

	Title	RENT03 Tree Management Policy		
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POLICY STATEMENT

NCHA believes that trees growing in our places are assets which have significant environmental, visual, health, social and other community benefits. NCHA's Tree Management Policy sets out how we will manage and enhance our trees and woodland in accordance with NCHA's Environmental Sustainability Strategy, balanced with a proportionate approach to health and safety and the impact of trees on people who live close to them.

NCHA receive a significant number of requests for tree works and our Tree Management policy details the guidelines and specific limitations to tree and woodland work that NCHA is prepared to undertake in response to requests for works by customers and the owners of adjacent properties.

Trees covered by the Tree Management Policy include street trees planted in NCHA developments in accordance with planning permissions, existing large trees and woodland acquired or retained as part of land purchases for developments (often served with tree preservation orders/included within conservation areas), planted areas designed to act as 'visual barriers', self set trees growing on NCHA land and trees growing in customers gardens (rented properties only).

Responsibility

NCHA has a legal duty to take such care as might be expected of a reasonable and prudent landowner, and to manage risks as reasonably practicable.

NCHA will conduct a survey by a qualified tree specialist before carrying out tree works. All tree works will be specified in accordance with the British Standard BS 3998:2010 Tree Work Recommendations. NCHA will only use ARB qualified tree contractors capable of carrying out tree works in accordance with BS 3998.

The Services Team are responsible for the co-ordination of tree works. If you have a query about tree works please contact your Community Co-ordinator on 0800 013 8555.

Health and Safety

All trees represent potential health and safety risks and NCHA will take a proportionate approach to risk that balances risk against the obvious environmental and other benefits provided by trees.

NCHA will survey trees considered a high risk on a cyclical basis and we will also respond to concerns raised by colleagues, customers or external agencies. We will also assess the likelihood of tree failure versus risk of severity of potential damage to people and/or property.

1. Purpose and scope

- 1.1 NCHA believes that trees growing in our places are assets which have significant environmental, visual, health, social and other community benefits. This policy sets out how NCHA will manage and enhance our trees and woodland in accordance with NCHA's Environmental Sustainability Strategy, balanced with a proportionate approach to health and safety and the impact of trees on people who live close to them.
- 1.2 The policy will set out how NCHA will seek to work with other organisations and stakeholders to maintain and enhance trees and woodland and the overall tree canopy.
- 1.3 Trees covered by this policy include street trees planted in NCHA developments in accordance with planning permissions, existing large trees and woodland acquired or retained as part of land purchases for developments (often served with tree preservation orders/included within conservation areas), planted areas designed to act as 'visual barriers', self set trees growing on NCHA land and trees growing in tenant gardens.
- 1.4 NCHA receive a significant number of requests for tree works. The tree policy sets out guidelines and specific limitations to tree and woodland work that NCHA is prepared to undertake in response to requests for works by tenants and the owners of adjacent properties in accordance with the positive principles set out above.
- 1.5 Finally, the policy will set out the works that NCHA will undertake to trees growing on adjacent land, but impacting on NCHA properties and tenants.

2. Individual responsibilities and risk

Head of Communities
Head of Housing Services
Your Community Manager
Rents & Services Manager
Services Team Leader
Head of Sustainability

NCHA has a legal duty to take such care as might be expected of a reasonable and prudent landowner and to manage risks as reasonably practicable. There is no legislation, approved code of practice or standard which determines how the risks posed by trees should be managed.

All tree works will be specified in accordance with the British Standard BS 3998:2010 Tree Work Recommendations before work is undertaken. NCHA will only use ARB qualified tree contractors capable of carrying out tree works in accordance with BS 3998.

3. Policy details and guidance

3.1 When NCHA will carry out works on trees

- 3.1.1 NCHA will carry out works to trees outside of the bird nesting season and during autumn and winter months (October to February) when the trees are dormant. However, if there is a strong health and safety reason for requiring work to be carried out, then works may be done as soon as practicably possible.

3.1.2 **Protection of birds and other wildlife**

When considering requests for tree works in all circumstances with the exception of tree works required for health and safety or damage to property purposes, NCHA will also consider the impact of the works on birds and other wildlife. We will aim to inflict nil or minimal damage which can be quickly recovered.

If damage to birds and wildlife is assessed as likely to be significant, NCHA will abandon or seek to amend works to reduce the damage to an acceptable level.

3.1.3 **Proactive approach to the management of communal trees, trees in gardens and woodland areas**

NCHA is responsible for a number of woodland and nature areas and seeks to develop and biodiversity, wildlife and other environmental, visual and social benefits of these areas. NCHA will seek professional advice where appropriate and work with our partner agencies to develop management plans for these areas.

Whilst a large proportion of tree works are commissioned on a reactive basis because of complaints received from customers and neighbours of NCHA properties, NCHA will conduct surveys to take a proactive approach to the management of trees and woodland for which we are responsible.

This means NCHA staff and contractors identifying and resolving tree management issues, usually as part of the scheme inspection and contract management process with NCHA's grounds maintenance contractors, before they are reported to NCHA.

The Service Provision Schedule should specify the works that the grounds maintenance contractor should undertake on scheduled visits and additional works which will be ordered as and when necessary.

3.1.4 **Health & Safety**

NCHA recognise that trees can cause potential significant health and safety risks to people and property in the event of the failure of limbs/branches or whole trees from the root base. NCHA also recognise that the risk posed is higher for some species of tree and for larger and older trees, and that this risk is likely to be increased further by climate change and the increased frequency of extreme weather events.

NCHA recognise that all trees represent potential health and safety risks and take a proportionate approach to risk that balances risk against the obvious environmental and other benefits provided by trees.

NCHA will appoint a tree surveyor to survey any tree ahead of work. The surveyor will assess the likelihood of tree failure against the severity of potential damage to people/property. This would produce a traffic light or similar scoring system of:

- Green - low risk, no H&S works required.
- Amber - medium risk, some H&S works required such as removal of limbs/branches/reduction of height etc.

- Red - high risk, as medium risk plus felling of tree and removal if required.

The risk assessment will be undertaken by an ARB qualified tree contractor working to BS 3998.

3.1.4 **Tree Preservation Orders and Conservation Areas.**

Prior to carrying out works, NCHA will check with the Local Authority to ascertain if trees are subject to a Tree Preservation Order (TPO) or are located within a Conservation Area.

Where this is the case, NCHA or the appointed arborist will make an application to the Local Authority and await a response before carrying out works.

If a tree presents an immediate threat to the health and safety of customers, visitors to the area or property, NCHA will instruct the arborist to make safe and notify the Local Authority of works carried out. Once safe, if further work is required, an application will be made as normal.

NCHA will always follow the instructions and guidance of the Local Authority Tree Officer.

3.1.5 **Working with customers and partners**

NCHA will work closely with customers and partners including Local Authorities, grounds maintenance and tree contractors and community organisations to maintain, improve and develop NCHA's communal trees and woodland areas. NCHA will also turn over areas of estates deemed suitable for the planting of trees and developing more biodiverse ecological habitats.

Working with tenants will include education to develop NCHA's approach to environmental and biodiversity issues, understanding the wider benefits of communal trees and woodland and consultation on the management of existing trees/woodland and nature areas and the development of new areas.

3.1.6 **Preventing trees causing damage to property**

Where a tree located in close proximity to a NCHA property, or a tree on NCHA land is close to a neighbouring property not owned by NCHA is causing or likely to cause damage to the structure or external fittings, NCHA will agree to take action.

Actions can include works to the tree or even removal of the tree where NCHA's Arborist considers it to be a reasonable course of action or on the recommendation of a qualified surveyor appointed by an insurer or the owner/residents of adjoining properties. The Arborist will take into account potential issues that removing a tree may cause – for instance overheating caused by the removal of shade and localised flooding caused by the reduction of water uptake. The same approach will be taken in regards to trees that impact on the integrity of path, drives, fencing etc.

Though property and other structures are prioritised, all works will be proportionate to address each instance with high regard in mind to keep and maintain a healthy tree.

Works to a tree or trees may also be considered following a general inspection if the purpose is to maintain the health of the tree and avert lower safety risks, for example:

- Crown thinning – removal of dead, crossing, damaged or less vigorous branches to allow space for new and health growth.
- Crown raising – removal of lower branches, especially near paths, drives etc. to prevent people from hitting their heads.
- Crown reductions – reducing the overall size of the canopy but maintaining the overall shape of the tree. A course of action usually used around street lighting.

The above works can be used in combination to achieve the appropriate outcome.

3.1.7 **Trees that are damaged or diseased**

If a tree is suspected of having a disease or infestation that will severely affect its health and stability, NCHA will obtain the opinion of a qualified Arborist to confirm the suspicion and if appropriate, a course of action.

Where a tree is damaged, NCHA will instruct an Arborist to ensure the safety of people and property in the first instance and then recommend a course of action.

Where the affected tree is subject to a TPO or sited in a Conservation Area, NCHA will still contact the Local Authority as outlined previously.

3.1.8 **Impact upon mental wellbeing of customers**

Whilst NCHA will not generally consider requests for tree works due to loss of light in most circumstances, we will consider the impact the situation may have on the mental health of customers and neighbours.

Where poor natural lighting during the main part of the day is impacting upon the mental state of a customer/neighbour, NCHA will consult an Arborist for a solution that addresses their needs and also maintains the wellbeing of the tree and local habitat.

3.1.9 **Felling trees**

Trees that have died will be removed. Again if subject to a TPO or within a Conservation Area, the Local Authority will be notified and NCHA will also take photographic evidence of the state of the tree in addition to obtaining the opinion of the Arborist.

Trees that have to be felled will be 'cut to stump'. NCHA will not remove the stump as this is both disruptive to the local area and expensive. There is also an ecological benefit to retaining the stump and letting it naturally degrade over time, providing habitat for insects, beetles and fungi.

To stop regrowth from the stumps of felled trees, NCHA will ask the appointed Arborist to use an 'Ecoplug', a contained system of delivering glyphosate to the intended tree remains alone and not into the rest of the environment.

3.2 When NCHA will not carry out works on trees

3.2.1 Loss of light and excessive shadow

NCHA will not normally consider requests for tree works due to loss of light and shadow except where the shade from trees results in the use of artificial light during most of normal daylight hours in order to be able to undertake day to day activities safely.

This means that NCHA will not normally consider requests where a tree shades a property for a short period of a day.

3.2.2 Impact on TV/Satellite reception or Solar Panels

NCHA will not carry out works that may or may not improve TV/Satellite reception. NCHA will also not consider tree works where trees are shading solar panels or causing minor disruption to TV reception for individual or communal areas. Instead, other options may be explored such as raising the height of reception poles or re-siting panels.

3.2.3 Debris from blossom, pollen, excreted sap and fruits/seeds

NCHA will not consider works intended to reduce the mess resulting from blossom, pollen, excretions of sap and fruits or any other complaints relating to debris from trees.

3.2.4 Mess from roosting birds

Birds nest and roost in trees and inevitably nesting and roosting birds create undesirable amounts of bird mess. Unfortunately, nesting and roosting birds are an inevitable consequence of having trees close to a property or other important possessions such cars.

Customers/householders will be encouraged to protect their possessions as far as possible by purchasing suitable cover(s).

NCHA will not consider tree works requested because of mess from roosting birds.

3.2.5 Excessive leaf fall during autumn

NCHA will not consider tree works requested because of complaints about significant leaf fall during autumn.

Clearing leaves is the responsibility of the tenant/householder and an unavoidable and incidental consequence of trees in the vicinity for which the benefits out way the costs. Where leaf fall is in a communal area of an estate, NCHA's appointed grounds maintenance contractor will clear them on their scheduled visits only.

NCHA will not consider requests for tree works because of leaf fall.

3.2.6 Trees in gardens of NCHA tenants

According to the NCHA Tenancy Agreement, tenants are responsible for trees growing in their own gardens.

NCHA also recommends that tenants should only plant trees appropriate to the size of the garden and that they should be planted far enough away from any properties or structures (shed, fencing etc.) to minimise the risk of damage by roots or falling branches.

However, it is recognised that many customers may have trees growing in their gardens that are larger than they can safely manage themselves and that many tenants cannot afford the cost of employing an arborist to undertake this work.

Unsafe DIY tree maintenance works undertaken by tenants represent a health and safety liability risk for NCHA, and NCHA will therefore undertake essential tree works in tenants' gardens to reduce the likelihood of risky DIY tree works being undertaken by tenants.

Where NCHA members of staff become aware of trees planted by tenants or self-set trees that may cause problems in the future, the member of staff should advise the tenant to remove the tree or ensure that the tree is maintained at an appropriate size or removed whilst it is still possible to do so.

Where appropriate, NCHA staff may also request the NCHA grounds maintenance contractor to remove self-set trees before they cause a significant problem.

Where a tenant has planted a tree that requires works or removal due to being a large species planted in the wrong location, NCHA may recharge them for part or all of the costs of any work carried out. An example of this would be the planting of a Christmas tree in the garden.

3.2.7 Complaints about trees located on NCHA land from residents or owners of non-NCHA properties
NCHA's approach to complaints about trees from non-NCHA owners or residents will be in accordance with the guidelines set out above.

4. Supporting documentation and key legislation

4.1 Forms
None

4.2 Guidance
None

4.3 Legislation
None

4.4. Related policies
None

5. Monitoring and reporting
N/A

6. Definitions
TPO Tree Protection Order
DIY Do It Yourself

7. Equality and diversity

7.1 This procedure has been written in line with NCHAs Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy and Equality Statement.

8. Appendices

N/A

9. Policy Approval

9.1 This policy has been approved prior to issue by the Director of Homes and Wellbeing or if applicable by NCHAs Board or Customer Committee.