Newsletter

Sometimes trees just have to be felled...

But we need to engage with stakeholders early to explain why

The dispute between residents and Sheffield Council over the proposed felling of 5,000 street trees is rolling on. The tree felling is part of the council's £2bn road improvement works, 'Streets Ahead', a five-year project being carried out by Amey.

In the latest turn of events the council, along with some union members and university professors, has written a letter explaining that "*Sheffield has an estimated two million trees within its borders, giving it a strong claim to be the greenest city in Europe. The council is proposing felling and replacing 14 per cent of the 36,000 street trees, or 5,000 in total. After this process is complete, Sheffield will still have a strong claim to be the greenest city in Europe.*"

This comes after the tree felling programme was stopped when the High Court granted

protesters a three-month injunction, in response to which the council organised an event at the Town Hall to communicate its new 'Tree and Woodland Strategy' , seeking to win over support.

Mike Ellison from Cheshire Woodlands said: "*It looks like Sheffield Council left it a little too late to fully engage with the public. This happens surprisingly often and it's something many councils and large social landlords often have to deal with.*"

"*Residents can become very protective of trees in their area and organisations need to communicate well in advance of any felling.*"

"*Usually local people just want reassurance that a reasonable and balanced approach is being taken and that trees will be replaced for future generations. Many in Sheffield are outgrowing their situation or coming to the end of their lives so this course of action seems perfectly reasonable. We just need to remember that people love their greenery and so need to be given all the facts in a timely way.*"

Tree Surveys and Conservation Workshops for Schools

As well as providing tree safety surveys for schools, Cheshire Woodlands offers workshops to pupils at primary and secondary schools on the topic of 'Trees and their role in conservation'. Past sessions have included building bug hotels, identifying common trees, the benefits of trees in urban and rural settings, and planting trees for the pupils to tend and care for.

In recent years, safeguarding the environment has become a paramount objective. That's why we think it is essential to teach future generations the importance of looking after their environment in a sustainable manner.

If you are interested in Cheshire Woodlands delivering a workshop for your school, please get in touch.

Trees are nature's sponges

Trees and shrubs are thirsty organisms and they have much more of an impact on our surroundings than we might realise. Once mature, a deciduous tree can transpire large volumes of water. Trees can maintain an open structure in the soil, making it more permeable and less susceptible to water run-off. Trees on flood plains help to provide a buffer for storm water and reduce flooding downstream. In fact, the All-Party Parliamentary Group on Forestry met in February to look at how the strategic planting of trees could be used as a defence against flooding. There is also a petition currently before parliament to prioritise the planting of trees as a preventative measure against flooding. The government will respond by June of this year.

The absorption factor can also be a hazard, however. By abstracting moisture from shrinkable soils, trees can contribute to the subsidence of low-rise buildings. And if a tree is removed for whatever reason, shrinkable soils such as clay might rehydrate and, over the course of a few years, make the ground swell and cause 'heave', potentially resulting in damage to buildings. For this reason it's best to identify the characteristics of the local soils before planting trees and large shrubs close to buildings and select the plants accordingly or design the building's foundations to withstand future soil shrinkage. If you have trees that are causing you concern, get them checked out by a specialist.

Top Tips: Looking after trees

1. Trees on your land are your responsibility. Take a look around once in a while to check that they remain healthy and aren't causing any obvious risks to neighbours or the public. If you have any doubts, call in a specialist.

2. In spring and summer, water any newly-planted trees regularly, especially at times of drought.

3. It's often best to leave your tree alone but if you must prune it, it's best to do this when the tree is young. Making smaller cuts when young will cause less damage and can direct future growth, reducing the need for larger cuts when it is bigger.

4. Too much pruning can stress trees, shrubs and hedges, particularly when carried out in the growing season.

5. Pruning bigger trees requires experts. For your own safety and that of the tree, contact an arborist.

6. Mulch, leaves and twigs, placed around the base of the tree, will help to condition the soil, retaining water and preventing weeds, as well as encouraging the development of a healthy rooting environment.

7. If you plan to work on any tree that is covered by a 'TPO' (Tree Preservation Order) or is in a conservation area, you will need to contact your local council to request permission, or notify them in the case of a conservation area.

8. If you notice your trees causing an obstruction, i.e. roots lifting up the pavement, fallen branches, etc, contact an arborist for advice.

New Countryside stewardship scheme open for woodland tree funding

The government's recently updated 'Countryside Stewardship Scheme' provides incentives for land managers to look after their environment. The scheme is open to all eligible farmers, woodland owners, foresters and other land managers through a competitive application process.

The range of one to two-year grants available includes funding for hedgerows and boundaries, woodland creation, woodland improvement and tree health. Funding can be sought for the restocking of trees following felling due to specific tree health issues, funding to maintain and protect young trees, as well as for woodland management.

To find out more visit www.gov.uk/countrysidestewardship

Keep calm and manage your trees

There are regular press reports detailing the hazards that trees can pose, from branches falling on cars to members of the public suing for being hit by falling pine cones. If you're responsible for land it's enough to send you running for the chainsaw! But the reality is that tree safety management should be a relatively simple job. Most of our clients see our consultants only once every two to five years. We carry out what is known as a 'walkover assessment', looking to identify and record any trees that present significantly elevated risks, rather than an inventory of each and every tree.

The risk from falling trees is generally very low, but when they become degraded, trees adjacent to people and property can cause harm and some degree of monitoring is required. In an attempt to satisfy what may be perceived as an onerous legal duty of care, tree owners are often driven by the risk-mongers to implement unreasonable and disproportionate levels of tree management, but in reality, the tree owner needs only to demonstrate that they have acted reasonably and not that they have done everything possible.

Tree risk management should not focus on risk minimisation, but should balance the benefits of risk reduction with the associated costs relative to both lost tree value and any financial resources that would be required to reduce the risk further. Cheshire Woodlands can help its clients by developing a policy for tree risk management and a strategy for implementation. We guide our clients through reasonable and proportionate management of risks without burdening them with excessive and unnecessary costs for tree work.

cheshire woodlands
arboricultural consultancy

Tree Care Workshops

- Does your organisation have trees on multiple sites?
- Do you employ grounds managers?
- Would you like to take better care of your trees and shrubbery to prevent future problems?
- Could your teams benefit from getting together as a group for training on best techniques for managing your trees?

If so, and you would like us to run an in-house tree care workshop for your grounds-staff, please drop us a line.

What clients say about us

"More than happy with CW Service"

"Rates are competitive, staff are friendly and accessible"

"Work is professional and done to an excellent standard"

"Fast and efficient"

"Excellent service throughout the project"

British Researchers fight Ash Dieback

Ash dieback, also known as Chalara, is a fatal disease which was first identified in the UK in 2012 following its spread across Europe over the past 20 years. According to the Woodland Trust, it could eventually

"*This pioneering research puts Britain at the forefront of tackling ash dieback and other tree diseases that are threatening our environment and global food security.*"

wipe out as many as 130 million ash trees across the UK. The disease is also affecting the hundreds of species of animals that rely on ash trees for their habitats.

However, it is thought that a potential solution could be on the horizon. Researchers at the University of York and the John Innes Centre have found genetic markers which can be used to predict trees that are resistant to the disease, which can then be planted to replace lost woodland. At Cheshire Woodlands we are concerned about the likely implications for genetic diversity of the species.

Minister of State for Universities and Science, Jo Johnson, said:

Ash trees affected by the disease show wilting and discoloured (black /brown) leaves. Branches and stems of the tree are affected by lens-shaped lesions centred on a dead side shoot.

If you suspect you have seen trees affected, you can alert the Forestry Commission at www.forestry.gov.uk/treealert

For more information, please visit www.forestry.gov.uk/ashdieback