales for Essential Works

Funding	Work Category	Details	Target Response Time
Arboricultural Services Budget	Emergency	Response to trees that are perceived as imminently dangerous.	Onsite within 1 hour (Or barrier off until resources available)
	Urgency	Response to trees that are perceived as dangerous but where work needs to be undertaken at a safe time.	Works completed within 14 days (Or barrier off until resources available)
	Planned	Works to trees which have been identified through inspections and require further planning and organisation to undertake subject to review and budget availability.	Any time up to 12 months from the day of inspection but determined by priority rating, availability or budget – works will be prioritised.
	Nuisance	Work to abate or remove actual or potential nuisance caused by council trees (in line with the Tree Strategy 2020 – 2030 policies).	Completed within 12 months of inspection. (Budget constraints)

#### 5.2 Tree Failure Log

The tree failure log will be used to record all known or reported whole or part tree failure. These failures will be recorded when reported by members of the public and staff or through formal inspections.

The failure log will help inform estimation of the real risk levels and produce patterns, which will provide base data about tree failure. Data can be correlated and analysed to help in future priority setting and inform management plans.

The tree failure log will be kept within Parks Service and will be reviewed annually in line with the Tree Strategy 2021 – 2031.

### 5.0 Recording Systems

The routine 5 year tree survey will be an electronic document with a CAD based map identifying all known trees within Blackpool. The CAD based map can be integrated into GGP5 software or as a KML file and used in conjunction with Google Earth, which can be used to identify the location and conditions of the boroughs trees.

#### 5.1 Tree Warden Volunteer Assessment

The tree warden assessment will be used as a walk over survey and will highlight any trees that need further assessment, based on their condition and location.

## 6.0 Document Control

Document owner:	Paul Hodgson
Document number:	V1
Document category:	Environmental
Document location:	Parks Service
Last edited:	17/05/2021

### 6.1 Record of Amendments

Date	Version	Amended by	Description of changes

### 6.2 Approved by

Name	Title	Signature	Date



## 7.0 Appendix 1

### 7.1 Specification of Works for the Routine 5 Year Survey

#### Details of what should be included

The tree survey shall include all the information required to make an informed management decision in regards to the condition of the trees, any hazards present and risk zones highlighted. In order to manage our trees responsibly, we are following the guidance set by NTSG – Common Sense Risk Management of Trees.

Please include within the content of the report:

- Introduction
- Purpose of the report
- Terms of reference
- Scope of the report
- Survey details
- Explanation of tree description and highlighting NTSG practices
- Discussion/conclusion

The plan needs to highlight:

- The location of all existing trees with ref number recorded on the tree survey plan, over 75mm in diameter measured at 1.5m above ground level, which are located on all council owned land or council owned trees.
- The location of woodland or substantial tree groups with ref number recorded on the tree survey plan, with trees over 150mm in diameter measured at 1.5m above ground level, which are located on all council owned land or council owned trees.
- The location of all notably specimens with ref number recorded on the tree survey plan, over 75mm in diameter measured at 1.5m above ground level, which are located on all council owned land or council owned trees e.g. unique trees, veteran trees and rare species etc.
- Trees that are less than 75mm diameter at 1.5m above ground level need not be accurately surveyed but should be indicated on the tree survey plan.
- Risk rating to coincide with the schedule.
  - Please use a colour coded system so the plans are easily interpreted.

Maps provided for council owned land in the required format.

The requirement of schedule data included:

- Species (common and scientific name)
- Height
- Crown height
- Diameter of the stem measured at 1.5m above ground level
- Crown spread
- Age class (e.g. young, semi-mature, mature, over-mature, veteran etc.)
- Assessment of the physiological and structural condition including roots, main stem/s and canopy. Please note any habitat benefits within/on the structure of the tree/s or group/s
- A risk rating based on the hazards identified and the location of the tree/s, group/s, woodland etc.
  - Please use a system, which can be used to create a priority of works schedule e.g. low, moderate and high with associated colour code to match the colours on the plans.
- A full schedule of tree works including removals with full justifications, remedial works to ensure acceptable levels of risk and management in the context of the location.
- Life expectancy

**7.2 Tree Warden Volunteer Assessment Template**

<b>Date</b>	<b>Species</b>	<b>Age</b>	<b>Location</b>	<b>Condition</b>	<b>Observations</b>
<i>Example</i>	<i>Common Ash – Fraxinus excelsior</i>	<i>Mature</i>	<i>Revoe Park – see map for location</i>	<i>Good</i>	<i>Single stem with open canopy, minor deadwood and no major visible defects</i>

**7.3 Tree Failure Log Template (to be carried out as a formal inspection)**

<b>Date</b>	<b>Species</b>	<b>Age</b>	<b>Location</b>	<b>Weather</b>	<b>Type of Failure</b>	<b>Type of Loss</b>	<b>Cost</b>	<b>Contributing Factors</b>	<b>Foreseeability</b>	<b>Action</b>
<i>Example</i>	<i>English Oak – Quercus robur</i>	<i>Mature</i>	<i>Stanley Park</i>	<i>Stormy, F8 SW direction</i>	<i>30cm diameter branch shed at collar</i>	<i>Steel fence section on the boundary of the park</i>	<i>£150.00</i>	<i>Heartwood decay, likely caused by Laetiporus sulphureus</i>	<i>Not foreseeable, no outward signs of decay</i>	<i>Climbing inspection to probe point of failure and establish extent of decay</i>