

# Veteran Tree Management Guide

Durham Biodiversity Partnership

**Veteran  
Trees  
Project**



## 3 Does your tree need active management?



*A veteran Beech adjacent to a public footpath*

© Stephen le Fleming

Any trees that exist on public land, or on land to which the public has access, need to be managed in some way in order to ensure that risks to the public are as small as possible. Of course, the main concerns are not just risks to the public, but also the preservation of the tree. Removing the tree would remove the risks, but also the tree, which should only be considered as a last resort. Even trees that pose a relatively large risk of injury can be managed to get rid of the risk but without the tree being removed. The actual risk of

injury to the public involving trees is very slim, and the Forestry Commission calculated that the risk of death from a tree is 1 in 10,000,000; almost 600 times less likely than from a road accident.

It should be noted that this guide simply provides basic advice and background information. If you feel that one of your trees requires management, please contact one of the useful organisations or your local authority; details for both can be found in the folder holding these cards.



*A vandalised veteran Beech*  
© John Durkin



*A grazed Sweet Chestnut*  
© John Bragg



*A veteran Rowan that has been exposed to high winds*  
© John Durkin

The following points should be considered before deciding whether to actively manage a veteran tree:

- Is the tree next to a footpath, road or waterway and liable to fall and obstruct access?
- Is the tree found in a grazed pasture (grazing can cause both damage to the trunk of the tree as well as compacting of the trees roots systems in the soil and soil damage by poaching)?
- Have the tree or others around it been vandalised in any way?
- Is the tree found in an area that is exposed to high winds?
- Would the tree damage buildings if it was to fall over?
- Could the roots of the tree damage a building or a road surface?
- Has the tree been damaged near the base of the trunk or roots by fungi?
- Is the tree part of a field boundary or can it be found on cultivated arable land?
- Is the tree found in a plantation of younger trees?



*A lightning damaged Oak*  
© A. Dunk



*A veteran Oak split and fallen in a waterway*

© A Dunk

If the answer to any of these questions is yes, then management would be needed for the sake of the tree, people or buildings around it.

Some management could harm or remove wildlife habitat, but this will be carefully assessed by one of the Arboricultural Association's Registered Consultants (see folder for details of the Arboricultural Association – links would also be provided by local authorities). Other

management involves a change in the land use, which is entirely the responsibility of the landowner.

Once it has been assessed that a veteran tree needs to be managed, it should be remembered that the tree will be providing important habitat even if it is dead. If trees need to be felled or have branches removed, the material that is cut off should be left on the ground adjacent to the tree site. This should be

mentioned to the tree surgeon that is hired to perform the tasks.

Veteran tree removal should never be an option unless the tree has an infection that can spread to other trees and threaten their health. Taking a veteran tree away removes nutrients from the area and can severely damage the soil.