Registered Charity No 1156662

BUCKINGHAM CANAL SOCIETY

TREE MANAGEMENT POLICY
(TREE PLAN) SEPTEMBER 2015

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Introduction

Trees are of immense environmental and aesthetical value to the canal and the surrounding environment. They provide a habitat for wildlife, act as a wind and rain shelter and even help to reduce the rising temperatures caused by climate change. All vegetation, when properly managed, is an important and attractive feature of the waterway environment. It also fulfils a key role in the stabilisation of riverbanks, consolidating embankments and water table control. The uncontrolled establishment and growth of vegetation alongside a navigation can, however, cause personal injury, damage to craft, reduce amenity, and adversely affect the water environment.

The principal aims with regard to vegetation management on the waterways are:

- Maintenance of a navigable channel suitable for propeller driven craft and unpowered craft.
- Removal of hazards to boaters where marginal vegetation growth causes obstructions to sightlines required for safe navigation, or physically obstructs the navigation.
- Access to the waterway edge by boat and from the bank at appropriate locations for long-term and casual mooring.
- Protection of waterways infrastructure from adverse affects of plant growth.
- Towpaths that are maintained to ensure users can use them easily and safely.
- There should be no trees between the towpath surface and water's edge.
- There should be no trees within 1 metre of a structure such as a lock, building etc.
- Trees intruding on operating space such as landings etc to be removed within 1 year of noting.
- Trees on embankments (where root penetration, or falling over, onto the navigation is a hazard) should be removed.
- Minimum clearance over water and towpath should be 2.5 metres (on narrow waterways) 3.0 metres (on broad waterways)

Note: Where found, invasive non-native species should, if practicable, be removed. If the growth is extensive then action should be taken to reduce its presence by restricting further growth pending action for eventual removal of the plant.

Buckingham Canal Society (BCS) recognizes these benefits, seeking to preserve healthy trees and encourage the planting of new trees where possible. Whilst the majority live and grow without incident, a number of trees located in various sections of the canal pose challenges and risks that need to be managed. This policy outlines how we intend to increase the number of trees along the canal, how we aim to manage the tree stock effectively, and how we reduce the risk that certain trees pose to the public, where relevant. BCS is responsible for several thousand trees, either directly, or indirectly, to its landlords and partners, principally for those positioned on, or adjacent to, land, forming the canal and towpath. This tree policy does not cover trees in private ownership, which are outside BCS 'control. Trees in private ownership are the responsibility of the private landowner.

Tree Preservation Orders are outside the direct remit of this document and must be treated separately, in accordance with the order and relevant legislation.

Conservation Areas do exist, at various locations, and must be considered alongside this Tree Management Plan

Overview

The overall aim of the tree policy is to ensure that the Canal trees are retained, enhanced and increased in the most proactive manner whilst ensuring the health, safety and wellbeing of BCS members, volunteers, the public and property.

The BCS executive team will ensure the Society undertakes a rolling 3 year inspection programme of its trees, recording relevant information about them. This inspection programme is designed to assess the trees' condition and health, whilst highlighting any work that may be required, to ensure the trees are retained in the best possible condition. If a tree is highlighted to be dead, dying, diseased, or dangerous, and is posing an unacceptable risk to public safety, it will be identified for felling.

The decision to prescribe work to a tree is always calculated on a risk basis. Risk is calculated through the process of a visual tree assessment. Whenever appropriate, this will be using the Forestry Commission Practice Guide: 'Hazards from Trees' (http://www.forestry.gov.uk/pdf/fcpg13.pdf/$file/fcpg13.pdf)

An evaluation of the tree takes into account many factors including:

- Size
- Species
- Presence of structural decay, or defects
- Relationship of any fungal infection relative to species

All these factors are considered in relation to the potential target, the damage that could be caused if the tree were to fail and the likelihood of it doing so. If defects are observed, further detailed examination may be carried out, using a range of skills and equipment, before any decision is taken regarding the tree's future management. If a contractor, rather than the appropriate relevant BCS officer, recommends a tree for felling, the relevant BCS Officer will inspect this tree, again, prior to the felling taking place, to ensure the Officer is confident that this is the correct decision.

The relevant BCS Officer will inspect trees, on and adjoining, for, and with, third parties. From these inspections, BCS will only become involved in removal, or major works, where the work is of benefit to the tree, or if the tree poses an unacceptable risk, to the public, or to property, and an appropriate payment is made. These instances will include when a tree is:

- Dead
- Dying
- Diseased
- Dangerous
- Damaging property (e.g. subsidence when confirmed by technical evidence)

However, it must be remembered that the decision, about what will be done, rests with the owner of the tree. In conjunction with the inspection programme, BCS will maintain a rolling maintenance programme, carrying out cyclical works and works highlighted by partners, or the relevant BCS Officer.

This rolling programme will reduce avoidable risks and issues, for example:

- Vehicle and pedestrian collision
- The removal of identifiable risks
- The removal, or pruning, of trees, where its relationship to a property causes excessive problems.
- Obstructing footpaths, or driveways, by branches, or epicomic growth

Felling will not be undertaken for the following reasons:

- Blocking light
- Television or satellite signals
- Residents do not 'like' the tree
- Leaf, or fruit ,drop
- Unproven allegations of subsidence, or direct damage
- Perceived threat
- The tree's size; 'it's got too big'
- The tree ' moves in the wind'
- Bird droppings
- Aphids
- Individuals' medical conditions
- Erection of fencing, walls, play areas and sports pitches

The above is not an exhaustive list, but is representative.

Further to an inspection, the BCS Officer may agree to undertake a variety of pruning operations, to remedy complaints, provided that the long-term health, appearance, or potential development of the tree is not affected. As part of good arboricultural management, the removal of trees will be carried out, when the removal will benefit the long-term development of adjacent better quality trees, i.e. woodland, and copse, management.

Furthermore, formative pruning may be carried out, following the BCS Officer's inspections, for example:

- Removal of crossing, weak, or competitive branches
- Crown balancing
- Dead wooding
- Crown lifting
- Crown thinning

All waste from tree surgery will be recycled, being used in a variety of situations, including: mulches for shrub beds, power station fuel, firewood, habitat piles, or dead standing timber, where suitable, thereby avoiding the use of landfill sites. As a last resort, arising materials will be burnt.
If the decision of the BCS Officers is subject to a challenge, by a member of the public, neighbour, or partner, the decision will be reviewed by the Executive Trustees. To enable such a review, a short report will be provided, outlining the history of the tree, the BCS Officer's opinion and 3rd party request. If a 3rd party is not content with the decision of the Executive Trustees, then this 3rd party may make a formal complaint, following the BCS complaint procedures, which can be found on the website

Wildlife and Conservation Tree works shall be carried out, whilst ensuring adherence to all wildlife and conservation laws, including:

- Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (amended 1996)
- Wildlife and Countryside (Amendment) Act 1999
- Countryside Rights of Way Act 2000
- Town and Country Planning Act (Trees) Regulations 1999 (amended 2008)
- Conservation (Natural Habitats) Regulations 1994 (amended 2010)
- European Habitats Directive 1992 (amended 2007)
- Biodiversity Act 2005 (amended 2008)

BCS recognizes the different levels of risk, represented by a hazard tree, when it is located in different sites and will manage them in accordance with Department of Environment Research for Amenity Trees No. 7 'Principals of Tree Hazard Assessment and Management'. Higher levels of risk will be acceptable, in locations where there is a lower footfall, e.g. middle of a woodland area, as opposed to a highway situation. This will allow the retention of veteran trees, without undue risk, whilst encouraging bio-diversity and habitat retention.

When any works are recommended, for trees within a Conservation area, the BCS Officer will liaise with the relevant Council's Planning Department.

BCS will communicate with partners, public and members, as appropriate, of any major tree works, such as pollarding, or felling, before any works are carried out. If there is a large number of trees to fell, in one location, BCS will also erect notices, to inform the public of the proposed works. In the event of emergency health and safety work, that must be carried out immediately (e.g. storm conditions), the BCS Officer will notify relevant partners and authorities, retrospectively.

Felling is the last resort, and will only be carried out, when deemed necessary by the BCS Officer. However, public safety is paramount, and for this reason the public will be informed of tree works, via notices, but will not be consulted for approval.

Subsidence is a complex interaction, between the soil, building, climate and vegetation, that occurs on highly shrinkable clay soils, when the soil supporting all, or part, of a building, dries out and consequently shrinks, resulting in part of a building moving downwards. Trees lose water from the leaves, through transpiration, that is replenished by water taken from the soil by the roots. If the tree takes more water from the soil, than is replaced by rainfall, the soil will gradually dry out. Trees have a large root system and they can dry the soil to a greater depth, critically, below the level of foundations. The amount of water trees can remove from the soil can vary, between different species. This policy seeks to set out BCS response to subsidence claims, against its own trees. The opposite of subsidence, is a process called 'heave' and this occurs as a shrinkable clay soil re-hydrates (becomes wet again) and begins to increase in volume, exerting upward pressure. Heave can also cause damage to buildings, and is just as undesirable as subsidence, but occurs less frequently.

All claims regarding subsidence, will be referred to the BCS Insurer, along with a brief report from the BCS Officer. The report will highlight, if the tree is the responsibility of BCS, the age, type, and condition of the tree and any other factors that may be of importance to the claim. The insurers for the claimant, or their consultants, must provide evidence of ALL the following items before any works are carried out to BCS owned trees.

- Physical damage
- Presence of live roots of a suitable species
- Seasonal movement, or variation, of the damage, during different seasons.

If the above evidence is provided, BCS will adhere to the advice supplied by insurers with regard to what, if any, works are required to the trees. If evidence is insufficient any claim will be dismissed.

Replacement Trees

It is BCS policy, that every tree felled, or lost, to natural events, should be replaced in a 2 for 1 ratio, to ensure that, over the years, the Canal retains its tree stock for future generations. It is recognized that it is not always practical, or prudent, to replace a tree in the same location, or with the same species that was previously planted.

BCS will work proactively, to manage, or facilitate, replacement tree planting, which may include, but not be limited to, working with the community and friends groups, considering new planting schemes, including memorial trees, community woodlands, and by encouraging funding from new developments for tree planting. Each year, BCS will update and publish a programme for planting in the year, reflecting the approved budget.

Procedures

This policy will be supported by Operational Procedures in BCS, to ensure compliance.
Attached in Appendix 1 is the 'Procedure – BCS Works on Trees'. This is used only when a tree inspection highlights that works are required, based on a BCS Officer's inspection, in line with this policy.
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Definitions

Arboriculture – the management of trees in the urban environment
Arboricultural Officer – This can, also, be the Tree Team Supervisor, who deputizes for the Arboricultural Officer.
Good Arboricultural Practice – appropriate tree surgery operations, carried out at suitable times, to promote the quality of trees and their enduring relationship with the urban environment.
Minor Roads – Footpaths, bridleways and 'urban roads', that are neither 'trunk', nor 'classified', usually with a speed limit of 30mph. These roads are the responsibility of the Highways Authority.
Geographical Information System (G.I.S) – Computer database, usually represented as a map, with linked tables of data.
Dead, Dying, Diseased – see Dangerous
Dangerous – a tree can be classified as dangerous, posing a more than acceptable risk, to persons, or property, having been assessed of its chance of collapse and the potential damage that may result if it collapsed.
Failure Risk Assessment – An assessment based on how could the tree fail, what defects are present, probability of failure? Followed by Consequential Damage – what damage would the failure cause? Followed by Hazard Reduction – if more than acceptable risk present, tree pruning, removal, or relocate, targets appropriate to each situation.
Major Works – works including felling, or work concentrated on many trees, in a localized area.
Pollarding – the removal of all branches, leaving a trunk, from which new branches will grow, in successive seasons. Usually on a 5 – 15-year cycle, limited to a small number of species.
Physical Damage – damage, usually cracking, to structures, caused by incremental growth of stems, or roots, or soil shrinkage, due to water extraction.
Presence of live roots – taken from test boreholes, dug in the area, adjacent to property damage, as evidence towards proving to be the cause of subsidence of a property.
Seasonal Movement – physical damage to structures, that increases with annual growth, relating to direct damage. If subsidence is present, the cracking will increase in summer and reduce in winter.

(Deciduous trees extract large volumes of water during summer months and dramatically less in winter, when trees are without leaves.)
Cyclical Works – removal, or adjustment, of stakes and ties from young trees, removal of basal, or epicormics, growth, crown lifting to clear footpaths or highway vision splays.

In case of any queries, or questions, in relation to this Policy, please contact the Buckingham Canal Society Executive Officer:

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Signed:
Position:
Date:
Review Date

Appendix 1

Procedure - Works on Trees.

Before any work is undertaken, trees will be inspected by the BCS Officer, the work team supervisor, or suitably qualified independent surveyors. An inspection sheet must be filled in and filed at the time of inspection.

If any work is required to any tree(s), the BCS Officer must issue a formal work instruction. This instruction must include the following information:

a. Location of tree(s)
b. Where the tree is difficult to locate, a small dot of paint is to be sprayed on the base of the trunk
c. Type of tree(s) (Genus and Species or Common Name)
d. Details of the work required to the tree(s)
e. Priority of works e.g. One Month f. Site Specific Risk Assessments g. Location Maps from G.I.S mapping system clearly showing the location of the tree(s). Two plans to be produced, where necessary a) Close up including ID number and b) a generic site plan, to provide easily identifiable locations

If the tree(s) require felling, then the following tasks must be completed

- Inform BCs executive, officers and partners, at the first opportunity of the felling works and timescales
- If the tree(s) are in a Conservation Area, Local Council and residents must be informed, about the felling and timescales
- The Tree Team must not carry out any work on any tree(s), without the above procedure being followed, with the exception of emergency health and safety work, that must be carried out immediately. In this case, the BCS Officer must produce a Confirmation Order, at the first opportunity.
- When the BCS Officer is not available, the Tree Team Supervisor will carry out the above duties, in consultation with a member of the BCS executive

Appendix 2

Forestry Commission – Hazards from tree

This can be downloaded from

http://www.forestry.gov.uk/pdf/fcpg13.pdf/$file/fcpg13.pdf