

KĀPITI COAST DISTRICT COUNCIL TREE MANAGEMENT POLICY

1 PRELIMINARY MATTERS

Purpose

- 1) The purpose of this policy is to:
 - a) Provide consistency and clarity in operational decision-making when planting, maintaining, removing, and working around trees on land owned by or administered by Kāpiti Coast District Council (the Council); and
 - b) enable Council staff, contractors, and residents to understand how Council will manage trees as a valued community asset.
- 2) This is an operational policy
 - a) Legislation and Council regulatory documents take precedence over this policy.
 - b) This policy does not contain Council's planning expectations or aspirational objectives relating to tree planting such as tree canopy coverage or community access to green spaces.

Definitions:

- 3) The following definitions apply:

Amenity means the natural or physical qualities or characteristics of an area that make it pleasant, attractive, and enjoyable for people.

Council means the Kāpiti Coast District Council.

Council land includes Crown land where that land is controlled and managed by the Council on behalf of another Government agency.

High risk tree means a tree identified by a qualified arborist as likely to fail in the near term, where such failure could cause injury or significant damage to people, buildings, or critical infrastructure.

Local infrastructure means land, or development assets on land (eg roading and pipes), that are owned or controlled by the Council for the purpose of providing public amenities.

Protected tree means a notable tree, key indigenous tree, or other protected tree identified in ecological sites, riparian margins, or coastal areas as defined in the Kāpiti Coast Operative District Plan.

Right tree in the right place means endeavouring to plant the most appropriate tree species based on site suitability, rooting habits, functional and ecological attributes, performance, longevity and the potential to contribute to landscape character.

Road corridor means the area that comes within the definition of 'road' in section 315 of the Local Government Act 1974.

Senescent trees are aging trees that are in the final stages of their life, characterised by a decline in health, a reduction in growth, and the breakdown of cellular functions.

Tree means a woody plant with a single dominant trunk or stem, and a height at maturity of 3 metres or greater, and includes tree ferns but excludes vines.

Tree topping (to top trees) is the cutting back of a tree's branches to stubs or lateral branches, that are not large enough or correctly positioned to form the terminal role.

Implementation

- 4) Operational decisions under this policy will be made by the person responsible for the day-to-day management of trees and will be done in cooperation with other Council teams when work concerning trees extends across workspaces

Policy Scope

- 5) This policy covers all trees on Council land, including those on open spaces and road corridor and along walkways and accessways.
- 6) The following activities are included in this policy:
 - a) planting of trees
 - b) maintenance of trees (pruning, tree topping, approach to trees affecting critical infrastructure (eg powerlines, drains etc), and requirements when working around trees), and
 - c) the removal of trees (including high risk trees and storm damaged trees).
- 7) This policy does not cover trees located in the following areas:
 - a) private land
 - b) state highway land
 - c) any other public land not controlled or managed by the Council.

2 PLANTING TREES ON COUNCIL LAND

Tree planting

- 8) New tree planting will occur following the principle of 'right tree in the right place'. This will include along road corridors, walkways, and accessways.
- 9) Preference will be given to native species except where other species are better suited for functional reasons.
- 10) Members of the public must seek approval from Council before planting trees on any Council owned or administered land.
- 11) When removing amenity trees from our land, Council will endeavour to replace them on a minimum of a two-for-one basis. The location and species of the replacement trees could be different from those being removed.

Road corridor trees

- 12) In line with the principle of 'right tree in the right place', Council will take reasonable steps to ensure that new planting is of an appropriate type, and in an appropriate location, so that it minimises the level of future maintenance or other problems and does not create any road safety or commuter concerns.
- 13) Council will give notice to potentially affected property owners of its intention to plant a tree on the road corridor. The notice will include the tree species and provide property owners with a 10-working day window to raise any concerns about the matter with appropriate Council staff who will consider feedback prior to planting.

Explanatory Note: *Council has published material relating to berm maintenance and plantings: [fact sheet](#), and [berm management](#)*

Trees adjacent to waterways, drains, and stormwater infrastructure

- 14) Council will undertake a site-specific assessment when planting trees adjacent to waterways, drains, or other overflow paths to ensure the trees will not impede stormwater conveyance or adversely affect the hydraulic function of the watercourse.
- 15) The assessment will aim to ensure that:
 - a) The potential impact of trees on flood conveyance is assessed including the potential to impact surface roughness and the risks of blockage
 - b) any required re-profiling of the stream bank or adjustment of adjacent ground levels is considered to avoid adverse effects on upstream or downstream properties and infrastructure

- c) deep-rooted trees are avoided in areas where they could compromise structural elements of stormwater infrastructure, including retaining structures and pipe network.

3 MAINTENANCE OF TREES

Risk management

- 16) Council aims to prioritise the retention of mature trees and carry out arboreal works without causing unnecessary harm to the health or structural integrity of the trees.
- 17) Council will maintain its trees to promote structurally sound growth and reduce the likelihood of branch and whole tree failure, thus reducing the risk of harm to people, property, and infrastructure.
- 18) Council will prioritise tree maintenance based on an assessment of the risk the tree poses (See clause 51 *Assessment criteria for a tree's level of risk* for a listing of factors used to assess risk).
- 19) Council will manage the risk posed by trees in a proportionate and practical way, including by:
 - a) monitoring high-risk trees that have been identified and maintaining a register of those trees
 - b) recording in the register the assessment undertaken and any risk mitigation measures identified
 - c) establishing and applying processes for monitoring, reassessment, and risk treatment once the tree has been identified as high risk.

Pruning

- 20) Trees will be pruned to:
 - a) ensure the trees do not create a hazard for traffic or pedestrians
 - b) support crime prevention and public safety outcomes
 - c) prevent or mitigate damage to pipes or power lines and other network infrastructure
 - d) manage risk with larger senescent trees
 - e) provide access for other Council approved activities
 - f) maintain specified clearances over roads, walkways/accessways, driveways and around street and traffic lights

21) Council will prune trees only to the extent required for the purposes of the previous clause and in a way that preserves the health and shape of the tree.

Property owner requests

22) Council may, on a case-by-case basis, allow property owners to prune or remove branches from trees on Council owned or administered land to abate a nuisance, where prior written approval is granted.

23) Council will consider the following factors when determining whether to allow property owners to prune trees on Council land and the costing approach:

- a) the historical, cultural, botanical or scientific significance (if any) of the tree
- b) the likely effect (if any) of the pruning on ground stability or the stability of other trees, or the health and structural integrity of the pruned tree.
- c) the value of the tree as a public amenity, including the ability to provide shelter from wind and sun
- d) the wider community's interests in the maintenance of an aesthetically pleasing environment.

24) Where tree pruning has been allowed in accordance with the preceding clause, Council will:

- a) establish the standard and any limitations to the manner and extent of pruning;
- b) require the property owner to bear the costs associated with the work unless Council agrees to some level of cost sharing, which will be assessed on a case-by-case basis; and
- c) Council may revoke approval of the ability to undertake future work maintenance when it is not done in accordance with the established conditions.

Tree topping

25) Council will not 'top trees' merely for the sake of reducing their height to alleviate tree-related issues such as shading or debris, or the establishment, retention or enhancement of views.

26) In exceptional circumstances tree topping may be considered:

- a) when tree topping or regular height reduction has historically formed part of an established management regime for that specific tree and no reasonable alternative options are available
- b) for the clearance of powerlines or to meet other statutory requirements if the tree (or trees) form part of a purposefully planted and maintained hedge.

Trees impacting local infrastructure

When the tree concerned is a protected tree

- 27) Where the roots or canopy of a protected tree obstruct, damage, or otherwise interfere with local infrastructure, the retention and health of the tree will generally take priority. Council's preferred approach is to re-lay, realign, reinforce, or otherwise modify the affected infrastructure to avoid the tree's root or branch system where this is practicable.
- 28) Council will consider the removal of a protected tree to enable the repair, renewal, or replacement of local infrastructure only when alternative solutions have been assessed and are not reasonably practicable. Such a removal will be subject to Council's District Plan rules, associated resource consent requirements, and all relevant legislative obligations.
- 29) In determining what is reasonably practicable, Council will have regard to:
- a) the potential range of available network solutions and their effectiveness;
 - b) the cost, complexity, and longevity of those alternatives;
 - c) the significance, condition, and long-term viability of the protected tree; and
 - d) the necessity, urgency, and risk associated with the required local infrastructure works

When the tree concerned is not a protected tree

- 30) Where the tree concerned is not a protected tree and its roots or canopy are impacting local infrastructure, the affected infrastructure will be prioritised.
- 31) Despite prioritisation of protecting the affected infrastructure, tree removal will only be considered as a last resort after all other practical options such as pruning, root management, infrastructure realignment, or other engineering solutions have been fully assessed and deemed unworkable.

Explanatory Note: *Where trees growing on private property impact Council's land or infrastructure, Council may rely on its statutory powers under the Local Government Act 1974 to take appropriate action to mitigate the risk concerned. Such powers include, but are not limited to:*

- **Section 355** – Council may require removal of overhanging trees;
- **Section 468** – Tree roots obstructing public drains; and
- **Section 511** – Removal of obstructions from drainage channels or watercourses.

Trees affecting overhead powerlines and wires

- 32) Council will manage trees around powerlines in accordance with the Electricity (Hazards from Trees) Regulations 2003.
- 33) Where a request or notice to trim trees is received from an electricity distributor, Council will determine whether it has an interest in the affected trees.
- 34) Where Council determines it has no interest in the affected tree(s), public safety will take precedence and the utility company may remove or trim the tree(s) at discretion and cost, in accordance with applicable legislation.
- 35) Council may find value in tree(s) on land it owns or administers and declare an interest in them after assessing:
 - a) the wider community's interest in the maintenance of an aesthetically pleasing environment provided through the tree(s); or
 - b) the value of the tree(s) as a public amenity, including the ability to provide shelter from wind; or
 - c) the likely effect that the removal or trimming would have on ground stability or the stability of other trees; or
 - d) historical, cultural, botanical or scientific significance (if any) of the tree(s).
- 36) Where Council declares an interest in the tree(s), it will work with the asset owner to balance public benefit outcomes with safety requirements and ensure pruning or trimming meets required standards.

Trees impacting private property

- 37) Where Council is notified by a property owner that one of its trees is causing damage to private property, including service connections to that property, Council will take reasonable and practical steps to investigate, and where appropriate, mitigate the damage.
- 38) Council will consider requests for compensation for damage to private property on a case-by-case basis. Factors such as reasonable property maintenance, causation, and the timeliness of notification may influence the outcome, including the amount of compensation payable.

Contractors and tree protection plans

- 39) All contractors undertaking works on or adjacent to public trees must carry out those works in accordance with Council-issued guidance and requirements on working around trees, as applicable to the nature and scale of the activity. Contractors are responsible for ensuring personnel are familiar with, and comply with, this guidance at all times.

- 40) Where a contractor is uncertain about the guidance on how to carry out the work, or identifies a potential risk to tree health, stability, or safety of personnel, the contractor must contact the Council for advice before proceeding or continuing with the works.
- 41) Where the affected tree is listed as a protected tree under the District Plan, the contractor must submit a Protected Tree Management Plan to Council no later than 10 working days before the scheduled commencement of works. No works may commence until Council has reviewed the plan and provided written confirmation to undertake the work.
- 42) Council reserves the right to seek compensation and/or require remediation for the loss of, or damage to, Council trees and their immediate environment arising from works undertaken by contractors of other persons, regardless of whether a Protected Tree Management Plan has been approved.

4 REMOVAL OF TREES

Tree removal

- 43) Council will prioritise the retention of trees over removal whenever possible. Trees will not be removed solely for the sake of alleviating issues such as shading or debris, or the establishment, retention or enhancement of views.
- 44) Council may remove trees that are dead, dying, storm damaged, or otherwise structurally compromised where they pose a risk to people, property, or infrastructure.
- 45) Council may remove trees adjacent to waterways, drains, or other overflow paths to remove or mitigate flood risk where the tree:
 - a) is obstructing stormwater flow or contributing to debris accumulation in storm weather events in a way that poses risk to infrastructure or public safety in such an event
 - b) causes erosion or waterway destabilisation
 - c) poses a high risk to the integrity of stormwater infrastructure.
- 46) Council may remove healthy and structurally sound trees where necessary to manage or prevent the spread of pests and diseases, or where the tree's species characteristics, in context, create an unacceptable long-term risk. Relevant characteristics may include where the tree:
 - a) has a rapid growth rate
 - b) will reach an eventual size inappropriate for its location
 - c) is prolific at self-seeding

- d) poses a major risk when senescent
 - e) has a high likelihood of colonising inappropriate sites
 - f) is a pest plan species listed as a tree growth form in the current Department of Conservation's List of Environmental Weeds in New Zealand or Greater Wellington Regional Council Pest Management Plan.
- 47) Council may remove trees to facilitate infrastructure projects on Council land, subject to applicable resource consent requirements, only after assessing the value of the project to the community and, in context, the value of trees as an amenity asset.
- 48) Council may consider removing trees on a case-by-case basis, where requested by a property owner and where there are serious health impacts within a household, supported by authoritative evidence from a person's medical practitioner confirming that a particular tree or trees are the primary cause.

5 HIGH RISK TREES

- 49) Where Council considers a tree to be high risk, or likely to cause major issues in the future, that tree is added to a list for removal, with removal work being prioritised by the tree's overall level of risk.
- 50) Assessment criteria for a tree's level of risk:
- a) the potential harm to the health and safety of people
 - b) the obstruction and potential harm to drains and stormwater infrastructure
 - c) condition of the tree, including whether the tree is senescent
 - d) previous failure history
 - e) the potential damage or target if the tree was to fail
 - f) the tree species
 - g) access and topography
 - h) other factors specific to the site.

6 CLEARANCE OF TREES DURING STORM EVENTS

- 51) Council's main priority during storms is, in order:
- a) to keep roads clear, passable and open
 - b) to provide access to public spaces and places
 - c) to support the flow of stormwater through the stormwater network

d) to enable access to private ways and drives.

52) Trees located on private property that fall or encroach onto roads or public spaces may be cleared by Council where necessary, and the cost of the work may be recovered from the tree owner.

REFERENCES AND RELATED RESOURCES

Document	Purpose	Link
District Plan	The District Plan sets out how land can be used, developed, and protected within a district. It lists activities that are permitted and when a resource consent is required, as well as associated rules or standards that apply.	operative-district-plan-2021
KCDC Berm Fact Sheet	This Fact Sheet provides information to on the responsibilities of homeowners and Council with maintaining street berms. It also notes in what cases would Council step in to mow or trim vegetation on a berm.	fact-sheet-print
Land Development Minimum Requirements	These requirements provide standards and guidance for the design, construction and maintenance of any asset that is part of or connect to Council’s asset network or otherwise impacts the function of network assets.	land-development-minimum-requirements-2022
Electricity (Hazards from Trees) Regulations 2003	<p>These regulations set out responsibilities between tree owners and electricity line companies for the management of vegetation near powerlines.</p> <p>Their purpose is to ensure the safe and reliable operation of the electricity network while balancing property and vegetation interests.</p>	2003 Regulations

DOCUMENT CONTROL

Version	Date Approved	Next Review Date	Description	Approved By
1	June 2026	June 2027	New Policy	SLT
2				