



Okehampton United Charities

Funding for the Community

Tree Management and Protection Policy

Okehampton United Charities frequently receives requests for tree pruning that cannot reasonably be met due to potential damage to the tree or because the issues raised are temporary or perceived problems. Below are commonly asked questions and our approach to managing these concerns in line with best practices and relevant UK law.

The tree outside my house looks dangerous and moves in the wind.

Our qualified tree inspectors conduct routine inspections in line with our Tree Risk Management Strategy. If you raise concerns, we will inspect the tree, and all findings are recorded electronically. Movement in the wind does not necessarily indicate a dangerous tree, but inspections will determine its condition and safety.

The tree outside my house hasn't been pruned for ages. It's too tall and needs to be lopped back.

We regularly inspect and maintain trees to ensure safety. Reducing tree height is not a standard practice as it can encourage rapid regrowth or cause structural defects. We prune trees near highways to ensure visibility and clearances for roads, footpaths, streetlights, and signs, prioritising public safety.

Tree branches are growing across my boundary. What can I do?

There is no legal obligation for tree owners to prevent branches from growing over boundaries. However, under UK law, overhanging branches may be considered a nuisance, and adjacent property owners have the right to cut them back to the boundary line. The removed branches remain the tree owner's property unless agreed otherwise.

As a policy, we assess requests for pruning on a case-by-case basis. We generally act only if branches are in contact with a building. Minor overhangs or those at significant height are unlikely to warrant immediate action but may be reviewed within two years.

The tree is shading my property or blocking my view. Can anything be done?

Householders have no legal right to light or an unobstructed view over a neighbour's land. Trees that block light or views do not legally constitute a nuisance. As a policy, we do not prune or fell trees solely for these reasons unless severe restriction of light is demonstrated to the Trustees' satisfaction.

The tree is blocking light to my solar panels. What can I do?

While we support renewable energy initiatives, we do not prune or fell trees solely to reduce shading over solar panels. Solar panel installers should advise on potential obstructions prior to installation, as trees are part of the natural environment and may grow over time.

The tree is affecting my TV or satellite reception.

There is no legal right to television or satellite reception. Trees interfering with reception, particularly in windy conditions, are not considered a legal nuisance. Relocating aerials or using signal boosters often provides an effective solution without the need for tree pruning.

The tree is affecting my telephone lines.

If trees are entangled in telephone or electrical wires, contact the relevant utility provider. Only authorised contractors are permitted to work near such services to ensure safety.

I have allergies caused by pollen from nearby trees. Can the trees be removed?

Pollen production is a natural process and not legally classified as a nuisance. Pruning nearby trees may provide limited relief but will not eliminate the issue, as pollen can travel great distances. We do not prune or remove trees solely due to pollen-related allergies.

Leaves, seeds, or fruit from nearby trees are causing a mess. What can I do?

Leaves and seeds carried by the wind are part of the natural environment. Once detached, they become the responsibility of the property owner where they fall. Routine seasonal maintenance, such as clearing gutters and pathways, is undertaken on property owned by the charity.

Sticky residue from trees is damaging my car or garden.

The residue, known as honeydew, is caused by aphid infestations and is common in lime and sycamore trees. Regular washing prevents damage to car paintwork. Pruning does not resolve this issue, and we do not disfigure trees to address it.

Birds roosting in trees outside my house are making a mess.

Bird fouling is not legally recognised as a nuisance. Healthy trees benefit the environment, and pruning does not prevent birds from roosting. We do not prune trees solely to address this inconvenience.

The tree is covered in ivy. Is it harming the tree?

Ivy does not directly damage trees but can obscure structural defects or fungal growth and increase wind resistance. We remove ivy only where necessary to assess tree health or manage risks.

The trees are in the wrong place or are a general nuisance. Can they be removed?

Trees must pose a substantial interference to a neighbour's comfort and convenience to be considered a legal nuisance. We do not prune or fell trees simply to prevent the accumulation of leaves, seeds, or debris unless they present a demonstrable risk.

The tree has basal growth. Can it be removed?

Basal growth, commonly seen in lime trees, is a natural occurrence. We remove it only where necessary to assess tree health or manage risks.

I'm worried about tree roots damaging my property or utilities.

Proximity alone does not mean tree roots will cause damage. Modern building standards minimise this risk. Tree roots rarely break pipes but may exploit existing leaks. Replacing faulty pipes with modern materials typically resolves these issues. We do not prune or fell trees solely to prevent root intrusion but will investigate if evidence of damage is provided.

What should I do if I see someone working on a Charity tree?

Contact us immediately on 0771562418 or email clerk@okehamptoncharities.org.uk. We will verify whether the work is authorised and take appropriate action if necessary. All reports are treated confidentially.