EVOLVE

TREE MANAGEMENT

Tree Risk Report

for

Stenkirth Park

Prepared for

Kirkby Stephen Town Council

Prepared by

Josh Ledbury

Date:

30/9/26

Reference:

ETM/RISK/Stenkirth/09-26

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1. Introduction

1.1 This inspection was undertaken by Josh Ledbury on Monday 28th September 2026.

1.2 The inspection relates to trees located at Stenkirth Park, Kirkby Stephen.

1.3 The site comprises a publicly accessible woodland adjoining the River Eden, with numerous internal footpaths, viewpoints and park benches throughout. The woodland is frequently used by members of the public.

2. Instructions

2.1 The survey was instructed by Christian Barnes, Clerk to Kirkby Stephen Town Council, via email on 22 July 2026.

2.2 The instruction was to undertake a ground-level visual tree risk inspection and provide associated management considerations for trees within Stenkirth Park.

2.3 The purpose of the inspection and report is to:

- Carry out a visual tree risk assessment of trees capable of influencing road boundaries, internal footpaths, park benches and other foreseeably well-used areas.
- Identify reasonably observable tree-related hazards and assess the associated risk.
- Individually record only trees for which specific risk management, monitoring or other management intervention is recommended.
- Review the condition and management requirements of the ash population within the woodland.
- Undertake a follow-up visual inspection of the mature beech previously subject to detailed inspection on 21 March 2025.
- Provide proportionate recommendations for tree risk management and wider long-term woodland management.

3. Report Limitations

3.1 The inspection was undertaken from ground level. No climbing, aerial inspection, excavation, drilling or other detailed diagnostic investigation was undertaken unless otherwise stated. Where further investigation is considered necessary, this is identified in the recommendations.

3.2 Trees are dynamic biological structures whose condition may change rapidly. Whilst all reasonable care has been taken to identify visible defects, no guarantee can be given that any tree is completely safe, due to the unpredictable nature of natural forces.

3.3 Recommended works are intended to reduce the assessed risk. They do not guarantee against the subsequent failure of the tree or tree part concerned.

3.4 The trees were assessed having regard to the prevailing weather conditions at the time of inspection. It is not possible to predict the effects of extreme or exceptional weather events.

3.5 The findings and assessments within this report relate to the conditions observed on the inspection date. Subject to recommended works and monitoring being undertaken within the stated timescales, and in the absence of any material change, the assessment may reasonably be relied upon until the next scheduled inspection stated in Section 9. It should not be relied upon as representing current tree condition beyond that date without

reassessment. Earlier reassessment may be appropriate following significant storms, observable deterioration or damage, changes in site use or occupancy, works affecting the trees or their rooting environment, or another material change. Any tree-specific monitoring or reassessment period stated within the report takes precedence.

3.6 Responsibility for arranging the recommended works and ongoing tree management rests with the person or organisation having control of the trees and site.

3.7 The inspection was undertaken whilst the trees were in leaf. The presence of foliage assists the assessment of physiological condition and vitality but restricts visibility of upper crown structure and may obscure defects such as cavities, deadwood, weak unions, fungal fruiting bodies and other structural abnormalities.

3.8 Dense ivy growth and/or other vegetation may obscure parts of the stem, buttress roots and lower crown. Where present, this may restrict the ability to identify defects and signs of decay. Significant ivy-covered trees have been noted where relevant and may require reassessment following clearance.

4. Method of Survey

4.1 The inspection was carried out from ground level using Visual Tree Assessment (VTA) techniques supported by binoculars, a probe and a sounding mallet.

4.2 Professional arboricultural judgement underpins the assessment, supported where appropriate by the Quantified Tree Risk Assessment (QTRA) method. QTRA considers three components: the likelihood of failure, the size of the tree or tree part concerned, and exposure of people or property. The assessment therefore concerns the overall risk of harm, not simply whether failure is considered likely.

5. Work Categories & Timescales

5.1 Each recorded tree or group is assigned a work category indicating the purpose and recommended timescale of any management action. Categories are colour-coded on the site plan. Unless a tree-specific timescale is stated in the survey table, the following standard timescales apply:

1 (Red): **Safety – Immediate**
Implement any necessary interim controls immediately and complete the recommended work as soon as reasonably practicable.

2 (Orange): **Safety – High**
Work must be completed within 3 months.

3 (Yellow): **Safety – Medium**
Work must be completed within 12 months.

4 (Green): **Safety – Low**
Work is advised to be completed before the next scheduled inspection.

5 (Red): **Damage to Property – Immediate**
Implement any necessary interim controls immediately and complete the recommended work as soon as reasonably practicable.

6 (Orange): **Damage to Property – High**
Work must be completed within 3 months.

7 (Yellow): **Damage to Property – Medium**
Work must be completed within 12 months.

8 (Green): **Damage to Property – Low**
Work is advised to be completed before the next scheduled inspection.

9 (Blue): **General Management**
Desirable works which may be undertaken subject to budget and management objectives.

10 (White): **No Work Recommended**
No work has been recommended.

Any tree-specific timescale stated in the survey table takes precedence over the standard timescales above.

6. Findings of the Survey

6.1 The survey table (Appendix 2) contains records for 4 individual trees and 0 groups.

6.2 The numbers and references of recorded trees and groups are summarised by recommended management timescale below:

Recommended management timescale	Number of trees/groups	Reference numbers
Immediate	0	–
Within 3 months	0	–
Within 12 months	2	T001, T004
Before the next scheduled inspection	0	–
General Management	2	T002, T003
No Work Recommended	0	–

6.3 The locations of individually recorded trees and groups are shown in Appendix 1: Map.

6.4 Individual survey records are provided in Appendix 2: Tree Survey Data Table.

7. Statutory Tree Controls

7.1 Tree Preservation Orders

7.1.1 Tree Preservation Order status has not been confirmed as part of this report. Westmorland and Furness Council advises that confirmation should be obtained directly from the Local Planning Authority.

7.1.2 The presence or absence of any applicable Tree Preservation Order should be confirmed before undertaking the recommended tree works.

7.2 Conservation Areas

7.2.1 The site is not located within a Conservation Area, as confirmed using Westmorland and Furness Council's available online mapping on 30/9/26.

7.2.2 No Section 211 notice is required in relation to conservation-area controls.

7.3 Felling Licence

7.3.1 In England, a Forestry Commission felling licence may be required before felling growing trees unless a statutory exception applies. Up to 5 cubic metres of timber may normally be felled in each calendar quarter without a licence, provided that no more than 2 cubic metres is sold. Other exceptions may apply depending on the tree size, location and circumstances of the work.

7.3.2 The recommended felling may require a Forestry Commission felling licence. The requirement should be confirmed and, where necessary, a licence obtained before felling begins.

7.4 Statutory Designations

7.4.1 The site adjoins the River Eden and Tributaries Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI). The precise SSSI boundary may extend into parts of the woodland.

7.4.2 The trees currently recommended for tree works are considered to lie outside the SSSI boundary; however, this should be confirmed with Natural England before the recommended works are undertaken.

7.4.3 Future tree management within the woodland should have regard to the SSSI designation and its precise boundary. In particular, T002 appears likely to fall within the SSSI and consultation with Natural England should therefore form part of any future consideration of works to this tree.

8. Management Considerations and Discussion

8.1 T002- Beech

8.1.1 T002 was subject to a detailed inspection on 21 March 2025. The previous investigation identified Kretzschmaria deusta and Armillaria sp. at the base of the tree. Resistograph testing identified locally degraded wood associated with the K. deusta; however, the remaining sound wood was considered sufficient for the tree to retain a high degree of structural integrity, and significant buttress roots tested elsewhere around the base did not indicate decay. At that time, crown vitality was normal and retention with ongoing monitoring was considered appropriate.

Figure 1 Base of T002 showing the location of Kretzschmaria deusta fruiting bodies and Armillaria sp. rhizomorphs.

8.1.2 During this visual reinspection, the previously identified basal condition appeared broadly consistent with that recorded in 2025, with no significant visual change identified in the apparent spread or extent of decay. Crown vitality has, however, notably reduced. This may in part reflect the effects of recent dry conditions, including the spring drought of 2025 and summer drought of 2026, although the cause of the reduction cannot be confirmed from visual inspection alone.

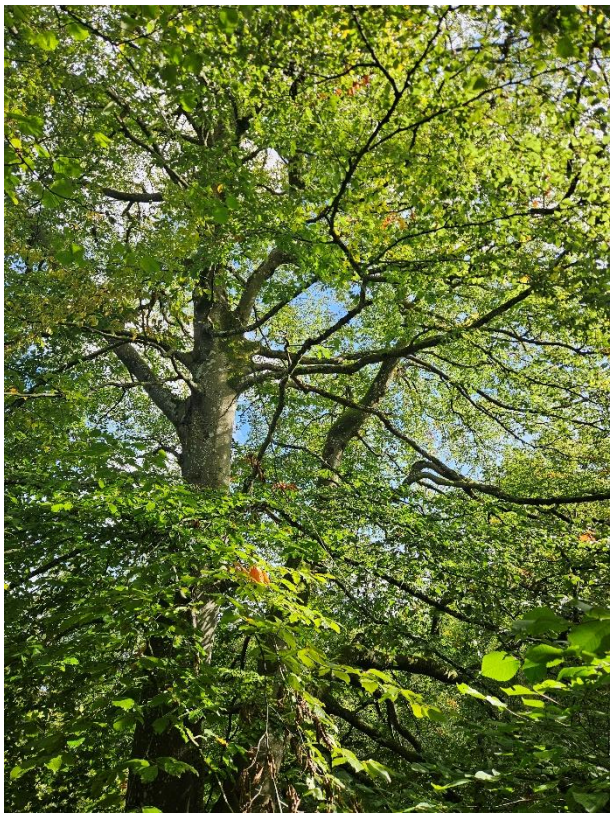

Figure 2 Canopy of T002 showing the observed reduction in leaf size and foliage density.

8.1.3 The reduction in vitality is relevant to the longer-term prognosis of the tree. Reduced energy production may correspondingly reduce the resources available for growth, adaptive response and compartmentalisation. It is therefore plausible that internal decay could progress at a greater rate than the tree's compensatory growth; however, this cannot be established from the current visual inspection and remains speculative.

8.1.4 At present, there is insufficient visual evidence to reach a different conclusion from the previous detailed assessment and no additional tree works are recommended. Given the reduction in vitality and known decay, reinspection in August 2027 is considered appropriate. This will allow the tree to be assessed again in full leaf, when a further assessment of its physiological condition can be undertaken and compared with photographs from the current and previous inspections.

8.2 Ash population

8.2.1 Previous management appears to have included the removal of a number of ash trees and, in some instances, the removal of upper crowns while retaining lower standing stems. The remaining ash trees observed immediately adjacent to, or within falling distance of, the road were generally assessed as Ash Dieback Level 1, indicating only limited visible symptoms of decline.

8.2.2 With the exception of T001, which has been individually recorded and requires specific management, the ash population was considered to present a tolerable level of risk at the time of inspection. Declining ash trees are generally situated in areas of relatively low occupancy and their physiological decline does not, in itself, justify widespread intervention. Continued inspection and monitoring are considered proportionate.

8.2.3 The previous approach of removing upper crowns from selected declining ash trees while retaining lower standing stems is considered appropriate where site conditions allow. This retains standing deadwood habitat while reducing the consequences associated with failure of larger tree parts. Retained stems should continue to form part of future inspections, as deterioration and decay are likely to progress. Where their condition subsequently makes standing retention inappropriate, particularly within falling distance of footpaths or other foreseeable targets, stems may be felled or pulled over and retained on site as fallen deadwood habitat.

8.2.4 Further intervention within the ash population is likely to be required over time as decline progresses. Particular consideration should be given to individual ash trees capable of influencing fixed or more frequently occupied targets, including park benches, where deterioration may alter the currently tolerable level of risk. Management should therefore remain responsive to changes in both tree condition and target occupancy rather than relying upon the presence of ash dieback alone as justification for tree removal.

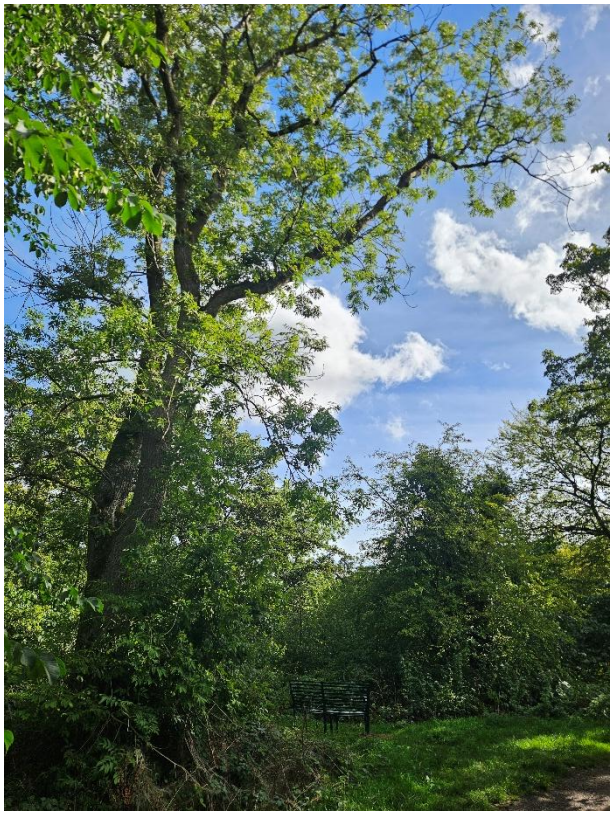

Figure 3 Mature ash displaying Ash Dieback Level 1 adjacent to a park bench. Dense understorey vegetation also restricts sight lines from the bench (section 8.5).

8.3 Woodland Structure and Species Diversity

8.3.1 The woodland generally displays good structural diversity, with natural regeneration and a range of tree heights and age classes present. The understorey includes species such as Sorbus, hawthorn and hazel, providing useful variation beneath the upper canopy.

8.3.2 The upper canopy is, however, heavily represented by sycamore. The sycamores are generally of reasonable quality and the species is well established within the local landscape; therefore, its presence is not considered undesirable in itself. Longer-term management should instead seek to gradually reduce its dominance through selective thinning, favouring suitable trees and natural regeneration and planting of alternative species.

8.3.3 Future management should seek to maintain continuity of canopy and age structure rather than undertaking significant intervention at any one time. Selective thinning and coppicing, including periodic management of hazel where appropriate, could be used to improve growing space, maintain variation in woodland structure and favour selected trees for longer-term retention.

8.3.4 Where suitable canopy gaps arise, opportunities should be taken to establish or favour a greater diversity of future upper-canopy trees. Oak, birch and alder may be appropriate in suitable locations, with species selection responding to local growing conditions and the wider management objectives for the woodland. The objective should be a diverse future canopy rather than replacing the present dominance of sycamore with dominance by another single species.

8.3.5 In suitable locations, there is opportunity to develop individual trees with greater space to form open-grown specimens, creating a gradual blend between the woodland character and the more formal recreational use of the park. T003 provides an example of this approach,

where removal of an adjacent oak is recommended to allow the retained young oak to develop as an open-grown feature tree adjacent to the footpath and park bench.

8.4 Footpaths, Benches and Sight Lines

8.4.1 Routine management should seek to maintain unobstructed access along the internal footpath network. Where appropriate, lower branches should generally be maintained at approximately 2–4 m above footpaths, with lateral vegetation managed where it significantly encroaches upon established routes.

8.4.2 The location and outlook from park benches should also be considered during future thinning and coppicing. In some locations, dense vegetation immediately surrounding benches restricts views and reduces their amenity value. Selective management could be used to create longer views towards the River Eden, highlight individual specimen trees or provide views deeper into the woodland.

Figure 4 Park bench with sight lines towards the River Eden restricted by understorey vegetation.

8.4.3 This should form part of gradual woodland management rather than extensive clearance. Selective coppicing or removal of individual understorey trees, including hazel where appropriate, can improve sight lines while retaining the wider structural and habitat value of the understorey.

8.5 Red Squirrels

8.5.1 Red squirrels were observed within the woodland during the inspection. The continued suitability of the woodland for red squirrels should therefore be treated as an important consideration in future management.

8.5.2 Long-term management should seek to retain a diverse woodland structure and continuity of suitable food resources. Any future management of existing hazel should therefore be undertaken in a manner that avoids unnecessarily depleting this food source, with productive hazel retained and favoured where appropriate.

8.5.3 The introduction of Scots pine through future planting could contribute both to increased tree species diversity and the provision of an additional food resource for red squirrels. Future woodland management should therefore have regard to the apparent need to

conserve and, where practicable, improve the resources and habitat available to the existing red squirrel population.

8.6 Longer-Term Woodland Management

8.6.1 Consideration should be given to preparing a Forestry Commission-approved Woodland Management Plan to provide a structured framework for the long-term management of the woodland.

8.6.2 Subject to eligibility, the current Woodland Management Plan grant provides £1,500 towards preparation of a Woodland Management Plan. An approved plan may subsequently assist with access to further grant or stewardship opportunities, which could contribute towards the cost of implementing longer-term woodland management.

9. Summary & Re-inspection

9.1 Summary

9.1.1 Tree-related risk within Stenkirth Park was generally considered tolerable at the time of inspection, with relatively limited intervention required. Specific works are recommended to T001 and T004, while the wider ash population is considered suitable for continued monitoring and proportionate management as decline progresses.

9.1.2 T002 remains suitable for retention at present, with no additional tree works recommended. Although no significant visual change was identified in the previously recorded basal decay, crown vitality has notably reduced. Reinspection is therefore recommended in August 2027, when the tree can be reassessed in full leaf and compared with the current and previous inspection photographs.

9.1.3 Beyond immediate tree-risk considerations, the woodland provides opportunities for longer-term management to improve species diversity, succession, habitat value and amenity. Particular consideration should be given to gradual diversification of the sycamore-dominated upper canopy, red squirrel habitat and food resources, and management of vegetation around footpaths and park benches.

9.2 Re-inspection

9.2.1 The site should be re-inspected in March 2028, approximately 18 months from the current inspection. Earlier reassessment should be undertaken following significant storms, observable deterioration or other material changes affecting tree condition or site use.

9.2.2 T002 should be re-inspected separately in August 2027. This will allow the tree to be assessed in full leaf, with particular consideration given to physiological condition and comparison of crown vitality and basal condition against photographs from the current and previous inspections.

END OF MAIN REPORT BODY

APPENDICES FOLLOW

Appendix 1: Map

Stenkirth Park

What3words: employer.crouching.brownish

Page size: A4

1 : 1,566

0 50 m 100 m

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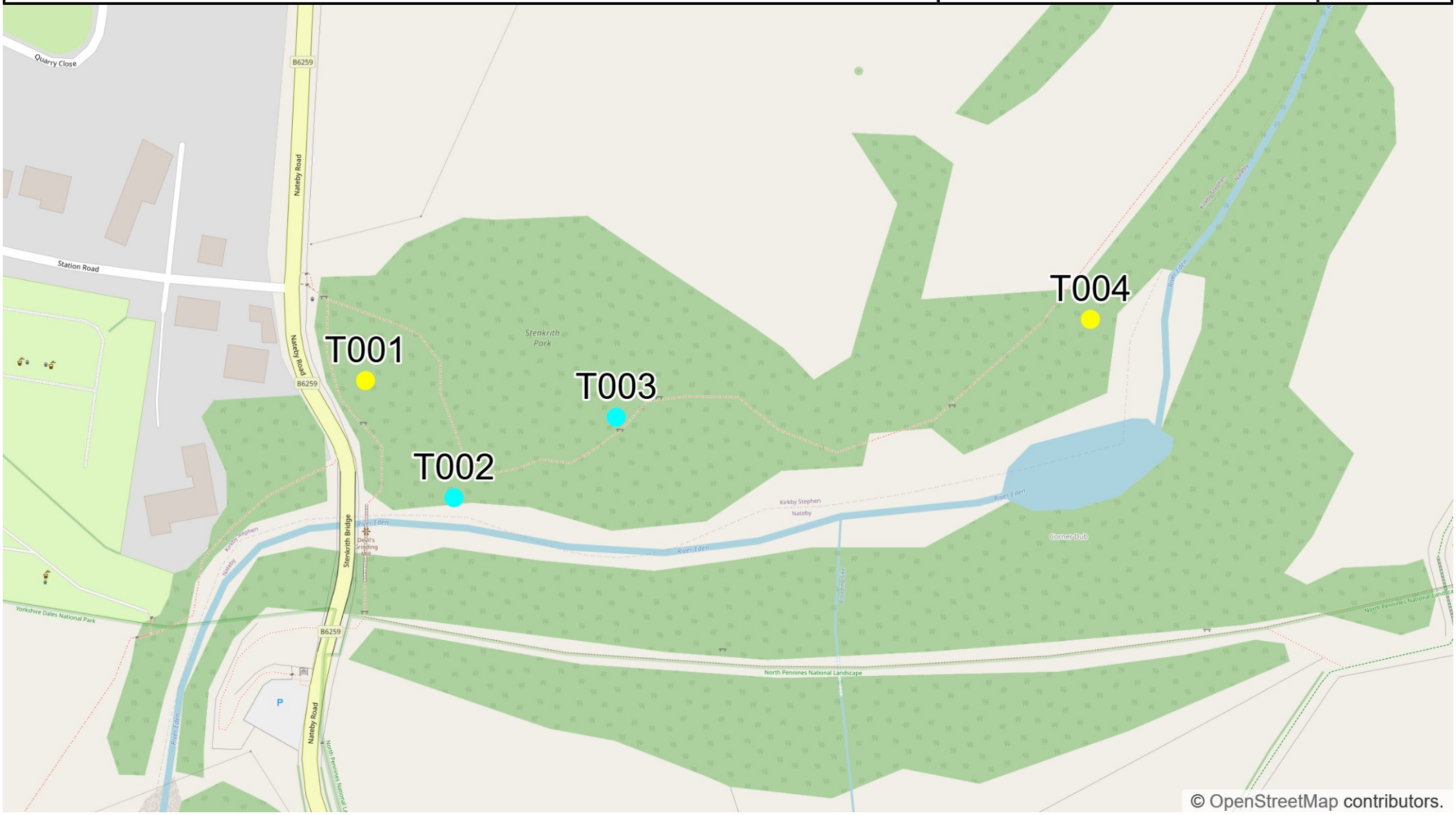
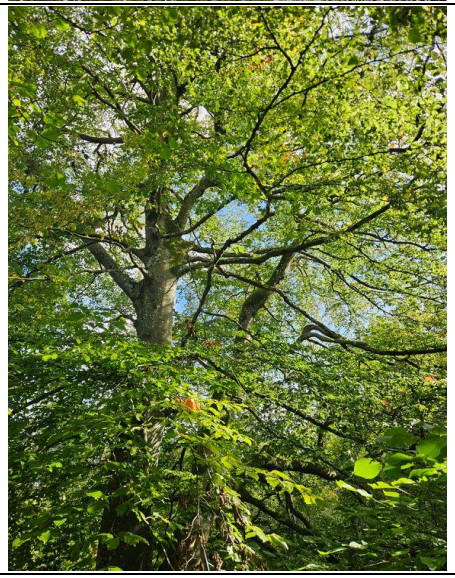
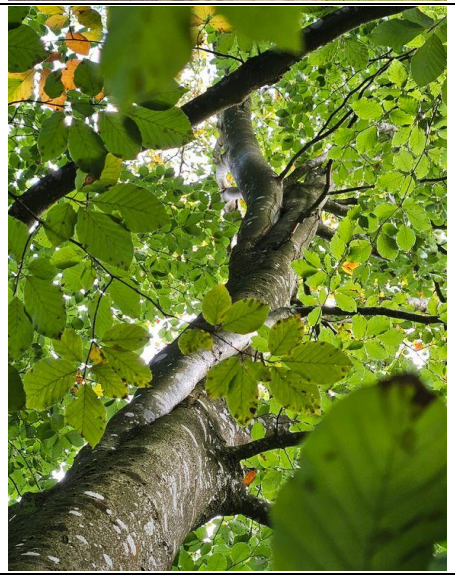
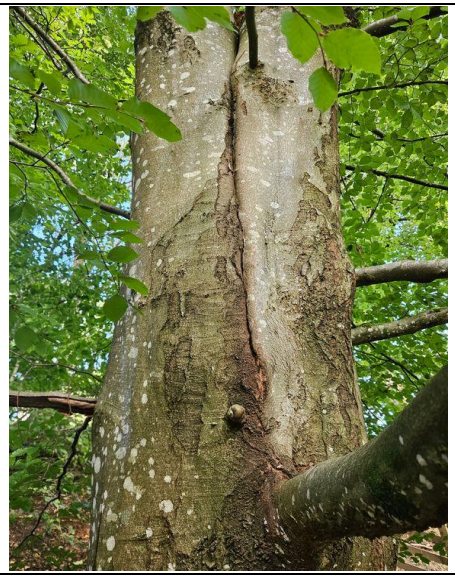


Appendix 2 : Tree Survey Data Table

Ref.	Species	Description/Tag number	Measurements	Physiological Condition	Structural Condition	Survey Notes	Recommendations	Category	Comments	Inspect Period
T001	Ash *(Fraxinus sp.)*	1712	Height (m): 15-20 Life Stage: Mature	Fair	Fair	• Tree previously formed part of a more cohesive canopy with an adjacent ash, which has subsequently been removed, bar the lower stem. • Cracking and indications of internal stress are present around the lower stem, although the full extent is obscured by the bark. • Sounding with a mallet identified areas of altered resonance consistent with bark separation from the underlying wood. • A pronounced dog-leg is present within the lower stem. • The lower-stem symptoms may relate to altered wind loading following the loss of mutual shelter from the adjacent ash, with increased torsional loading concentrated around the lower stem. • The combination of lower-stem defects, evidence of stress and declining vitality is considered to increase the likelihood of failure.	• Remove tree, leaving stump as low as reasonably practicable. • Stack resulting timber adjacent to the stump to decay naturally.	3) SAFETY - MEDIUM	• Removal can also contribute to succession thinning by providing additional space and light for the adjacent sycamore and cherry. • The resulting canopy gap provides an opportunity for establishment of a future upper-canopy tree.	N/A
T002	Common beech *(Fagus sylvatica)*	1749	Height (m): 20-25 Life Stage: Over Mature	Fair	Fair	• Refer to Section 8 for discussion of the previous detailed inspection and current reinspection findings.	• No works currently recommended. • Reinspect in August 2027, including comparison of crown vitality and basal condition against photographs from the current and previous inspections.	9) GENERAL MANAGEMENT	• None	1 Year
T003	Oak *(Quercus sp.)*	1797	Height (m): 15-20 Life Stage: Young	Normal	Good	• High-quality young oak tree adjacent to the footpath and park bench. • Generally has good growing space, with the exception of one adjacent oak. • The retained oak is identified by a yellow arrow in the accompanying photographs. • The adjacent oak is marked with orange spray at the base and identified by a red line in the accompanying photographs.	• Remove the adjacent oak marked with orange spray at the base and identified by a red line in the accompanying photographs.	9) GENERAL MANAGEMENT	• Removal is recommended to prioritise growing space for the retained oak, allowing it to develop as an open-grown feature tree adjacent to the footpath and park bench.	3 years
T004	Beech *(Fagus sp.)*	1770	Height (m): 20-25 Life Stage: Early Mature	Fair	Poor	• Beech with multiple acute primary unions from approximately 2 m above ground level. • Active cracking extends through the primary unions, with further cracking observed within the upper canopy. • Orange bark associated with the affected unions. • High likelihood of failure. • Proactive removal is recommended.	• Remove tree; cut stump as low as reasonably practicable.	3) SAFETY - MEDIUM	• Removal will provide additional growing space for adjacent trees of better quality. • Following removal, allow natural regeneration to develop where suitable. • The resulting space could alternatively be considered for planting with lower-canopy species such as Sorbus or hawthorn.	N/A

Appendix 3: Pictures

Ref.	Photo	Photo	Photo
T001			
T002			

Ref.	Photo	Photo	Photo
T003			
T004			

Appendix 4: Tree Survey Data Table Key

Ref

The unique reference used to identify the tree or group in the data table, map and report.

Species

The species of the tree or group. Common names, botanical names or both may be used.

Description / Tag number

A description of the tree's location, tag number, or any other information helpful in identifying the tree.

Measurements

Height - approximate height recorded in 5 m increments.

Life stage - The developmental stage of each tree is recorded as follows:

Newly planted:	Not fully established and capable of being transplanted or easily replaced.
Young:	Establishing, typically with good vigour.
Semi-mature:	Established, typically vigorous and growing taller.
Early-Mature:	An established tree approaching mature dimensions, typically showing continued height and crown development with good vigour.
Mature:	A tree that has attained, or is close to, its typical mature dimensions, with extension growth generally slowing.
Over-mature:	A tree beyond its mature phase, typically showing greatly reduced extension growth and increasing features associated with ageing.
Veteran:	A mature tree with significant, long-standing decay features, such as substantial heart rot or hollowing, or an accumulation of other advanced decay habitats. A veteran tree need not be ancient.
Ancient	A tree that is in the ancient stage of life and/or is exceptionally old relative to others of the same species. Characteristics may include crown retrenchment, development of semi-independent functional units and exceptional relative age. Ancient trees are also veteran trees.
Dead:	The tree is no longer physiologically active.

Physiological and Structural Condition

Physiological condition and structural condition in context are assessed separately using the categories defined below.

An assessment of the tree's physiological condition is defined as:

Normal:	Fully functioning physiological system showing expected vitality for the species and life stage, i.e. normal bud growth, leaf size, crown density and wound closure.

Moderate:	A functioning physiological system showing below average vitality for the species and life stage, i.e. reduced bud growth, smaller leaf size, lower crown density and reduced wound closure.
Early Decline:	A physiological system with reduced functionality showing a physiological decline, disease or significantly below average vitality, i.e. limited bud growth, small and chlorotic leaves, low crown density and limited wound closure; some branch tips may be declining.
Mid Decline:	Apparent decline affecting most of the crown, with branch tips declining and limited or no extension growth.
Late Decline:	Significant decline over the majority of the canopy with a large proportion of the branches dead or severely declining. The tree is moribund.
Dead:	The tree shows no signs of physiological activity.
Varying:	Groups with individuals being categorised according to a number of the above definitions.

An assessment of a tree's structural condition in context is defined as follows:

This is a contextual management rating rather than a standalone description of mechanical condition. It considers observed structural features, site use, potential consequences of failure and the benefits of retaining the tree, including habitat value.

Good:	No significant structural defects requiring remedial action were observed.
Fair:	Structural defects or abnormalities are present. Having regard to site use, potential consequences of failure and the benefits of retaining the tree, continued retention is considered appropriate. The assessed risk may be tolerable in its current condition or may require proportionate arboricultural works to reduce it to a tolerable level. Monitoring or further investigation may also be appropriate.
Poor:	Significant structural defects are present which result in, or may reasonably be expected to result in, an unacceptable level of risk. The defects are of a nature or extent whereby proportionate arboricultural works are unlikely to provide satisfactory longer-term risk management while retaining the tree in its current form. Removal or substantial intervention may therefore be appropriate.
Unknown:	Structural condition could not be assessed with confidence because of limitations such as Ivy, dense vegetation or restricted access.
Varying:	The group contains individuals falling within more than one of the above definitions.

Survey notes

Relevant observations concerning the tree, its condition, surrounding targets and site context, including any limitations affecting the assessment.

Recommendations

Recommended actions arising from the assessment, including tree work, further investigation, monitoring or other management measures.

Category

Each recorded tree or group is assigned a work category indicating the purpose and recommended timescale of any management action. Categories are colour-coded on the site plan. Unless a tree-specific timescale is stated in the survey table, the following standard timescales apply:

1 (Red): Safety – Immediate
Implement any necessary interim controls immediately and complete the recommended work as soon as reasonably practicable.

2 (Orange): Safety – High
Work must be completed within 3 months.

3 (Yellow): Safety – Medium
Work must be completed within 12 months.

4 (Green): Safety – Low
Work is advised to be completed before the next scheduled inspection.

5 (Red): Damage to Property – Immediate
Implement any necessary interim controls immediately and complete the recommended work as soon as reasonably practicable.

6 (Orange): Damage to Property – High
Work must be completed within 3 months.

7 (Yellow): Damage to Property – Medium
Work must be completed within 12 months.

8 (Green): Damage to Property – Low
Work is advised to be completed before the next scheduled inspection.

9 (Blue): General Management
Desirable works which may be undertaken subject to budget and management objectives.

10 (White): No Work Recommended
No work has been recommended.

Any tree-specific timescale stated in the survey table takes precedence over the standard timescales above.

Comments

Any further comments that do not fit within other headings.

Re-inspection

The recommended interval before the tree should be re-inspected. This may be shortened where particular defects, investigations, monitoring or management requirements are identified.