

HARLTON PARISH COUNCIL

Risk Management of Trees within the Parish – Mission Statement

As a responsible landowner, Harlton Parish Council (PC) has a Duty of Care under Common Law to manage the risks associated with trees within its land, predominantly the Clunch Pit and the Glebe. This duty requires a balanced and appropriate approach to tree management, ensuring public safety while avoiding unnecessary interventions or excessive expenditure. Under criminal law, tree owners hold potential liabilities regarding the Health and Safety of individuals on or near their land. While it is impossible to guarantee the absolute safety of any tree, reasonable and proportionate risk management is necessary to demonstrate compliance with legal responsibilities.

It is important to consider the actual risk posed by trees in context. Statistically, the likelihood of a fatality due to a falling tree is exceptionally low - estimated at **1 in 10 million per year**. Non-fatal incidents, such as being struck by a tree, occur at approximately **55 cases annually**, significantly lower compared to other leisure-related activities such as:

- **262,000** injuries from football per year
- **10,900** injuries per year from children's swings
- **2,200** injuries per year from moving rubbish wheelie bins

The **Health and Safety Executive (HSE)** considers an individual risk of death of **1 in 1 million per year** as a very low level of risk. Consequently, tree management should be **proactive yet proportionate**, avoiding unnecessary expenditure while ensuring appropriate risk mitigation.

Mission Statement

Harlton Parish Council, as the owner of the Clunch Pit and the Glebe, is committed to the responsible management of its trees while fulfilling its legal Duty of Care. Our approach is based on **proactive, proportionate, and evidence-based decision-making** to ensure public safety and the preservation of our natural environment.

Consequently, our Tree Management system has been established:

To demonstrate compliance with our responsibilities, Harlton PC has introduced a structured system of tree inspections, which includes both **formal and informal** assessments. This system ensures:

- **Responsible and proactive management** of tree-related risks
- **A sensible and proportionate scope of inspection**, focusing on key risk areas
- **A systematic programme** that aligns with best practices and expert recommendations
- **Follow-through on recommended actions** to address potential hazards
- **Maintaining records and substantiating evidence** to demonstrate due diligence

Through this structured approach, Harlton PC ensures that it meets its legal and ethical obligations while taking **reasonable and proportionate steps** to mitigate risk. This approach balances public safety, environmental stewardship, and financial prudence, ensuring that our community can continue to enjoy the benefits of our natural spaces with confidence.

Adopted March 2025