Tree felling

Guidance in relation to NR position statement (11th May 2018) regarding rail minister’s suspension of non-safety critical tree felling
Background

Concern
There has been lineside neighbour concern about tree felling followed by subsequent national and social media coverage

Stop work
Rail Minister instructed the cessation of “all felling during the current nesting season, except where safety critical”
This applies to England and Wales only

Safety
All tree work is undertaken to enable the operation of a safe and efficiently performing railway

Minimum necessary
Between 1st March and 31st August any vegetation work required should be the minimum activity necessary to maintain safe operations
Network Rail Position

All tree work is undertaken to enable the operation of a safe and efficiently performing railway

Between 1\textsuperscript{st} March and 31\textsuperscript{st} August any vegetation work required should be the minimum activity necessary to maintain safe operations

If work does take place, breeding surveys / environmental checks must be carried out

Be aware of other protected species and invasive species and associated restrictions
Definitions

**Fell trees vs. Remove trees**
Distinction in legislation for the sizes of trees that are exempt from requirement to obtain a felling licence

**Felled tree count**
Those trees with a dbh in excess of 10cm

**dbh**
diameter at breast height; measured 1.3m up the tree trunk

**Nesting season**
1\(^{st}\) March to 31\(^{st}\) August

[**note**: birds, nests, etc. protected all year round]
Activities

Red activity
Felling shall not take place between 1\textsuperscript{st} March and 31\textsuperscript{st} August

Amber activity
Activity normally planned outside of nesting season. If they do proceed, breeding bird surveys / environmental checks must take place. Work shall be the minimum necessary.

Green activity
Work can continue with breeding bird surveys / environmental checks
Minimum activity necessary

Signalling resolved by removing a single branch. Habitat retained. Safe operations resumed.

Leaf fall issue mitigated by removing selected trees, retaining others with reduced canopies. Much less visual impact. Habitat retained.
<8cm and <10cm dbh trees
>10cm dbh trees

example image
Category 5, 6 and 7 trees

Mitigation timescales unlikely to extend beyond nesting season; use exemptions under advice from ecologist
Category 1, 2, 3 and 4 trees

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Fell trees</th>
<th>Selective thin trees &lt;50%</th>
<th>Remove trees</th>
<th>Lopping, topping, pruning, pollarding</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>&gt;10cm dbh</td>
<td>&lt;10cm dbh only</td>
<td>&lt;8cm dbh only</td>
<td>All sizes.</td>
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<tr>
<td>n/a</td>
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Any mitigation will be in excess of 13 weeks; schedule work after nesting season.
Leaf fall / known adhesion problem site

Reducing density of trees or size of canopy will reduce the number of leaves

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**Within 300mm of OLE**

Removing individual branches will increase distance from wires; pollarding will reduce risk of tree failure on to wires.
Level crossing, signal, sign sighting

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Sighting can be re-established by removing small trees and branches
Branches contacting with trains

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Sideways growth from trees can be removed; may be possible to carry out mechanically
Construction activity

Construction activity

Renewal, refurbishment, installation and enhancement activities can retain trees

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Clearance for fencing work

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Temporary measures can be used prior to removal outside of nesting season.
Inspection of structures / earthworks

Plan inspections for winter when vegetation has died back; create clear zones outside of nesting season.

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- >10cm dbh
- <10cm dbh only
- <8cm dbh only
- All sizes.
**Summary**

**Can the work be rescheduled after the nesting season?**

- **YES** → Reschedule
- **NO**

**Do trees >10cm diameter need to be felled?**

- **NO**
- **YES**

See position statement (11th May) and this guidance

**Consider the following;**

- Is it absolutely necessary to do the work?
- Have necessary environmental checks been completed and acted upon?
- Is the specification the minimum necessary?

**The work can take place following breeding bird surveys and all other required environmental checks**

**Be aware;**

- Any work carried out during the nesting season will be subjected to extra scrutiny
- Felling Licence may be required – consult with local Forestry Commission office

Please consult with your Environment Manager / Specialist before proceeding

Should the need arise to clear beyond minimum necessary or fell >10cm trees, refer back to Environment Manager / Specialist for site-specific agreement

**DON’T KNOW**
References

NR/L2/OTK/5201 ‘Lineside vegetation management manual’

NR/L3/TRK/003/TEF3077 ‘Tree Hazard: Risk Evaluation and Treatment System’ – contact Senior Asset Engineer responsible for Lineside / Off Track for contact details of arboricultural surveyors

*Breeding bird surveys* – forms and guidance available on Safety Central (*Biodiversity*)

*Environmental checks* – if required framework ecological consultants contact details are available on Safety Central (*Biodiversity*)

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