

## **Notes from Tree Safety Meeting – 8<sup>th</sup> April 2008**

**Forestry Commission, 340 Bristol Business Park, Bristol**

### **Attendees:**

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| Sir Harry Studholme (FC Commissioner)<br>(Chair)           | Simon Richmond (Arboricultural Association)     |
| Nick Eden (Arboricultural Association)                     | Mike Seville (CLA)                              |
| Caroline Harrison (ConFor)                                 | Jane Karthaus (ConFor)                          |
| Brian Mahony (Forestry Commission England)                 | John Watt (Middlesex University)                |
| John Lockhart (Lockhart Garratt/RICS)                      | Emily Ramsay (Forestry Commission GB)           |
| Rachael Edwards (Forestry Commission<br>England) (minutes) | Andy Tipping (LTOA/London Borough of<br>Barnet) |
| Rebecca Haskell (Woodland Trust)                           | Shireen Chambers (ICF)                          |
| Mick Boddy (BSI)   | Mike Hodson (BSI)                               |

**Apologies** were received from Brian Mahony (Forestry Commission England), Neville Fay (Treeworks Services Ltd.)

### **Review of Actions/ Comments from last meeting**

HS has been in contact with the NFU insurers. Senior underwriters do not share the concern of landowners with regard to tree risk. They are therefore reluctant to be involved in the conference.

JL has spoken to RICS. He reported that tree risk is not high on the agenda at present but with increasing environmental risk insurance they may wish to have greater involvement in the future.

NF mentioned Zurich Municipal are still interested in providing a speaker for the conference but have yet to confirm.

NE highlighted the potential confusion with regard to the BSI standards about trees on construction sites (BS5837) and the tree safety inspection document (BS3213). Other standards of interest are BS3998, Pruning which is undergoing a revision and BS4043, root ball lifting.

### **BSI**

The BSI now produce a range of documents, not just standards. This means that any document developed is not necessarily going to be a standard.

There is a committee currently looking at BS5837, Trees in Constructed Areas. BS3213, Tree Inspection is currently in preparation and is being considered by a committee comprised of a number of organisations.

The original intention was to issue the tree inspection BS3213 document at the end of May 2008, with consultation during June/July 2008 to fit in with the tree safety conference on 29<sup>th</sup> May. BSI is prepared to give an overview of the document at the conference. It would also be possible for delegates to have an advance, electronic copy of the document prior to the conference so that they can make comment on a prescribed return form. There was concern about having detailed discussion prior to the conference or strategic talks. In this way it may not be appropriate for the BSI standard to be circulated to delegates. There is potential that should this happen the purpose of the conference would be overshadowed by discussion about the BSI document. It was agreed that the BSI draft would not be widely circulated prior to the conference.

The draft document focuses on detail rather than strategy. It is a more technical document for practitioners. It is a continuation of themes/expansion from those mentioned briefly in BS3998 and BS5837. The BSI envisages significant evolution of the document following consultation.

The BSI sees the need for a strategy to accompany BS3213. The BSI draft document does begin to give guidance and a strategy could be developed using this as a baseline. It is important that the strategic guidance, the aim of the tree safety group, and this more technical document are complementary to avoid confusion and ensure the same messages are being conveyed. Any strategic level document should give advice on the level and frequency of inspection.

Concerns were raised about the pressure on inspectors to identify trees as safe as this is not realistic. It should focus on whether there are any external signs of weakness or structural failure. Inspections can be increased if required by the situation i.e. proximity to people or highways, visitor numbers etc. The level of management needs to be proportionate to the risk, with due regard paid to the value of deadwood etc.

The BS intends to be as proportionate as possible. A good starting point is to assess whether there is anything of significance that can be harmed by failure. There was a short article in the latest AA journal by the barrister who represented Poll, which suggests arboriculturalists are raising the inspection profile. It is important to establish that we should not be looking at the widescale inspection of trees. Even if the decision is to do nothing, this course of action should still be supported by a clear rationale.

The civil obligations associated with tree risk are seen to be greater than legal ones. The Health and Safety at Work Act and HSE SIM have low expectation of action in relation to trees. Need to be clear about survey versus inspection. Inspection should be a more detailed second stage.

Four keys areas were highlighted as below:

1. Which trees to survey
2. How frequently they are inspected
3. Who does the inspections – competency of inspectors
4. How

It was felt that points 1-3 were for consideration in the strategic document whereas 4 is the more technical, practical guidance.

The BSI draft document covers all of these points, although it was pointed out that that if there is no consensus about the content of the draft document, the BSI will not publish it or will publish with caveats. The scope of the document could be reduced to cover only trees in the built environment, which is what the document primarily focuses on even though there are wider implications to the standard.

The Tree Safety Group agreed the primary objective is to develop a set of broad principles to be the basis of a strategic discussion. It would be good to conclude this work before the continuation of the British Standard. The BS needs to be properly titled to avoid confusion.

Middlesex University will commence a study into Tree Risk. This will look at where and when failures occur and the relationship between them. This study will look to firstly nail down the facts to underpin Risk Assessment and then flesh out the actual and perceived risk. The London Tree Officers Association have a tree failure database. The difficulty is in finding out why they failed.

In previous meetings of the Tree Safety Group it was felt that the BSI could be an appropriate vehicle to take the principles forward.

The meeting agreed recognition of the importance of the BSI and taking this forward. At the end of the process should include a standard. The standard should be freely and readily available. There was some concern that BSI standards can be expensive and therefore would not be as easy to access.

After some discussion it was agreed that the BSI should have a 10 minute slot at the conference on 29<sup>th</sup> May to outline the differences between the standard and the strategy and highlight the work already done by the BSI.

HS concluded that it is the choice of the BS when the consultation process is started but that he hoped the concerns of the Tree Safety Group would be taken into account. It was suggested that the BSI need to consider the pre-circulation of the draft document to the group for informal feedback and to inform future discussions. The feeling of the group was to delay the document until a standard can be produced to which we all agree and can sign up to. The meeting agreed with this statement.

The aim is for the Tree Safety Group to produce something by the end of 2008. This allows the conclusion of the work to be carried out by DARM and for the results to be fed in.

Results could be fed in to a BSI standard through revisions if necessary. The group decided that it was not possible to answer what the best course of action is without seeing the draft document. This should be considered in a later meeting.

MH agreed to circulate the document among the members of the group. Representative organisations agreed that at this stage they would only consult a few members with an interest in the subject, rather than more widely.

**ACTION: MH to send document to RE for circulation or request a distribution list  
COMPLETED**

## **Conference**

At the time of the meeting bookings were up to 155. Aiming for 250.

Help with publicity for the event is required to reach the wider industry. Thanks were extended to those who have already helped.

SC agreed to include leaflets in the delegate packs for the ICF conference.

**ACTION: NF to co-ordinate getting leaflets to ICF for inclusion  
COMPLETED**

An E-flyer is now available. Paper copies were circulated during the meeting and feedback was positive. It is possible to amend the covering introduction to suit the audience but the main e-flyer should be retained to ensure consistency in information.

**ACTION: RE to circulate electronic copy to group members for distribution to their networks. COMPLETED**

Organisations with representation on the TSG are allowed to nominate one delegate to attend the conference free of charge. Other should register through the website as usual.

**ACTION: Group members to send nominations to RE. RE to collate and forward to Ellen Elena. COMPLETED**

The conference should be mentioned wherever possible. JK received a release, which branded the conference as an FC event. This was clarified with the FC press office and should be rectified.

*Electronic Voting System*

Speakers at the conference will present for 10 minutes. They will be asked to focus on 3 key issues under their title and have 3 recommendations. This will allow for audience participation and feedback.

Questions will need to be predetermined to ensure the best possible results are obtained from the conference.

**ACTION: HS, NE, JK, JL, NF and MS to formulate draft questions** in conjunction with equipment consultants and circulate within the group. These will need to be allocated within the programme and discussed with speakers. **COMPLETED**

It was suggested that the speakers should know the composition of the audience if possible. NF said broad information could be circulated as required to avoid data protection issues.

#### *Speakers fees and expenses*

Discussion was had over the payment of speakers fees. There is some conflict with some people requiring payment for speaking and others not. It was asked what is reasonable to pay. It was decided that it depends what they charge and how much the agenda is compromised by that person not being there.

The budget allows for £550 per person including expenses.

HS and NF to discuss further and agree a form of words to be written in to the speakers agreements. The door should be left open for payment if necessary but highlighted that the conference is not for profit and any monies made will be used for the next stage of the process.

Sponsors for the conference are welcomed and logos can be added to the conference literature.

**ACTION: HS to speak to the WT about sponsorship. COMPLETED**

#### **AOB**

DARM have sent a draft proposal for the research they will be carrying out. Money has been secured from English Heritage (£7000), which is currently being held by the Arboricultural Association.

The documentation needs finalising prior to the contract being issued.

The next meeting will be held at the end of June/beginning of July.

**ACTION: All reply to RE with availability for next meeting on 30<sup>th</sup> June, 7<sup>th</sup>/10<sup>th</sup> July. COMPLETED**