

Tree management

in North Somerset



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: they are beautiful, they reflect the changes in the seasons and create an attractive environment; they help trap carbon-dioxide, filter pollution from the air, support wildlife and contribute to good health and wellbeing.

This leaflet has been produced to help you understand how we make decisions about the management of trees on North Somerset Council's land by explaining our priorities.

This leaflet aims to:

1. Explain our tree maintenance policy;
2. Explain how we assess risk of harm from our trees;
3. Tell you about how to contact us about a tree issue and how we assess enquiries;
4. Describe how we decide whether we will do as you ask;
5. Let you know what we do with felled wood and pruned branches;
6. Tell you what you can do yourself if we can't help.



1. Our tree maintenance policy

We manage thousands of our own trees and have to prioritise how we spend our limited resources on looking after them.

The way we manage our own trees is also reflected in how we deal with enquiries from the public and especially those that ask us to carry out tree work.

Works to our trees are undertaken if:

- they are dead, diseased or posing an unacceptable risk to people and property
- they are causing physical damage to private property; obstructing public footpaths and roads; or obscuring streets lights and road signs
- work is important for future health of the tree
- we wish to make landscape or highway improvements in line with site specific management objectives.



We try to be neighbourly where possible, but because we have to balance the needs of individuals with our wider tree management objectives and restricted financial resources, we can rarely make exceptions to our policy. Instead we make sure our efforts go into work that will create the greatest benefits to the largest number of people.

2. Safety

Public safety is the top priority for us and we have a proactive inspection regime for trees in our most busy areas. We use a system of calculating risk which informs our inspection programme and helps us 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 highways first because they are our most used sites. School sites and parks are also high priority. We will also respond as quickly as possible to reports of trees that pose a high risk of immediate or serious harm.



3. Reporting a tree issue – the process



You can contact us by:

Telephone: **01934 888 802**

Email: **natural.environment@n-somerset.gov.uk**

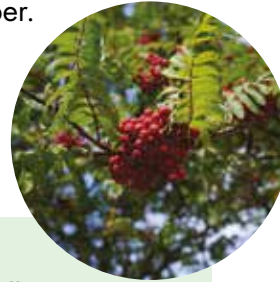
You can also report issues online at **www.n-somerset.gov.uk**

On average we receive 1200 enquiries a year relating to trees under our management. Balancing protection of the environment with limited resources means decisions have to be made based on the priorities of our work.

If you contact us please leave your contact telephone number.

This is really important so that we can speak to you if we need further information, such as the location of a tree.

Please also let us know if you wish to be contacted about the outcome or not.



If you make a request for tree works to be carried out to council owned and managed trees, the following steps will be taken:

1. Your enquiry comes in to Council Connect and is logged for a tree officer.
2. The tree officer will assess the enquiry within 10 working days. If your enquiry relates to an immediately dangerous tree, it becomes a priority for us, and the tree officer will investigate as soon as the enquiry is received.
3. If an inspection is required, a tree officer will visit the site. If the tree can be viewed from council land or highway, we will probably not contact you beforehand to make an appointment.
4. The tree officer will decide what action is required, if any. You will only be notified of the outcome if you have asked us to contact you.

4. Decisions around tree works

We receive on average 1,000 requests for pruning works each year. Balancing protection of the environment with limited resources means decisions have to be made based on the priorities of our work.

When tree work is required, either through our own inspections and management, or because of an enquiry from the public we will decide which of the following two categories applies to the tree. These categories determine whether work will be carried out to the tree and in what timescale.

The categories are:

1. Urgent

Work that is necessary to reduce an immediate risk of serious harm will be treated as a priority. Urgent work will be completed as quickly as possible to trees that are dead, dying or dangerous, causing physical damage to private property or obstructing the highway.



2. Not urgent

Work to trees that need attention to prevent future problems, or to continue previous management techniques such as damage to property, pollarding, will be completed in a timely fashion as part of our programmed works.

Other works

We cannot guarantee to undertake other tree work. Any other work that may be carried out will be at the discretion of North Somerset Council, and in our decision we will take into account good arboricultural practice, tree species, proximity to property and available resources.

Time scales

A time scale for the completion of any work may be provided but any time scale will be dependent on contractor workloads and priorities at that time.

Work we are unable to instruct

When we inspect a tree or follow up an enquiry from the public we will often not arrange for any work to be carried out. This can be for several reasons:

- It is not a high priority
- It will physically damage the tree
- The work would upset other people
- It will cause a reduction in, for example, public amenity and wildlife value
- The tree is not in our ownership or is not managed by us





Work we are unable to instruct

Trees are a valuable element of our shared natural surroundings and we must balance the needs of individuals with wider tree management objectives to enhance and improve the environment.

We have identified several specific examples where tree work will not be carried out. These also reflect situations where a tree owner is not legally required to prune or fell a tree, such as:

Sun light and views

Trees will not normally be pruned or felled to reduce shading or increase views;

Tree debris

Falling fruit, leaves, seed and sticky honeydew are not considered sufficient reason to prune or remove a tree;

TV reception, mobile phone signal and solar power structures

Pruning or felling is not generally undertaken to improve reception for televisions or telephones, or to increase sun light reaching solar panels;

Large trees

The fact a tree is large and swaying in the wind is not sufficient in itself to justify removal or pruning. If the tree sways because it is diseased or damaged we may prune or remove it if the risk of harm is unacceptable. The tree officer's risk assessment will determine this.

Third parties undertaking tree work on council owned land

We will not allow residents or their contractors to work on council owned land. This is because of management consistency, health and safety, and insurance reasons.

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 to rot down and become habitat and a food source for wildlife. You may have noticed these 'habitat piles' in our wooded areas. Where this is not possible, the wood is removed from site by our contractor, who takes ownership of it under the terms of their contract. Members of the public are not allowed to remove wood from our land.



6. Self help – the common law right of removing a nuisance

If branches overhang your property you may have a common law right to prune them.

There are strict rules associated with this:

- • If a tree is protected by a Tree Preservation Order or grows in a Conservation Area, you cannot prune the tree without our permission. If a tree is protected, you will need written consent from the council before carrying out any work to trees, including roots. You can check whether a tree is protected by using our Planning Constraints Search tool online: www.n-somerset.gov.uk/planningmap. Make sure to tick the boxes by Tree Preservation Orders and Conservation Area in the map legend.
- • 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.
- • You are strongly advised to consult a professional tree surgeon for guidance on how best to prune back encroaching trees, unless the works are trivial, meaning you could do the works with hand secateurs or similar. A list of tree surgeons and tree consultants which are approved by the Arboricultural Association can be found online www.trees.org.uk.
- • If you use your right to prune back a council owned tree, we ask that you dispose of the branches yourself in a responsible way.





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 contact: **01934 888 802** or **natural.environment@n-somerset.gov.uk**

What trees do for us:

- They contribute to improved health and well-being
- They help create an attractive environment
- They add character and charm to their surroundings
- They reflect the change in seasons
- They provide shelter and food for wildlife
- They reduce air pollution and flood risk
- They produce oxygen and help trap carbon-dioxide

