TREE RISK AND CONDITION ASSESSMENT OF TREES AT CLITHEROE ST PAUL'S CHURCH, LOW MOOR, CLITHEROE

Client: The Vicar and PCC of St Pauls Church, Edisford Rd, Clitheroe

Date of Tree Inspection: 4.2.2025

Weather conditions: Cold and Dry.

BACKGROUND AND PURPOSE.

- The specific trees are a group of 3 Pines and a Larch located at the south end of the church and close to Edisford Rd, a busy road handling local commuter traffic and buses with pedestrian traffic to schools and a sports centre.
- We understand that the trees are Covered by TPO No.7 1975 (St Pauls Clitheroe) The trees are referenced on the TPO as T12-14 Pine and T11 a Larch.
- The purpose of the study is also to identify the condition of the trees and the risk of harm and help provide completion of the clients Duty of Care liabilities. The inspection and application for permission for Tree Works has been initiated because of recent wind damage to trees and limb failures to the highway
- Implications of ground desiccation by trees and the implications for buildings and structures have not been addressed.

The trees and wind damage

INVESTIGATION METHODS AND QTRA

- The Trees which have been identified as presenting a risk of harm have been tag numbered for identification on site, with the attached schedule and plan helping to identify the location and required works.

- The methodology used, is to assess the tree conditions using VTA methods and a sonic hammer and then to proceed to use Digital Microprobe Techniques to identify basal or butt decay if required. All trees have been surveyed from ground level only.

- The urgency of the required work has been informed using the Quantified Tree Risk Assessment System of which we are licensees. The system involves assessing the condition of the tree and the type of possible failure, the use of the site and the proximity of people and buildings and the assessed likelihood of tree failure. In consideration of the risks associated with the trees I have applied the Quantified Tree Risk Assessment methodology (Ellison 2005), details of which can be supplied to you if required.

- Having considered generally perceived levels of acceptable and unacceptable risk reported in various literature, we propose that a risk of significant harm of 1 in 10,000 is a reasonable and broadly acceptable risk of harm that might be imposed upon people who have no control over the source of a risk. Risks identified which are greater than this will be refered to in the report and will require action on the part of your contractors. Certain of the recommendations may relate to issues of maintenance rather than safety and have been annoted with an (M) on the schedule. It is our view that if maintenance issues are not attended to over time they will develop into issues of safety.

FINDINGS

Taken as a group and assessed by the Quantified Tree Risk Assessment Method of which we are licencees we can advise that:

- The targets close to the trees are Buses cars, visitors, and commuter Traffic on Edisford Road within the fail range of three of the four trees. A bus stop is also within close proximity. Road side parking is also permitted

- The Trees vary in condition and age.

- The likelihood of failure varies and is shown on the attached schedule.

Environmental/Climate Issues

1. The greatest concern is with the late mature Pine (Tag 632) where the tree has suffered upper limb damage on two occasions since November 2024 and alerted the PCC to the apparent connection between climate change and higher wind speeds leading to tree failure.

2. The attached schedule lists the trees which require attention and provide more information on trees health and recommendation for Risk of harm mitigation.

Work rated as High and medium priority should be completed within three months and low priority work being completed if budgets permit.

The trees should be re-inspected in February 2027.

Contractors are asked to read the condition notes on the tree schedule and be aware of the risk of any basal failure of trees during pruning. Because of the site conditions, traffic and pedestrians control and protection will be necessary around the church. Contractors selected for this work will have high climbing skills and able to work to BS 3998. They will also per able to work to the requirements of the HSEs Working at Height regulations (especially the requirement for Dual rope lines for climbing, LOLER inspections of Climbing equipment.)

The work will not require Forestry Commission Permission but an application to carry out works will have to be issued to the Local authority and their permission to proceed is essential. We will make an application to the council for this work as set out in the schedule below

CONCLUSIONS

The issue of tree safety and climate change need to focus not just on the condition of the trees and their ability to withstand climatic stresses of wind speed, temperature and ground moisture, the presence of Pathogens and structural weaknesses **but on the increasing pressures of Climate change on trees**. This will require us to determine if trees are able to handle to pressures of on-going climate stresses and should inform our forward planting plans and tree replacement plans

Our conclusion in this case is that if we cannot justify replacing the trees there should be consideration to reducing car parking facilities near to large trees, reducing canopy spread where current wind speeds are high but tree health and growth can be sustained

The risk of harm from trees is very low when compared to the risk of harm to road users when we compare death from tree failure with death on the roads. Nil risk is not possible and unjustified tree loss or removal is an own goal in the climate change battle.

In Practical terms we are recommending some canopy thinning and reductions to reduce wind exposure and a review of the branch loss/history in February 2027. If the history of wind damage continues this will inform proposals for future work

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Proposed schedule of works to Trees

Tag.No	Species	Height (m)	Dbh (approx mm)	Canopy Spread (Radius in metres)	Age Class Y/EM/ M/LM /OM	Condition (Good/Fair/Poor)	Target Value rating	Size Of failure	Liklihood Of failure	Work required to mitigate risk	Priority (H/M/L)
632	*Pine*	*17*	*720*	*7*	*M*	*Good in terms of vitality, butt and root plate condition, Recent and past wind damage over time is evident. Cause being the westerly winds with the tree standing exposed*	*M*	*M*	*H*	*Removal of exposed snags. 10% upper canopy thin to reduce wind catch. Reduction of lower canopy spread Over road by 3m max.*	*H*
629	*Pine*	*17*	*680*	*7*	*M*	*Good, Canopy extends over pavement and Bus stop*	*M*	*M*	*M*	*Remove past deadwood snag. 10% thin of lower canopy over Bus stop*	*M*
630	*Pine*	*17*	*360*	*4*	*M*	*Good, High Height :Diameter ratio. No evidence of root plate lift*	*M*	*M*	*M*	*Revue tree condition in 2027*	
631	*Larch*	*16*	*480*	*3*	*M*	*Good, Root plate stable, canopy fair. Provides good and acceptable screening to adjacent property*	*L*	*L*	*L*	*Revue tree condition in 2027*	

Tree Location Plan **Trees number tagged 632,629,630,631**