



Cornwall Rural Housing Association Grounds Maintenance & Tree Policy

1 Introduction

- 1.1 Cornwall Rural Housing Association (CRHA) is a well-established housing provider that specialises in providing homes in dispersed rural communities.
- 1.2 CRHA aims to provide quality homes that meet demand, in safe and sustainable neighbourhoods. CRHA recognise that effective management and maintenance of its 'green' space and trees is crucial to achieve this objective.
- 1.3 This policy sets out how CRHA will manage communal green spaces and trees located either within its owned space or curtilages of properties it owns and manages. This policy ensures compliance with the outcomes of the Regulatory Framework for Social Housing in England (Neighbourhood and Community Standard issued 1st April 2024) as outlined below: -
 - Registered providers shall keep the neighbourhood and communal areas associated with the homes that they own clean and safe. They shall work in partnership with their tenants and other providers and public bodies where it is effective to do so.
 - Registered providers shall co-operate with relevant partners to help promote social, environmental and economic wellbeing in the areas where they own properties.
- 1.4 This policy meets our strategic vision of "Homes to make life better" making a difference to rural communities across Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly and our Customer First, Commitment and People Focus values to support and sustain rural communities in Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly. It also adheres to the Transparency Accountability and Influence Standard as imposed by the Regulator of Social Housing.
- 1.5 CRHA is committed to ensuring access and communication so that its services are accessible to everyone. CRHA will seek alternative methods of access and service delivery where barriers, perceived or real may exist, that may make it difficult for people to work for it or use its services.
- 1.6 CRHA is committed to ensuring that no person or group of persons will be treated less favourably than another person or group of persons and will carry out our duty with positive regards for the following core strands of equality; Age, Disability, Gender, Race, Gender Identity/Expression, Sexual Orientation, Religion and/or Belief.
- 1.7 The Policy should be read in conjunction with the following documents: -

- CRHA Complaints and Compensation Policy
- CRHA Repairs and Maintenance Policy
- CRHA Service Charge Policy
- The Town and Country Planning (Tree Preservation) (England) Regulations 2012

2 Scope of Policy

- 2.1 The purpose of this policy is to ensure the effective maintenance of grounds and trees including hedges managed by CRHA. The policy also provides guidance and instructions for all CRHA employees and contractors, whilst undertaking associated contract work. This is with the aim of satisfying the service obligations and legal duties imposed on CRHA.
- 2.2 Activities in relation to grounds and tree maintenance will conform to the requirements of the following key areas of legislation: -
- The Health and Safety at Work Act (1974)
 - The Health and Safety at Work Regulations (1999)
 - Occupiers Liability Act (1957 and 1984)
 - The Countryside and Wildlife Act (1981)
 - Highways Act (1985)
 - Lifting Operations and Lifting Equipment Regulations 1998 (LOLER)
 - Provision and Use of Work Equipment Regulations 1998 (PUWER)
 - Work at Height Regulations 2005 (WAHR)
- 2.3 CRHA is responsible for effective maintenance of communal land it owns or manages including trees and hedges. CRHA will carry out maintenance work on communal areas on a scheduled basis in accordance with the approved specification.
- 2.4 CRHA operates a risk-based approach to tree management on communal land. CRHA will engage a qualified and experienced Arboriculture Inspector to conduct thorough surveys of all communal green spaces and trees located within its properties or the curtilages of the properties it manages.
- 2.5 Following these assessments, CRHA will establish a database to record the condition of each tree, identify necessary management interventions, and capture additional relevant details. Trees will be subject to re-inspection at intervals specified by the Inspector to ensure ongoing health and safety.
- 2.6 Maintenance programmes and activities will be completed to the best horticultural practice, the creation and maintenance of visually pleasing horticultural features and the maintenance of rigorous standards of discipline, cleanliness and tidiness.
- 2.7 CRHA is committed, so far as is reasonably practicable, to ensure compliance with statutory requirements and to protect the safety of customers, residents, employees and others who might be adversely affected by its actions and/or omissions.

3 Tree Management Works

- 3.1 CRHA will arrange for an arboriculture contractor to carry out regular tree surveys on a cyclical basis to ensure that all trees owned and located on their developments are structurally safe. Work will be commissioned if surveys report the following: -
- Overhanging roads (below 5.2 metres)
 - Overhanging footpaths and/or signage
 - Touching an adjacent structure
 - Affecting stability of structure
 - Diseased
 - Preventing access
 - Significantly damaged
 - Potentially hazardous to health
 - Dead
 - Outgrown space allocated
 - Trees where there is a pest infestation i.e. wasps
- 3.2 CRHA visiting officers will carry out regular routine checks to their developments and report any trees that visually look in poor health, showing structural weakness and/or pose risk or danger to people or property. CRHA will arrange for a qualified arboriculturist to carry out further assessment and take appropriate action and this applies if similar reports are received by customers or members of the public.
- 3.3 Inspections will also be undertaken when the Property Services team carry out stock condition surveys.

4 Communal Areas

- 4.1 As part of CRHA's digital and doorstep programme the Tenancy Management Officer visits each development every 12 weeks. Whilst visiting the development she will take note of all communal areas including paths and car parking areas. Work will be commissioned if any area is found to be overgrown or untidy.
- 4.2 Communal areas including paths and car parking areas will be weed sprayed on a cyclical basis.

5 Customers Gardens and Trees

- 5.1 CRHA customers are responsible for the maintenance of their gardens, which includes lawns, hedges, shrubs and trees including keeping it clean and tidy and this is outlined in the conditions of the tenancy agreement. Failure to comply with this tenancy condition the customer/s may be subject to tenancy warnings and enforcement action. This may include CRHA carrying out remedial works on the customers behalf and recharging them or in extreme cases action to recover possession of the property.

- 5.2 Where it is known to CRHA that a customer/s have vulnerabilities which would prevent them from maintaining gardens to a satisfactory standard, it may consider carrying out essential maintenance free of charge on a periodic or one-time only basis. Each case will be reviewed on its merits, and it will be entirely at CRHA's discretion to carry out this type of work and will be dependent on such factors as: -
- Budget availability
 - Assessment of the level of customer vulnerability and their ability to seek help from others to carry out this work
 - The level of potential risk posed to the customer, the property or the wider public.
- 5.3 CRHA appreciates, however, that it may not always be possible or safe for its customers to satisfactorily maintain trees and large shrubs, especially those which may be well established, that are within the curtilage of the properties.
- 5.4 To ensure that established trees do not pose a risk to health and safety to individuals, impact on the quiet enjoyment of properties or pose a risk to property condition in any way, CRHA will periodically inspect all trees and large shrubs on premises it owns. CRHA will respond on a reactive basis to any trees that develop issues, as outlined in 3.1.
- 5.5 CRHA customers can obtain useful information regarding the management of trees and garden maintenance on our website. All new customers are issued this information at the time of accepting a tenancy with CRHA.

6 Private Owned Trees and Hedges

- 6.1 Where CRHA become aware of trees and shrubs that may be causing issues that are located on privately owned land/properties that adjoin CRHA properties, attempts will be made to contact the landowner to remedy or make safe the issue at hand, giving reasonable time limits to respond.
- 6.2 If a private owner fails to do the work within an agreed period, CRHA will escalate the case to the local authority or other registered provider or seek civil action against the owner.
- 6.3 Where there is an urgent need to act due to significant and immediate risk or danger to people or property, CRHA will consult with the owner occupier, decide to carry out the work to make the tree or hedge safe, if it is possible to do so.
- 6.4 If the private owner refuses to co-operate, CRHA reserves the right to seek civil redress to resolve the situation.

7 Statutory Protection

- 7.1 Where maintenance or removal of trees that are protected by the Tree Preservation Order (TPO) is required, CRHA will apply for a written consent from the local authority or its representatives before taking any action as per the Town and Country Planning Act (1990).
- 7.2 CRHA will check prior to the removal of trees the location and check whether this is a conservation area.
- 7.3 All bat species and birds at nest are protected by the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981, which makes disturbance of either class of species an offence. Bats and nesting birds often use trees for nesting or roosting. CRHA, therefore, has a duty to abide to this legislation.

8 Training

- 8.1 All colleagues who receive enquiries relating to trees and ground maintenance will receive specific training to acquire the skills and knowledge needed to comply with this policy.

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