

Tree Survey Report

DEESIDE GOLF CLUB BIELDSIDE ABERDEEN

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

This survey and report relate to the trees within the land owned and managed by Deeside Golf Club, Bieldside, Aberdeen.

It was commissioned by Course Manager, Neil McLoughlin and sets out the achieve the following objectives.

1. To undertake a visual inspection and assessment of the condition of the trees within the survey area.
2. To make recommendations for trees works necessary for reasons of safety and good arboricultural practice in-accordance with British Standard BS 3998:2010 *Tree Work – Recommendations.*

The tree inspections were conducted from ground level by Arboricultural Consultant, Struan Dalgleish on the 9th and 10th of December 2024. Weather conditions at the time were bright.

The survey and report up-dates previous tree surveys undertaken in August 2014, October 2018, January 2019, August 2021, and November 2022.

The drawings in Appendix 1 show the extent and approximate locations of trees recorded by the survey.

Details of the trees and recommendations for management are provided in the Tree Survey Schedule in Appendix 2.

Author's qualifications: Struan Dalgleish is a Chartered Forester (MICFor) and Chartered Environmentalist (CEnv). He holds an Honours Degree in Forestry and is a Professional Member of the Arboricultural Association. He has over 25 years' experience of arboriculture at a professional level.

1.1 Limitations

- The findings and recommendations contained within this report are valid for a period of eighteen months from the date of survey (i.e. until 10th June 2026). Trees are living organisms subject to change – it is strongly recommended that they are inspected on an annual basis for reasons of safety.

- The recommendations relate to the site as it exists at present, and to the current level and patterns of land use. The degree of risk and hazard may alter if the site or its surroundings are developed or changed, and as such may require re-inspection and re-appraisal.

- Where dense ivy, basal shoots or shrub growth obscured parts of the tree, full and thorough detailed inspection may not have been possible. Tree condition assessment is based on the visible parts of the tree only. Further assessment may be required following the cutting back of obscuring growth, as specified in the Tree Survey Schedule.

- Whilst every effort has been made to detect defects within the trees inspected, no guarantee can be given as to the absolute safety or otherwise of any individual tree. Extreme climatic conditions can cause damage to even apparently healthy trees.

- Only trees within areas highlighted on the drawing in Appendix 1 have been included by the survey. Trees elsewhere were not inspected.

- The Report, Drawing and Schedule have been prepared for the sole use of Deeside Golf Club and their appointed agents. Any third party referring to or relying on the information provided does so entirely at their own risk.

2.0 TREE SURVEY METHODOLOGY

2.1 Tree Risk Assessment

Tree assessment aims to find a balance between the risk or threat to safety and property posed by trees and the benefits they provide, including visual amenity, wildlife habitat and screening or shelter.

The process sets out by firstly to consider the land use intensity surrounding the tree, i.e. the likelihood any person or object would be injured or damaged should a tree or part of a tree fail.

Where trees have significant potential to cause harm or damage, they have been subject to detailed and thorough visual inspection undertaken from ground level.

This often includes large trees in proximity to areas of regular pedestrian and / or vehicular access or close to frequently occupied buildings and other structures. On site this included trees falling distance of roads, car parks, buildings, paths, tees, and greens.

Trees within areas of in-frequent access such as those in the interior of dense woodland have not been inspected in detail. Within such areas, trees have been subject to a less detailed 'walk thought' assessment which sets out to note the overall condition of the group and any pertinent management issues.

2.2 Tagging and Mapping

Due to the considerable number of trees present on the site those inspected have often been recorded within distinct groups.

Using aerial photography, the approximate canopy edge of each group has been outlined on the Tree Survey Drawings Appendix 1.

Where the requirement for tree work or otherwise notable individual trees are identified, these have been tagged and recorded. Approximate trunk locations and tag numbers are shown on the drawings.

Four (4) Tree Survey Drawings have been provided at 1:2500 Scale on A4, each covering a quarter of the site. The scale and canopy spread are approximate only.

Details of trees and recommendations for management are presented in spreadsheet format in the Tree Survey Schedule in Appendix 2 and highlighted below.

3.0 TREE SURVEY RESULTS

3.1 General Description

In total of **56 Groups of trees** were recorded by the survey.

The trees contribute much to the character of the site and surrounding area and provide important levels of visual amenity, screening, shelter, and wildlife benefit.

Many mature broadleaf and coniferous trees occur within the western part of the site and around the nine-hole course. These have been supplemented by more recent planting which established large numbers of now semi-mature trees. To the west of the nine-hole course the new course layout has been defined by large swathes and strips of semi-mature tree planting.

It is evident that the trees throughout the site have been subject to on-going management over the years and have generally been well maintained.

Those within low lying areas of the course are subject to periodic flooding when the river is in severe spate.

The soils throughout the site appear to be fertile and alluvial in nature.

The trees within some areas of the course are fairly exposed to strong winds as it funnels down the Dee valley. With consideration to this and the significant size and age of the trees, little severe storm damage has occurred over the years.

Tree work recommended by the previous survey was noted to have been completed.

3.3 Management Components

The tree population can be broadly organized into three distinct components.

1. Mature broadleaf trees
2. Mature coniferous trees
3. Semi-mature and young trees

A description of each, identifying management issues and recommendations is provided below.

4.0 TREE CONDITION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Several issues relating to the health and condition of the trees were identified by the survey. These are recorded in the Tree Survey Schedule and highlighted below.

Recommendations are made of reasons of safety and good arboricultural practice in accordance with BS 3998:2010 '*Tree Work – Recommendations..*'

A timescale for completion of recommendations works and re-inspection frequency has been provided.

4.1 Mature Broadleaf Trees

A large population of mature broadleaf trees occurs on densely wooded embankments along the northern boundary and at the south western corner of the site. These areas contain large numbers of beech (*Fagus sylvatica*) with sycamore (*Acer pseudoplatanus*), ash (*Fraxinus excelsior*), wych elm (*Ulmus glabra*) and lime (*Tilia x europaea*) also present.

The mature broadleaf trees are often likely to be well in-excess of 100 years with the oldest beech likely to be around 250 years old.

Mature broadleaf woodland areas are recorded as **Groups 6 and 11**, and around the edge of dense conifers in **Groups 7 and 8**. **Group 55** includes several mature ash trees occur between the car park and practice range.

The following issues and management recommendations for the mature broadleaf population are noted.

a) Ash Dieback Disease

The disease caused by the fungus (*Hymenoscyphus fraxineus*) causes the dieback of branch tips of ash trees.

Once infected, dieback tends to occur annually during the growing season and can eventually result in the death of trees often over a number of years. Young and semi-mature trees tend to succumb more quickly than older, larger tree.

The disease is now wide-spread through-out North East Scotland.

A substantial number of ash trees are present within the site. Most notably this includes 7 large and mature trees which line the driveway at the edge of the driving range. These trees were previously crown reduced by 25% and deadwood has been pruned-out.

Ash 848 was noted to have significantly died back since 2022. The old tree, which overhangs car parking has a large hollow cavity in the lower trunk.

Pruning to reduce the crown by a further 25%, removing the dead ends is recommended.

Ash trees should be re-inspected for dieback disease when in leaf and symptoms are most evident.

The condition can be assess using the Tree Council's four-stage classification process. The methodology quantifies the % of healthy crown remaining.

CLASS 1 - 100% to 75% of the crown remains.

CLASS 2 - 75% to 51% of the crown remains.

CLASS 3 - 50% to 26% of the crown remains.

CLASS 4 - 25% to 0% of the crown remains.

Further detailed information is freely available in the Tree Councils Publication; Ash Dieback Disease – A Guide for Tree Owners in Scotland.

b) Dutch Elm Disease

Dutch elm disease has had a severe impact on the tree cover in recent years and numerous dead elms have been removed from the site including eight (8) mature individuals from the main driveway.

The gaps created within the row could be replanted with an appropriate species to enhance the tree cover in the long term. See Section 4.7 New Tree Planting Recommendations.

Where dead elms occur within infrequently accessed areas it may be appropriate to retain these standing dead trees to provide deadwood for wildlife and improve biodiversity.

The small, surviving elm population requires to be closely monitored for signs of the disease. Inspections are best carried out in late summer when symptoms of the disease are most notable.

c) Structural Defects

Groups 6, 7, 8 and 11 contain large numbers of mature beech trees with smaller numbers of sycamores also present. A few semi-mature beeches are present at the edge of the dense canopy.

Trees have developed a wind firm and aerodynamic form and removal of trees from dense groups should be treated with caution to avoid excessively opening-up the canopy to the wind.

Two dying beech trees noted in **Group 6** have become outcompeted by their more dominant neighbours. They however appear unlikely to collapse towards frequently accessed areas and could be **retained to provide useful wildlife habitat**.

Several mature beech trees were noted to display significant structural defects. These often however occur out-with areas of frequent access and do not appear to pose a risk to safety.

The previous large limb failure (noted in January 2019) to have occurred within Group 6 fell harmlessly into surrounding dense shrubs.

Where structural defects threaten safety or property remedial action may be required.

The following defects were noted within the mature broadleaf woodland groups:

- i) **Wounds and Decay** - Severe and advance basal decay can often be associated with the presence of wood decay fungus including *Kretzschmaria deusta*, *Meripilus giganteum* and *Ganoderma spp.* At the time of survey these fungi were not noted to be present on trees within areas of regular and frequent access.

Less severe and more localized decay associated with old wounds, and large pruning wounds were noted to be affecting a substantial number of trees around the site.

Sufficiently vigorous trees can respond to wounding and decay through the formation of re-enforcing wound wood. In time old wounds can close over concealing decay inside.

- ii) **Tight forks** - Co-dominant leaders, limbs and large branches arising from very acute angled forks can be prone to splitting, particularly when included bark is present.
- iii) **Abrupt branch angles** - These can occur naturally or from re-growth from pruning wounds. Where decay has occurred in old wounds re-growth can be poorly attached.
- iv) **Slender stems, limbs, and branches with excessive end weight** - This can become an issue when trees grow in close competition to one another or where pruning has removed excessive lower growth but retained the end weight.

4.2 Mature Coniferous Trees

The mature conifers occur as rows and strips of large Sitka spruce (*Picea sitchensis*). These are a prominent feature of the course where they line the fairways. Mature Scots pine (*Pinus sylvestris*), and larch (*Larix decidua*) are also present in groups or occurring as individual mature specimens.

A larger block of Scots pine, with larch, Sitka spruce and occasional Douglas fir (*Pseudotsuga menziesii*) occurs on the densely wooded areas at **Groups 7, 8, 13 and 56**.

It is thought the mature conifers are around 120 years old. They often display healthy growth with dense crowns and reasonable or good form.

The following issues relating to the management of the mature coniferous trees were however noted.

a) Heterobasidion Root Rot

Several mature Sitka spruces blew over during very high winds in 2014 and tree inspection at that time confirmed the presence of the root decay fungus *Heterobasidion annosum* within Group 45. The trees within this group and neighbouring groups 44 and 47 were tagged at the time. These tags remain in fair condition.

The fruiting bodies of the fungus were evident at the base of Sitka spruce 1717, 1744, 1747 and 1749 (Group 45) in February 2014. No fungal brackets were noted by the most recent survey.

Resinous bleeding from the lower trunk, which can also a symptom is noticeable throughout the spruce population and severe in some case.

Since 2014 the trees have survived several severe gales with no further losses.

To ensure safety of golfers from falling trees during gales access to the course or parts of the course, in particular adjacent to Groups 44 and 45, could be restricted.

Recommendations for management to ensure the long-term continuity of tree cover on the course is provided in May 2014 Tree Management Plan.

b) De-foliation of Spruce Trees

The survey undertaken in January 2019 noted many of the mature Sitka spruce displayed signs discoloured needles and defoliation.

At that time of the January 2019 survey the following comments were made:

'The crowns of the trees had noticeably thinned in the year since the previous survey was undertaken.'

*The symptoms are consistent in appearance with damage caused by the Green Spruce Aphid, *Elatobium abietinum*.*

The sap sucking insect infests spruce trees during the winter months feeding on needles and causing them to drop. The new, growth which emerges in spring remaining relatively unaffected until the following winter. The insects spend the summer as non-feeding nymphs.

Natural predators such as ladybirds, lacewings, hoverfly larvae and parasitic wasps may prey on the inactive nymphs during the summer and help limit infestation.

Pesticides are available to control aphid numbers, however the effect of these is often short-lived and treatment of whole, large trees impractical.

The occurrence of mild winters may result in increased aphid numbers and increasing severity of defoliation. Dry summers can limit the trees opportunity to recover.

The condition of the trees should be closely monitored. Badly affected trees can recover but it may take several years for them to regain a healthy appearance.'

The most recent survey noted that the trees had recovered and displayed dense and healthy crowns.

4.3 Semi-mature and Young Trees

Many semi-mature trees grow within groups around the mature trees within the western part of the course and as dense strips and areas of planting which define the layout of the eastern part of the course. An avenue of semi-mature cherry trees lines the driveway to the club house.

Most semi-mature were established around 30 years ago with aid from a Forestry Commission tree planting incentives scheme.

This planting comprises a wide range of mixed native and naturalized broadleaf species. This includes oak (*Quercus robur*), silver birch (*Betula pendula*), ash (*Fraxinus excelsior*), wild cherry (*Prunus avium*), rowan (*Sorbus aucuparia*), whitebeam (*Sorbus aria*), alder (*Alnus glutinosa*), beech (*Fagus sylvatica*), sycamore (*Acer pseudoplatanus*), Norway maple (*Acer*

platanoides), hornbeam (*Carpinus betulus*), white poplar (*Populus alba*), aspen (*Populus tremula*), hawthorn (*Crataegus monogyna*), and hazel (*Corylus avellana*). Willow is present around the large pond.

Conifers established at around the same time include extensive strips of dense Scots pine (*Pinus sylvestris*) with lesser numbers of Lodgepole pine (*Pinus contorta*), larch (*Larix decidua*) and spruce (*Picea spp.*).

Several Lawson cypress' (*Chamaecyparis lawsoniana*) scattered individually, or as small groups also appear likely to date back to this time. Two cypress trees have recently died, and a third tree tagged 130 showing signs of decline. The spread of currently small patches of brown foliage on other cypress trees should be monitored.

Due to the relatively small size the semi-mature trees pose a lesser threat to safety.

General management recommendations for groups of semi-mature and young trees are provided below.

a) Strimmer and Grazing Damage

The previous survey noted several instances of damage to the base and lower trunks of semi-mature and young trees due to strimming or mowing damage and grazing damage of roe deer or rabbits.

The impact of this damage was thought to be particularly severe within **Groups 33, 34 and 37** where damage is contributing to the decline and death of several trees.

No further significant damage was noted at the time of re-survey.

Great care must be taken when strimming around the base of trees to avoid contacting the stem.

Robust plastic guards can be used to protect trees from strimming. Once in place the guards can reduce tree death and failures.

Roe deer were noted on the site and rabbits are also likely to be present. Where their grazing is causing significant damage to young and semi-mature trees, protection measures may be required.

b) Thinning of Semi-mature Trees

The trees within dense semi-mature groups often display good vigour and are well established.

Closely spaced, even-aged trees can however become mutually suppressed if thinning is not undertaken. Trees within dense un-thinned groups can develop spindly form and become prone to storm damage.

Thinning encourages the development of individuals with more spreading crowns and wind-firm form of long-term potential.

It should be carried out selectively, aiming to remove a small proportion of poorly performing trees to encourage the development of a diverse range of well-formed trees.

Trees around the perimeter of the course and where screening is required could remain un-thinned to maintain denser woodland.

Where thinning is proposed a Scottish Forestry Felling Permission may be required.

Further details can be obtained here – <https://forestry.gov.scot/support-regulations/felling-permissions>

c) Tree Nursery

Group 25 recorded near the western site boundary was recently planted as a tree nursery to grow-on trees as stock for new planting.

The trees within the nursery have failed to establish due to water logged soils and grazing of roe deer.

4.4 Arboricultural Standards and Consent

Tree works should be undertaken by a suitably qualified and experienced tree surgeon, in accordance with British Standard 3998:2010 '*Tree Work - Recommendations*'.

Aberdeen City Councils on-line mapping has been reviewed and does not indicate the trees to be subject to a Tree Preservation Order (TPO), nor do they occur within a Conservation Area.

A Scottish Forestry Felling Permission may be required where a significant volume of wood is to be felled or thinning undertaken.

4.5 Protected Species

Bats and nesting birds are subject to a high level of legal protection, and it is an offence to disturb bat roosts at any time or birds during the nesting season.

Large and mature trees can provide suitable habitat for roosting bats, and it is necessary that their presence is checked for prior to undertaking tree felling or major pruning.

This should be conducted by a competent and experienced bat surveyor and recommendations for tree works may require to be modified if the presence of bats is confirmed.

To minimize the impact on nesting birds, tree works should where possible be avoided between March and June.

4.6 Re-inspection Frequency

For reasons of safety all the substantial trees within areas of frequent and regular access should be inspected by a competent arboriculturalist every 18 months.

This timescale will allow the next surveys to be carried out during the summer months, when symptoms of Ash Dieback Disease can be most easily detected.

Re-assessment should include those trees within falling distance of roads, car parks, tracks, buildings, tees, fairways, and greens.

Trees within less frequented areas such as woodland interiors should be subject to a less detailed annual 'walk-through' inspection which would set out to assess the overall condition of the group, identify general management issues and obviously dangerous trees.

Additional inspections may be required in the aftermath of severe storms.

4.7 New Tree Planting

The removal of dead elms, due to the spread of Dutch Elm Disease, has created significant opportunity for new tree planting in gaps between mature ash trees 835 to 844.

The ash trees may now also be of limited long-term potential due to Ash Dieback Disease and the establishment of new trees would provide continuity of tree cover within this prominent location.

It is suggested a formal row of small-leaved lime trees (*Tilia cordata*) could be established to provide replacement trees of long-term potential.

Young plants should be obtained as pot grown specimens approximately 1 to 1.5m tall from a reputable local nursery. Taller trees are likely to require support with a stake.

Tree planting should be undertaken by a suitably competent person during a period of frost-free weather in the dormant season (October to March).

To aid establishment newly planted trees should be mulched with a 10cm layer of well composted wood chips within a circular area 1m wide around the base of the tree. Mulch should remain clear of direct contact with the stem and should be kept weed free.

Watering will be required during prolonged periods of drought until well established.

If grazing rabbits are causing damage suitable protection will be required.

5.0 PHOTOGRAPHS

The photographs below were taken during the survey.



Photo 1 – G1, cherries lining the driveway.



Photo 2 – Birch in G2 overhanging practice area adjacent to Deeside.



Photo 3 – Mature cherry between car park and Group 4.



Photo 4 – Conifers at edge of G8 close to neighbours house and garden buildings.



Photo 5 – Mature spruce lining fairway.



Photo 6 – Mature ash 848 displays significant tip dieback and pruning to reduce the crown by 25% is recommended to remove dead branches.



Photo 7 – Ash 416 next to clubhouse. Tip dieback was previously noted and does not appear to have significantly progressed. Ash trees should be re-inspected during the summer months.



Photo 8 – Mature beech 148, sycamore 147 and Norway maple 132 at edge of G6.



Photo 9 – Severely decayed beech 149 within G6.

Photo 10 – Beech at edge of G11, close to greenkeepers facilities.





Photo 11 – Trees mature trees, often beech on embankment at edge of G11.



Photo 12 – Sitka spruce in G50. Dead tree has been removed.



Photo 13 – Gap in G45 where trees previously blew over and were removed. No further windblow has occurred since this time.



Photo 14 – Lawson cypress 130, near G27. Crown is thinning.



Photo 15 – Spruce 131 in G27 display significant thinning.



Photo 16 – Ash 422



Photo 17 – Semi-mature Scots pine



Photo 18 – Willow surrounding pond.



Photo 19 – Waterlogged soils will impact tree health.



Photo 20 – Dead Scots pine 426. The small tree occurs at the edge of the fairway and is not a significant safety risk. Retaining deadwood can provide significant biodiversity benefit.

APPENDIX 1 – TREE SURVEY DRAWINGS

- 1. North West**
- 2. North East**
- 3. South West**
- 4. South East**

Scale Approximately 1:2500 at A4

Tree Positions and Canopy Extent are indicative only.

APPENDIX 2 – TREE SURVEY SCHEDULE

Explanation of Tree Survey Schedule Terms

Tree / Group No.	Identification number of tree / Group as shown on drawing.
Species	Common name.
Ht. (m)	Height of tree estimated in metres.
Dia. (mm)	Diameter estimated in millimetres, often at 1.5m.
Crown Radius (m)	Average crown radius assessed in m.
Age Class	Young, middle aged, mature, over mature, veteran.
Condition	Good, fair, poor, dead. See explanation below.
Comments	General comments relating to health, structural condition, and form, highlighting any defects or areas of concern.
Recommendations	Recommended tree work in the interest of safety and good arboricultural management.
Timescale	Period within which recommendation should be completed.

Tree Condition Categories

Good	(1) Healthy trees with no major defects (2) Trees with a considerable life expectancy (3) Trees of good shape and form
Fair	(1) Healthy trees with small or easily remedied defects (2) Trees with a shorter life expectancy (3) Trees of reasonable shape and form
Poor	(1) Trees with significant structural defects and/or decay (2) Trees of low vigour and under stress (3) Trees with a limited life expectancy (4) Trees of inferior shape and form
Dead	(1) Dead trees