

UCKFIELD TOWN COUNCIL



TREE POLICY

Policy Number 48		
Issue No.	Date completed	Details of amendments
01	24.11.08	EL61.11.08
02	24.11.14	EL48.11.14
03	31.10.19	
04	18.11.19	EL.34.11.19
05	08.02.21	Environment & Leisure Committee 8 th February 2021 Additions of sections 8.0 and 9.0
06	07.07.25	Environment & Leisure Committee 7 July 2025 Additions of sections 5.5 to 5.8

1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 Trees and woodlands have many landscape and wildlife benefits and even dead trees have a high wildlife value.
- 1.2. The Town Council owns significant areas of land within the Town and is responsible for the management of the trees and shrubs in those areas.
- 1.3 The Town Council appreciates the importance of encouraging the planting of native species, but accepts that in certain locations the planting of non-native and ornamental trees could be appropriate. However, wherever possible priority will be given to planting native trees on land owned or land which is donated to the Town Council.

2.0 Tree Preservation Orders

- 2.1. Wealden District Council has a duty, under the Town and Country Planning Act 1990, when dealing with development proposals, to retain trees and woodland to enhance their contribution to the landscape character of the District. This duty involves the administration of Tree Preservation Orders (TPO) and other forms of tree and hedge protection.
- 2.2. The District Council actively monitors sites and where a contravention of a TPO occurs formal enforcement action may be considered necessary. Anyone who cuts down, uproots, or wilfully destroys a tree or hedge or tops, lops or wilfully damages a tree or hedge in a way that is likely to destroy it is guilty of an offence. Anyone found guilty of this offence is liable upon conviction, to a fine of up to £20,000.
- 2.3. Many of Uckfield Town Council's trees are covered by Tree Preservation Orders and permission must be sought from the District Council before any works can take place.

3.0 Aims

- 3.1 The Council feels it is important that trees, whether protected by TPOs or not, are not felled or lopped unnecessarily on the basis of perceived threats and simple inconvenience.
- 3.2 Uckfield Town Council's policy regarding trees in its ownership is to retain trees and woodlands wherever possible.

4.0 Care of Trees

- 4.1 The Council does, however, have a duty of care to ensure that trees remain safe and will carry out appropriate works if a tree is dangerous.
- 4.2 The Council will carry out a survey of trees in its ownership over a cycle of five years.
- 4.3 Should residents adjacent to woodland feel that tree work is required, they should in the first instance write to the Town Council detailing the problem, e.g. overhanging branches etc. The Council will assess each request individually and respond accordingly, but at all times will have regard to this policy.

- 4.4 Should a resident wish to obtain a professional assessment of the trees from an experienced and qualified tree surgeon or Arboriculturist, the Council would consider such an assessment and may reassess the request.

5.0 Common Law

- 5.1 Under Common Law anyone can prune branches that overhang their boundary, only to the boundary, providing they return the debris to the tree's owner. However, unnecessary pruning can damage a healthy tree and reducing the height can be highly disfiguring and result in decay of structural parts of the tree.

- 5.2 Anyone wishing to exercise this Common Law right should ensure that all works comply with BS 3998: 2010 Tree work recommendations. A copy of which can be obtained from the British Standards Institution, 389, Chiswick High Road, London W4 4AL by Tel: 0208 996 7000 or downloaded from their website

<http://shop.bsigroup.com/ProductDetail/?pid=000000000030089960>

- 5.3 Before carrying out work to any trees, it is up to the individual to check whether or not any Tree Preservation Order or other statutory protection exists. This information can be obtained from Wealden District Council, Vicarage Lane, Hailsham. East Sussex, BN27 2AX. Tel: 01323 443322. Additional information about TPOs can be found at www.wealden.gov.uk

- 5.4 Anyone wishing to prune a tree, under this law, should advise the Council in writing prior to any work being undertaken.

- 5.5 Any requests in relation to trees owned by Uckfield Town Council that are not deemed a safety issue as recommended by external and internal professional tree inspectors – will be addressed on a case by case basis and those recommendations will be approved by the Countryside Ranger or Head Groundsman. Any tree works would need to be carried out to British Standards by an approved contractor, a list can be obtained from Uckfield Town Council.

- 5.6 In the case of a non-safety related request to carry out works to a tree owned by Uckfield Town Council and following a pre-approved recommendation, those costs will be fully incurred by the resident. This includes an admin charge of £75, where a variation on a TPO (tree protection order) is required and £50 where this is not required.

- 5.7 Approved tree works on Town Council land will be arranged through the resident making this request, although no works can begin without permission given in writing.

- 5.8 Any costs payable to the Town Council must be paid in advance of any approved tree works.

6.0 Tree Wardens

- 6.1 Tree Wardens are volunteers who are appointed by the Town Council who gather information about their local trees and get involved in local tree

matters. They report any concerns regarding dangerous or diseased trees and any unauthorised works on trees under Preservation Orders. Anyone interested in becoming a volunteer can contact the Town Council for further information. Periodic training can also be arranged for volunteers.

7.0 Tree for a Tree Scheme

- 7.1 Uckfield Town Council has initiated a scheme whereby if a tree is removed due to being dead, dying or decaying, a new tree will be sought and planted on a suitable location, whether it be in the same location, or a more appropriate location across the town, on Uckfield town Council Land.

8.0 Understanding of British arboriculture

- 8.1 Trees in Britain have come under a great deal of stress over the past decades, with numerous pests and diseases affecting many species and some with landscape changing implications.

8.2 Priority of native trees

Britain has a relatively small native tree palate due to the inundation of the channel preceding the succession of forests in post glacial Europe. Moreover, several native tree species are under intense disease pressure, including elm, ash, oak, juniper and alder further reducing options for re-stocking. Whilst it is accepted that re-stocking with exotic trees would be undesirable in Uckfield's woodlands more consideration could be given to non-natives in Uckfield's open spaces.

Britain has a highly suitable climate for the cultivation of conifers, walnuts, maples, and non-native variations of oaks and ash should all be considered. Trees should be selected for their suitability for the Wealden landscape, their resilience and their addition of structural, genetic and landscape diversity.

It should also be recognised that sweet chestnut, elm, sycamore, Scots pine, horse chestnut and many other trees which greatly improve our landscape are considered by some experts non-native to this region.

Priority should be given to native trees in nature reserves and woodlands and consideration given to suitable non-natives on open spaces such as our parks and common lands.

8.3 A more active surveying regimen.

The tree policy is reviewed every five years although trees are checked and monitored on a continual basis.

A tree may be infected and decline due to failure within a five-year cycle and may also develop a mechanical failure within this time frame and also may become dangerous to arborists.

Forestry England are advising Landowners that many climbers are refusing to climb ash trees in advanced stages of decline which has the potential to make removal operations difficult and costly.

Our Countryside Ranger has highlighted that a tiered system should be considered whereby high use areas are surveyed more routinely with less surveying in less used areas. Species that are presently under stress would be ash as a good example and should be monitored more closely.

9.0 Planting

- 9.1 Tree planting is a hot topic amongst arborists and conservationists at present. Government initiatives are welcomed but with reservation.
- 9.2 Any tree planting must factor in aftercare of planted trees for at least five years and mulching, watering, pruning must all be accounted for in planting plans. Tree planting failure rates are recorded as being higher than 50%.
- 9.3 Though the exact mechanism is not presently understood it has been observed that trees that have naturally regenerated are far more resilient than planted trees.
- 9.4 Summary of factors that will be taken in to consideration to include:
 - where suitable, natural regeneration of woodland should be allowed to occur;
 - factor in both time and budget for after care of planted trees as part of planting costs;
 - ensure good biosecurity and purchase stock from reputable sources with preference given to stock grown in the UK.