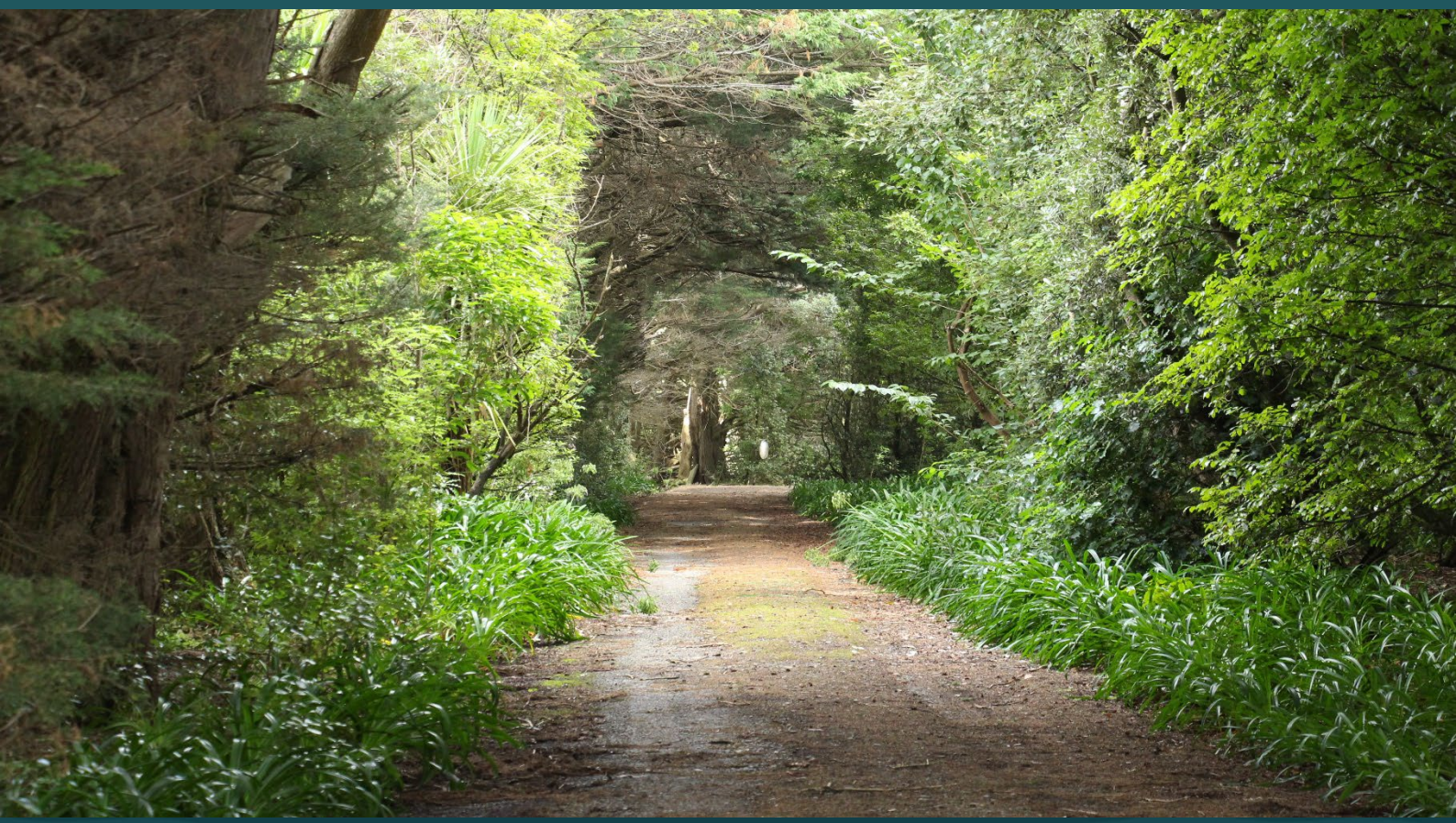
MANAWATŪ DISTRICT COUNCIL

# Tree Management Policy



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## 1 Purpose

1.1 The purpose of this Policy is to provide a clear and consistent framework for the management of trees on Council-owned or Council-managed land, including planting, maintenance, retention and removal.

1.2 Council recognises trees as long-term public assets and part of the District's green infrastructure. They contribute to amenity, character, biodiversity, shade, environmental resilience and community wellbeing.

1.3 This Policy provides the basis for balancing public safety, infrastructure protection, environmental and amenity outcomes, operational practicality, community expectations and affordability when tree management decisions are made.

1.4 Through this Policy, Council aims to:

- provide a diverse range of well-managed trees that enhance public landscapes and provide long-term public value;
- apply a consistent approach based on sound arboricultural practice;
- select species, cultivars and varieties suited to local conditions and capable of thriving with limited intervention after establishment;
- enable routine operational decisions to be made efficiently by appropriately delegated staff;
- prioritise the retention of healthy, high-quality trees while allowing removal where justified under the criteria set out in this Policy;
- plan for succession and replacement so that a healthy, resilient and mixed-age tree population is maintained over time; and
- support appropriate collaboration with communities on tree planting and stewardship.

## 2 Long-Term Outcomes

2.1 Council will work towards the following long-term outcomes when planning and managing trees on Council land.

**Urban canopy and amenity**

2.2 Maintain and enhance, over time, a healthy tree population that contributes shade, landscape character, visual amenity and the liveability of towns and settlements.

**Environmental resilience and biodiversity**

2.3 Support species diversity, appropriate indigenous species, habitat values and ecological connectivity where these can be achieved alongside safety, infrastructure and operational requirements.

**Place and Access**

2.4 Use well-designed planting to reinforce local character and, where practicable, improve access to the benefits of trees across the District.

**Long-term asset stewardship**

2.5 Plan for the maintenance, renewal and succession of the District's tree population over time, supported by tree asset information where practical to inform replacement planning, maintenance programming, budgeting and future planting initiatives.

## 3 Scope

3.1 This policy applies to trees located on:

- Council-owned or Council-managed parks and reserves;
- road reserves; and
- other Council-owned land used for operational or community purposes.

3.2 This policy does not govern the management of trees on private land or land managed by other agencies, except where Council has expressly assumed responsibility for their management.

3.3 Nothing in this Policy limits Council's statutory powers or responsibilities relating to trees outside its ownership or management.

## 4 Policy Principles

Council manages trees on its land in accordance with the following principles:

**Public Safety and Infrastructure Protection**

4.1 The safety of road users, pedestrians, park users, and the protection of essential infrastructure are fundamental considerations in all tree management decisions.

**Retention and Long-term value**

4.2 Council will generally retain healthy, high-quality trees and manage its tree population for long-term canopy, shade and landscape value.

4.3 Decisions will take account of the tree lifecycle, including establishment, maintenance, renewal and succession.

**Right Tree, Right Place**

4.4 Tree species and planting locations will be selected to suit site conditions, mature size, infrastructure constraints, landscape objectives and expected maintenance requirements.

4.5 Species selection will seek to minimise the need for ongoing intervention once trees are established.

**Resilience and diversity**

4.6 Council will maintain a diverse tree population that supports biodiversity and climate resilience and reduces vulnerability to pests, disease and changing environmental conditions.

4.7 Council will avoid undue reliance on a single species and will consider suitable indigenous species where they can thrive and achieve the intended landscape outcome.

**Community Participation**

4.8 Council supports appropriate community participation in tree planting and stewardship where this aligns with Council objectives and approved plans. Community participation does not limit Council's responsibility or authority to manage trees on Council land.

**Proportionate Maintenance**

4.9 Trees will be maintained to recognised arboricultural standards. Maintenance effort will be proportionate to tree age, condition, location and risk.

**Proportionate and Accountable Decision-making**

4.10 Routine decisions consistent with this Policy will be made by delegated staff. Decisions requiring escalation will be supported by documented assessment and appropriate technical advice.

## 5 Tree Management Decisions

**Replacement and succession**

5.1 Council will plan for the renewal and succession of its tree population to maintain healthy and appropriate tree cover over time. Replacement planting will respond to the landscape, canopy and succession needs of the site rather than a strict tree-for-tree replacement requirement.

**Retention and removal**

5.2 Healthy, structurally sound and high-quality trees will generally be retained.

5.3 Removal may be considered where:

- A tree is dead, dangerous, structurally unsound or severely diseased;
- It presents an unacceptable risk to public safety or essential infrastructure;
- It has poor health or form and limited prospect of developing into a quality specimen;
- It forms part of an approved renewal or succession programme;
- it is a recognised pest species or is causing significant unwanted spread; or
- retention is not reasonably practicable after reasonable alternatives have been considered.

5.4 Leaf fall, ordinary shading, minor debris and loss of a private view will not, on their own, normally justify removal of an otherwise healthy, high-quality tree.

**Alternatives to removal**

5.5 Where appropriate, reasonable alternatives to removal will be considered, including pruning, root management, changes to infrastructure design or alignment, and other practicable mitigation measures.

**Assessment and documentation**

5.6 The level of assessment and documentation will be proportionate to the nature and significance of the decision. Arboricultural or other technical advice will be obtained where appropriate.

**Notable trees**

5.7 Trees identified as notable or otherwise protected under the District Plan will be managed in accordance with the District Plan and any applicable statutory requirements.

5.8 Proposed works to, or removal of, a notable or protected tree must take account of the tree's identified values and any applicable approval requirements.

5.9 Where a notable tree is located on private land, responsibility for its maintenance generally remains with the landowner.

**Planting**

5.10 New planting on Council land will be approved by the appropriate delegated officer and will be consistent with the principles in this Policy. Street-tree spacing and numbers will be determined by site suitability and landscape outcomes rather than a fixed entitlement per property frontage.

5.11 Developers proposing planting on Council land must obtain Council approval and meet applicable establishment and maintenance requirements.

**Maintenance and inspection**

5.12 Council is responsible for the inspection and maintenance of trees on Council-managed land.

5.13 Pruning will seek to maintain natural form, sound structure, safety and required clearances.

5.14 Unauthorised pruning, removal or damage to Council trees may result in recovery of Council's costs and other enforcement action where appropriate.

**Private trees affecting Council land**

5.15 Consistent with section 3.2, owners remain responsible for trees and vegetation on private land. Where a private tree affects public safety, access, sightlines or Council infrastructure, Council may take action within its statutory functions and powers.

## 6 Delegation and Escalation

**Operational Authority**

6.1 Routine decisions under this Policy will be made by appropriately delegated officers in accordance with Council's delegations. Routine decisions may include:

- Approving routine tree planting, maintenance, and replacement,
- Approving tree removal where consistent with this policy and supported by assessment, and
- Engaging qualified arborists and contractors.

**Matters that may require consultation or escalation**

6.2 The following matters may generally require community engagement and/or escalation, depending on their nature, significance and applicable delegation:

- proposed removal of healthy, high-amenity trees where there is likely to be significant public visibility or impact;
- proposed works to or removal of notable or protected trees where additional approval is required;
- large-scale or area-wide tree removal programmes; and
- matters falling outside officer delegations or involving significant community interest.

**Matters outside delegation**

6.3 Where a matter cannot be determined within existing delegations, it will be referred to the appropriate decision-maker in accordance with Council's delegations.

## 7 Community Engagement

7.1 Council recognises that tree management decisions may generate varying levels of public interest depending on the scale, location, and potential impact of the proposal.

7.2 Council will generally consult where:

a. substantial new street-tree planting or material changes to existing planting arrangements are proposed within an established street;
b. removal of healthy, high-amenity trees is proposed where this is likely to have a significant effect on local amenity or generate significant public interest;
c. planting or removal may significantly affect local character;
d. significant community-led planting initiatives are proposed; or
e. a proposal is otherwise likely to generate significant public interest or impact.

7.3 Council will generally inform where:

a. Planting forms part of approved developments or capital projects,
b. Routine reserve or streetscape planting is being undertaken,
c. Planting occurs as part of approved renewal or replacement programmes, or
d. Works are operational or maintenance-related in nature.
e. Community engagement does not confer a right of veto. Final decisions will be made in accordance with this policy and relevant technical, operational, and statutory considerations.

7.4 Community engagement does not confer a right of veto. Final decisions will be made in accordance with this Policy and relevant technical, operational and statutory considerations.

7.5 The scale and form of engagement will be proportionate to the nature and significance of the decision and any applicable Council engagement requirements.

## 8 Memorial and Commemorative Trees

8.1 Council does not generally encourage memorial or commemorative trees on Council land because of their long-term management and replacement implications.

8.2 Any memorial or commemorative tree requires approval by the appropriate delegated officer and must be consistent with this Policy and any relevant management plan.

8.3 Memorial or commemorative status does not confer an ongoing right to retain a particular tree or planting arrangement. Such trees will be managed, replaced or removed in accordance with this Policy.

## 9 Partnership, Sponsorship, and Community Planting

9.1 Council values partnerships with communities, organisations, and sponsors to support appropriate tree planting initiatives where these align with Council objectives and approved plans.

9.2 Partnership planting initiatives should also consider biodiversity, ecological restoration opportunities, long-term maintenance obligations, infrastructure constraints, and road safety requirements.

9.3 Where a proposal involves the gifting or vesting of an asset to Council, Council's Vested Assets Policy will also apply.

9.4 Community partnership or sponsored planting on Council land requires approval by the appropriate delegated officer and must comply with this Policy and applicable operational requirements.

9.5 Participation in a partnership or sponsorship arrangement does not transfer ownership or decision-making authority over trees on Council land. Council retains responsibility for their long-term management.

## 10 Monitoring and Asset Information

10.1 Council will, where practical, maintain and periodically review tree asset information to support maintenance and replacement planning, budgeting, future planting, continuous improvement and review of this Policy.

## 11 Relationship to Other Documents

11.1 This Policy should be read alongside, where relevant:

a. the Manawatū District Plan;
b. relevant reserve management plans and Council bylaws;
c. the Vested Assets Policy;

d. relevant Council roading, engineering and asset management standards; and
e. applicable legislation, regulations and network utility requirements.

11.2 Council may maintain operational guidelines, technical guidance and supporting tools to assist staff in implementing this Policy. These documents do not form part of this Policy and may be reviewed and amended administratively in accordance with Council delegations.

11.3 Where another statutory or regulatory requirement imposes a different or additional requirement, that requirement will prevail to the extent of any inconsistency.