

Tree Survey Report

Trees adjacent to

**THE UNIT
TOR NA COILLE
BANCHORY**

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

This survey and report relate to five (5) trees adjacent to The Unit Gym, Tor Na Coille Hotel, Banchory.

The survey was commissioned by Dougal Lindsay, of Drumtochty Castle Estate, who own the property.

The aims of the survey are as follows:

1. To carry out a detailed inspection and risk assessment of the trees.
2. To make recommendations for tree management necessary for reasons of safety and good arboricultural practice.

The trees were all visually inspected, in detail from ground level. Three trees were also tested using a Resistograph decay detection device to help identify the extent of internal decay or hollowness at the base.

Inspection and testing were carried out on the 30th of October 2023 by Arboricultural Consultant, Struan Dalgleish. Weather conditions at the time were dull and overcast.

Details of the trees and recommendations for tree work are provided the Tree Survey Schedule, Appendix 1.

The locations of the trees are identified on a Google Earth aerial photograph in the Tree Survey Drawing in Appendix 2.

Resistograph Results are included in Appendix 3.

The trees are subject to Aberdeenshire Council Tree Preservation Order AC TPO 47 (2016). Tree works should therefore only be undertaken following close liaison with and the written consent of Aberdeenshire Council Planning Department.

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 24 years of experience of arboriculture at a professional level.

1.1 Limitations

The findings and recommendations contained within this report are valid for a period of twelve months from the date of survey (i.e., until 30th October 2024). Trees are living organisms and subject to change – it is strongly recommended that they be inspected on a regular basis for reasons of safety.

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

The report relates only to trees recorded in the Tree Survey Schedule in Appendix 1. Other trees were not inspected.

Whilst every effort has been made to detect defects, 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.

This report has been prepared for the sole use of Drumtochty Castle Estate and their appointed agents. Any third party referring to this report or relying on the information contained herein does so entirely at their own risk.

2.0 TREE SURVEY METHODOLOGY

The trees to be included by the assessment were identified by Tree Surgeon, Bernie Melsom, who carries out work for Drumtochty Castle Estate.

Each was subject to detailed and systematic visual inspection undertaken from ground level.

Where internal decay or hollowness of the base is suspected decay detection was carried out using a Resistograph IML 300.

Recommendations are made for reasons of safety and good arboricultural practice with the surrounding land use intensity in mind.

To aid identification each tree assessed has been tagged with a uniquely numbered aluminium identity disc, nailed to the lower trunk. Trees were tagged 995 to 998.

Tree 574 was previously tagged and assessed on 22nd November 2022 and has been subject to re-assessment.

3.0 TREE SURVEY RESULTS

3.1 Recent Management

Recommendations for the removal of 4 trees close to the gym made for reasons of safety following 22nd November 2022 assessment have been completed.

Significant new tree planting has since been undertaken nearby to replace the trees removed.

3.2 General Description

A further 4 trees (995 to 998) and re-inspection of 1 tree (574) were included by this most recent inspection.

All 5 trees occur within falling distance of the gym building and car park and overhang areas of very frequent pedestrian and vehicular access.

The trees comprise a mixture of coniferous species and are likely to be approaching 100 years old.

Four (4) trees, 995 to 998, include 2 Douglas fir's (*Pseudotsuga menziesii*), an Oriental spruce (*Picea orientalis*), and a Lawson cypress (*Chamaecyparis lawsoniana*). They grow as a closely spaced group to the west of the gym building. The Douglas firs are very large individuals.

Oriental spruce (574) occurs near the edge of the car park, east of the gym.

3.3 Tree Condition and Recommendations.

Visual inspection identified **Douglas fir 995** to be in very poor condition with a dead top and significant dieback at the tips of the lower crown. The tree is of limited life expectancy and increasingly likely to shed parts as it continues to decline.

Oriental spruce 574 also displays a dead top, however the lower crown retains reasonable vigour. The roots appear to have been significantly damaged by soil compaction due to car parking around the base. The condition of the tree should be closely monitored for sign of further deterioration.

The crowns of **Lawson cypress 996 and Douglas fir 997** display healthy vigour. Resistograph testing however identified significant internal hollowness at the base of both trees. See Appendix 3 - Resistograph Results.

Removal of Douglas fir 995 will expose these trees to the wind, further increasing risk of failure or shedding limbs.

With consideration to the surrounding land use intensity this could have severe consequences and the following recommendations are made to mitigate the risk.

Tree Removal

Removal of 4 trees has been recommended for reasons of safety.

1. **Douglas fir 995** – Due to severe dieback, irreversible decline, and close proximity to building.
2. **Lawson cypress 996** – Due to significant basal decay and exposure following removal of 995.
3. **Douglas fir 997** – Due to extensive basal decay, very large size and close proximity to building.
4. **Oriental spruce 998** - Will be left exposed and unviable following removal of its neighbours.

Removal should be undertaken as a matter of high priority and a timescale of **within 3 months** has been recommended.

3.4 New Tree Planting

Following the previous removal of trees, extensive new planting has been carried out within the hotel grounds.

A large number of saplings have been planted, including oaks (*Quercus robur*, *Q. petraea*, *Q. rubra*), birches (*Betula pendula*), maples (*Acer spp.*) and dawn redwood (*Metasequoia glyptostroboides*).

Further opportunity for replacement planting will be created following the removal of trees 995 to 998.

It is recommended 4 Scots pine (*Pinus sylvestris*) be established within the gap.

The species will provide idea habitat and food source for the red squirrels which are present within the site.

It was noted that grazing protection has not been provided and young trees are vulnerable to damage which can be caused by grazing rabbits and roe deer. Where damage appears to be an issue protection is required to ensure the young trees survive.

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.

Strimming which can damage the bark of young trees should be avoided within the mulched area.

3.5 Tree Inspection

It is recommended that **all** substantial trees within the grounds are subject to regular and routine inspection for reasons of safety.

This should be undertaken and documented by a suitably qualified and experienced arborist on an annual basis.

Additional inspection maybe required in the aftermath of severe storms.

4.0 PHOTOGRAPHS

The photographs over page were taken at the time of assessment.



Photo 1 – Douglas firs 995, 997, Lawson cypress 996 and Oriental spruce 998 in group close to The Unit. The trees are in poor condition with extensive dieback displayed by 995 and decay detected in the base of 996 and 997. 998 will be unviable following the removal of the neighbouring trees. Removal of the trees is recommended for reasons of safety.



Photo 2 – Removal of trees 995 to 998 will mitigate the significant risk. Re-placement planting with Scots pine is recommended to provide red squirrel habitat.



Photo 3 – Oriental spruce 574 within the car park displays a dead top. Pruning is recommended to remove the deadwood. The noticeable decline in tree health is probably due to soil compaction of rooting areas caused by car parking.



Photo 4 – Extensive new tree planting has recently been carried out within the property boundaries. Tree protection may be required where grazing of rabbits or roe deer is an issue. Mulching the base of newly planted trees with composted wood chips will help encourage healthy root growth and avoid the need for strimming near the base of trees.

APPENDIX 1 – TREE SURVEY SCHEDULE

Explanation of Tree Survey Schedule Terms

Tag No.	Numbered aluminium disc nailed to the lower trunk.
Species	Common name of species.
Ht. (m)	Estimated height of tree.
Dia. (mm)	Estimated diameter at 1.5m above ground level.
Crown Spread (m)	Estimated maximum radius of branch spread.
Age class	Young, Semi-mature, Mature, Veteran.
Condition	Overall physiological and structural condition in terms of good, fair, poor, dead. See explanation over page.
Comments	General comments, relating to health, structural condition and form, highlighting any defects or areas of concern.
Recommendation	Tree work recommended in the interest of safety and good arboricultural management.
Timescale	Timescale for undertaking recommended tree work.

Tree Condition Categories

Good	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> (1) Healthy trees with no major defects (2) Trees with a considerable life expectancy (3) Trees of good shape and form
Fair	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> (1) Healthy trees with small or easily remedied defects (2) Trees with a shorter life expectancy (3) Trees of reasonable shape and form
Poor	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> (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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> (1) Dead tree