

Tree management

in North Somerset



November 2023

www.n-somerset.gov.uk/trees

Tree management –

an explanation of how we manage our trees and what residents can expect

Here in North Somerset, we have a rich heritage of trees growing in streets, verges, woodlands as well as in about 1,100 green spaces.

People place great value on these trees for many reasons. These include beauty, reflection of the changing seasons; creating an attractive environment; helping to trap carbon-dioxide, filtering pollution from the air, supporting wildlife and contributing to good health and wellbeing.

This leaflet has been produced by North Somerset Council to help explain how we make decisions about the management of trees on our land.

This leaflet aims to:

1. explain our tree maintenance policy
2. explain how we assess risk of harm from our trees
3. provide contact details so people know how to tell us about a tree issue
4. describe how we assess enquiries and decide whether we will do as you ask
5. let you know what we do with felled wood and pruned branches.



1. Our tree maintenance policy

We manage around 300,000 of our own trees. We must prioritise how we spend our limited resources on looking after them.

The way we manage our own trees has an impact on how we are able to deal with enquiries from the public, especially requests to carry out tree work.

We carry out work to our trees if:

- They are posing an unacceptable risk to people or property. This is determined by a risk assessment carried out by our tree officer.
- We wish to make improvements to a landscape or road, in line with site specific management.

Where resources allow, we will carry out work to our trees if:

- They are touching buildings, hanging low over public footpaths and roads, or obscuring streets lights and road signs.
- Work is important for the future health of the tree.

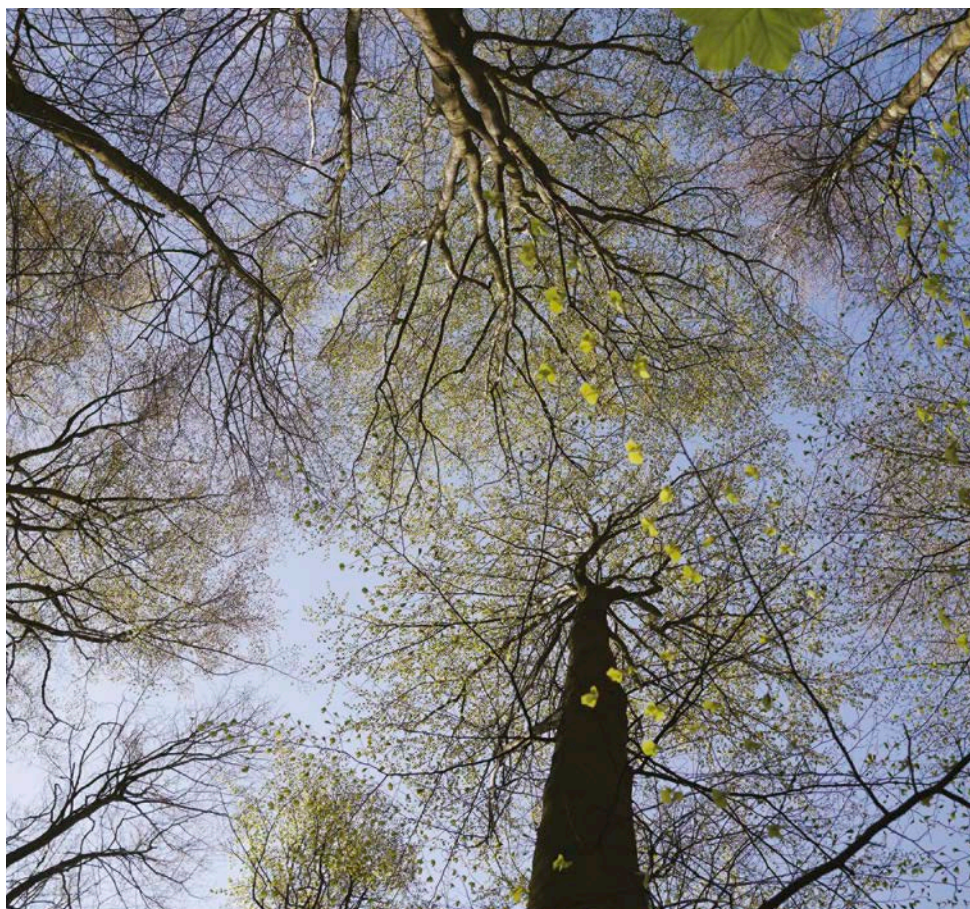


We must focus on our wider tree management objectives, which are influenced by restricted financial resources. We can't make exceptions to our agreed tree management work.

2. Safety

Public safety is our top priority. We proactively inspect trees in our most busy areas. We use a risk calculation system to inform our inspection programme. This helps us to decide what we need to do to keep the risk of harm from our trees to a reasonable level.

We prioritise risk assessments of trees in busier areas. We look at trees near our busiest roads first. We also class well used parks, open spaces and woodland parks as high priority. We carry out urgent tree work as quickly as possible.



3. Report a tree issue



Report all tree issues to us at

www.n-somerset.gov.uk/reporttree

If there is a risk of serious harm call **01934 888 802**

We receive over 1,000 enquiries a year about trees we manage. We prioritise our work by balancing protection of the environment with our limited resources.

If you contact us, please provide your telephone number. We will only need to contact you if we need more information.

You can check our response to your enquiry by looking at your case on MyAccount. We don't contact anyone directly.

When you make a request for tree work to be carried out to trees that we own and manage, we take the following steps:

1. The information from MyAccount is sent to our tree officer.
2. They will assess each enquiry but will only act if it meets our criteria.
3. Most of our trees can be seen from land we own, or from a road. In most cases, we will not need to make an appointment to see you.
4. After visiting, our tree officer will decide what action is required, if any.
5. Log on to MyAccount to see what the tree officer has decided.



4. How we make a decision

We receive around 1,000 requests a year to prune trees. We prioritise our work by balancing protection of the environment with our limited resources means. This means we simply can't do many of the things we are asked to do.

When we decide tree work is required, we put it in one of two categories. This applies to all cases – whether identified through our own inspections and management, or when looking at an enquiry from the public. These categories tell us whether work will be carried out to the tree and in what timescale.

The categories are:

1. Urgent

We prioritise work that is necessary to reduce an immediate risk of serious harm. We complete urgent work as quickly as possible.



2. Not urgent

We have a significant backlog of tree work. This means that we're unable to commit to any timescales on when we're able to deal with non-urgent work.

Other work

Any other work that may be carried out will be at our discretion. When making a decision, we take into account things like good arboricultural practice, tree species and available resources.

Timescales

We have a long backlog of works so cannot offer a timescale for when non urgent works will be carried out.

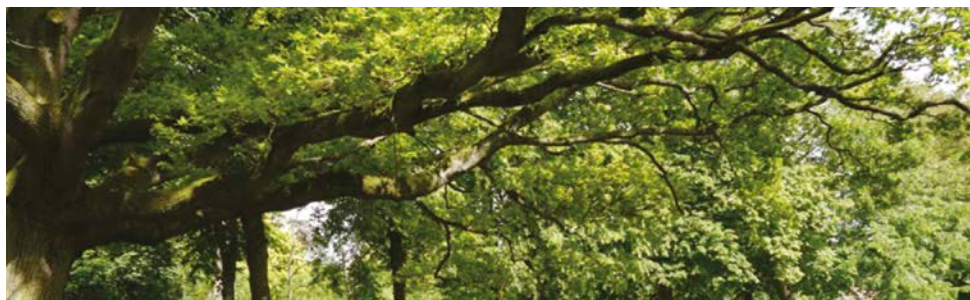


Work we are unable to instruct

When we inspect a tree, we will often not arrange for any work to be carried out. This can be for several reasons, including:

- It is not a high priority.
- It will physically damage the tree.
- The work would upset other people.
- It will cause a reduction in value to wildlife or public amenity.
- We do not own or manage the tree.





Work we are unable to instruct

Trees are valuable to our shared natural surroundings. We must balance people's needs with wider tree management objectives to enhance and improve the environment.

The following list explains when we carry out tree work.

Sun light and views

We don't prune or fell trees to reduce shade or improve a view.

Tree debris

We don't prune or fell trees because of falling fruit, leaves, seeds, pollen, sticky honeydew or bird droppings.

TV reception, mobile phone signal and solar power structures

We don't prune or fell trees to improve reception for televisions or telephones, or to increase sunlight reaching solar panels.

Large trees

We wouldn't prune or fell a large tree just because it sways in the wind. Healthy trees naturally sway in the wind and this is usually not a concern.

Third parties undertaking tree work on land we own

We don't allow residents, or their contractors, to work on land that we own. This is because our team has a consistent approach to the management of trees for reasons including health and safety and insurance.

5. What we do with the timber and wood chips

Where possible, we try to leave wood and wood chips from pruned or felled trees at the site. This rots down and becomes a useful habitat and food source for wildlife. You may have noticed these 'habitat piles' in our wooded areas.

Where this is not possible, we remove the wood, and our contractor takes ownership of it under the terms of their contract with us. We do not allow members of the public to remove wood from our land.



6. Self help

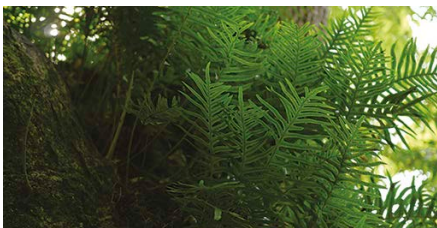
- If branches overhang your property, you have the right in common law to prune them. This applies whether the tree belongs to us or a neighbour. If a tree is protected by a Tree Preservation Order or grows in a Conservation Area, you can't prune the tree without our permission. If a tree is protected, you need to apply to us for written consent before carrying out any work, including to the roots of a tree. You can check whether a tree is protected by using the planning constraints search tool on our website at www.n-somerset.gov.uk/planningmap. In the map legend, make sure to tick the boxes next to 'Tree Preservation Orders' and 'Conservation Area'.
- If the tree is not protected, you can only cut the tree at the point where it crosses your boundary. You have no legal right to cut or remove any part of a tree that does not overhang your property.
- We strongly advise you to seek guidance from a professional tree surgeon on how best to prune back encroaching trees. This advice applies unless the work is minor, meaning you could do it yourself with hand secateurs or similar. A list of tree surgeons and tree consultants approved by the Arboricultural Association can be found online at www.trees.org.uk.
- If you use your right to prune back a tree that we own, please dispose of the branches yourself and in a responsible way.



7. What trees do for us

- **Carbon** – trees absorb carbon and lock it away, permanently removing it from our atmosphere.
- **Cleaner air** – not only do trees produce oxygen but they absorb pollutant gases. This gives cleaner air and decreases illness linked to air pollution.
- **Cooler temperatures** – urban areas can become heat islands. This can result in extreme temperatures, especially in the summer. Trees provide shade and can even block harmful ultraviolet (UV) rays.
- **Flood prevention** – root systems allow air and water to penetrate the soil. This slows water flow through the soil, which can be helpful at times of high rainfall. The canopy of trees intercepting rain also helps to reduce flood risk.
- **Improved living** – trees have been proven to have numerous benefits, including improving mental health and helping to increase property values. Studies have shown that improved access to trees can have a calming effect, and neighbourhoods with more trees have lower levels of antisocial behaviour.

For more information: www.n-somerset.gov.uk/trees



Council documents can be made available in large print, audio, easy read, and other formats. Documents on our website can also be emailed to you as plain text files.

Help is also available for people who require council information in languages other than English.

For more information call: **01934 888 802**

