

Notes from Tree Safety Meeting – 24th January 2008

Forestry Commission, 340 Bristol Business Park, Bristol

Attendees:

Sir Harry Studholme (FC Commissioner) (Chair)	Simon Richmond (Arboricultural Association)
Nick Eden (Arboricultural Association)	Mike Seville (CLA)
Neville Fay (Treeworks Services Ltd.)	Jane Karthaus (ConFor)
Simon Wallis (Forestry Commission England)	John Mortimer (Middlesex University)
John Lockhart (Lockhart Garratt, RICS)	Prof. David Ball (DARE, Middlesex University)
Rachael Edwards (Forestry Commission England) (minutes)	

Apologies were received from Brian Mahony (Forestry Commission England) and Emily Ramsay (Forestry Commission GB).

The notes from the last meeting were agreed.

Emerging Issues.

BSI

HS has been in contact with the Mike Hodson, Secretary of the Tree Group at the BSI with regard to the standard they are developing. The standard is aimed primarily at the construction industry but has the potential to impact on a much wider audience. It was felt that the BSI should consult with the wider industry, even though the standard is narrowly defined as trees on building development sites.

HS suggested it would be beneficial if organisations to write to the BSI highlighting concerns about the standard being premature and/or inappropriate and of the potential for unintended consequences following the publication of such a standard.

ACTION: ConFor, RICS, AA, and CLA to write to BSI about the impact their Standard on tree inspection will have.

NE has also been in contact with the BSI and has written an article on the subject of 'Tree Risk Management' for the AA's quarterly newsletter to be distributed on 1st March 2008.

NF suggested that Caroline Davis could be included in communications with the BSI.

The BSI will be invited to future meetings of the Tree Safety Group to ensure a co-ordinated approach.

ACTION: HS to invite BSI representative to meeting on 3rd April

Insurance/Insurers

More insurers are beginning to view tree safety as an issue. Landowners are being asked about their tree inspection policy when purchasing insurance. However, there is no basis for judging what should be being carried out.

There is potential to set up a Panel with insurers. Chris Green (HSE) has a contact within Zurich Municipal; NF has not yet got a name.

ACTION: MS to find main insurers for CLA and try to obtain a contact.

ACTION: JL to ask RICS about insurance via their insurance liaison group.

ACTION: HS to approach NFU insurance for discussion about their position with regard to tree safety.

Creation of a Tree Safety Forum

Discussion was held about when the forum would be formed and whether forum was the correct name for the group. There is going to be a specific output from the group and it was felt that this would be the natural end, rather than it continuing *ad infinitum*. A forum could be created at a later date, if required, to assist with on-going matters.

It was agreed that any correspondence would now include the logos of all parties involved in the group (FC, AA, CLA, RICS, DARM, TEP, ConFor).

The Tree Council could be used as one way of communicating output to a wide audience.

At the moment the process needs to be open. The AA, CLA etc need to inform their members that they are representing them at the Tree Safety Group meetings. It is important to note that there could be some conflicts and nervousness from members about some organisations being involved in this initiative.

It was suggested that having the final principles documented as a British Standard might be an appropriate vehicle for publication, although these usually cost money to access, which could restrict acceptance and availability. There may be compromise solutions.

Funding

The Forestry Commission has pledged financial support to the work of the Tree Safety Group. Much of this will be used for underpinning the cost of a conference. However, as this is a collaborative initiative more funding is required from other sources.

JL has approached RICS and MS the CLA about funding the group. Both are awaiting decisions.

ACTION: JK to approach Scottish Forest Trust as potential contributors.

Literature Survey

This work will be undertaken following discussion at the conference.

Workstreams from Previous Meetings

Letter to Potential Stakeholders

A letter was sent to 1036 organisations using Defras ETWF consultation list.

Through this a total of 449 people have shown interest in attending a conference, another 18 would like to be kept informed of developments.

Legal Panel

It is hoped that a Legal Panel would help develop a proportional approach to tree risk management. In the Poll V. Asquith case and subsequent reaction, there has been no consideration of cost/benefit analysis.

HS and NF met with Richard Stead to discuss formation of a Legal Panel to work with the Tree Safety Group. Richard Stead has a good understanding of the issues involved. He is continuing to look for a judge who would be willing to sit on the Legal Panel to oversee the creation of a standard. A retired judge would almost certainly be better able to undertake this task, rather than a current judge. This is due to potential concerns involvement may have on on-going or future cases.

It was highlighted that the Compensation Act 2006 has not yet been tested.

Conference

The conference is provisionally booked for Thursday 29th May 2008, to be held at the Royal Geographic Society, London. The venue can take more than 700 people, although costings have assumed 200 delegates.

The title of the conference was agreed as "Tree Management for Public Safety: Towards an Industry Statement".

The charge for 200 delegates including venue hire and catering is £9400. Additional costs relate to the speakers, hire of equipment and producing packs for delegates.

NF circulated a skeleton timetable of speakers, including Richard Stead, Prof. John Adams and Prof. David Ball. Suggestions for other speakers included Chris Bains and a representative from the HSC (preferably) or the HSE. Another possible contributor is William Worsley from the CLA. HS agreed to chair the day, although there is also the possibility of sharing these duties with someone else, possibly Chris Bains if he is available. Another possible session could be lead by the Arboricultural Association, Nick Eden or a colleague.

ACTION: NF to find contact to approach in HSC and forward details to HS who will then write and ask to present.

ACTION: MS to ask William Worsley if he would be willing to speak at the conference and let others know outcome.

Everyone agreed that audience participation at the event is vital for its success. With the potential for several hundred people to attend it was decided that round table discussion and feedback was not practical at this stage. More reasonable was the suggestion of using electronic response devices, which would also give immediate graphical representation of the feeling in the room. The questions, and possible answers, would need to be decided and programmed prior to the event, giving less flexibility for the audience. Potential questions could be based around experience with insurers, tolerability of risk and whether standard principals are the right approach to Tree Safety Management. Delegates could be asked for their questions when registering for the event.

ACTION: NF to investigate the cost and availability of electronic response equipment at RGS.

There needs to be a clear objective stated at the top of the timetable. This will ensure the conference has a focus and that delegates know what the aims are. There also needs to be some resolution at the end of the conference to ensure delegates go away positive about the day's events.

ACTION: NF to circulate objective among the group for agreement before publication

Broadly speaking, two main groups of people will attend this conference. Firstly, land owners who have responsibility for managing tree risk and secondly the people who advise land owners about tree risk. There are potential tensions and differences in liabilities associated with the two groups. This needs to be considered when devising the programme.

Bookings for the conference will commence mid-February through the TEP web bookings system. All monies will be paid via this portal too.

An advert for the conference has been placed in the AA's Quarterly Newsletter and could be included in ConFors magazine too.

ACTION: All logos to be forwarded to SR (simon@trees.org.uk) for inclusion in the advert.

ACTION: SR to forward advert to JK by Monday 28th January for inclusion in ConFor publication and to RE for distribution among interested parties.

It was decided to charge £95 + VAT as an Early Bird discount, for the first x number of delegates. £125 + VAT thereafter.

The next meeting will be held on Thursday 3rd April at Forestry Commission England, 340 Bristol Business Park, Bristol.