

‘Living with Trees’ 2026- 2031 Updated Tree Management Policy

Meeting of South Dublin County Council

9 February 2026

Living with Trees

South Dublin County Council
Tree Management Policy

2021 - 2026

Key Figures 2021 - 2026

SDCC



Inspections - 64,658

Pruned - 38,815

Felled - 4,415

Stumps - 2,938

Planted - 10,966

Mini Woodlands - 14 sites/34,775 whips

Customer Cares - 8,296

Members Reps - 3,695

Total - 12,621



Expenditure

€19.05m



Carbon Sequestered

Current: 22,630tonne

2026-2031: 7,183tonne

Canopy Cover

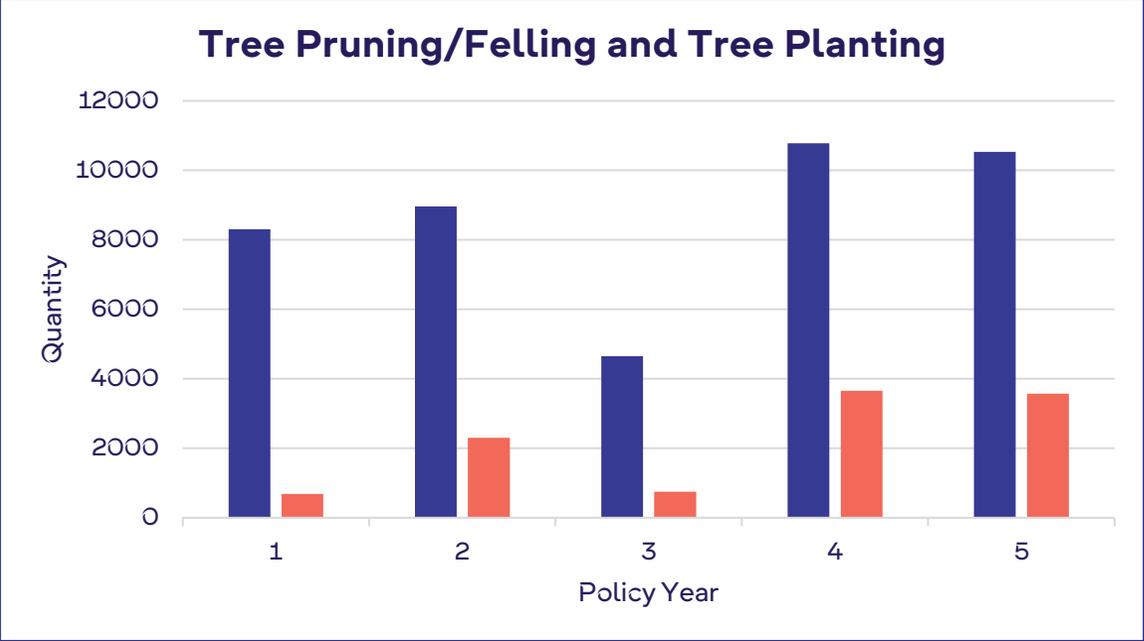
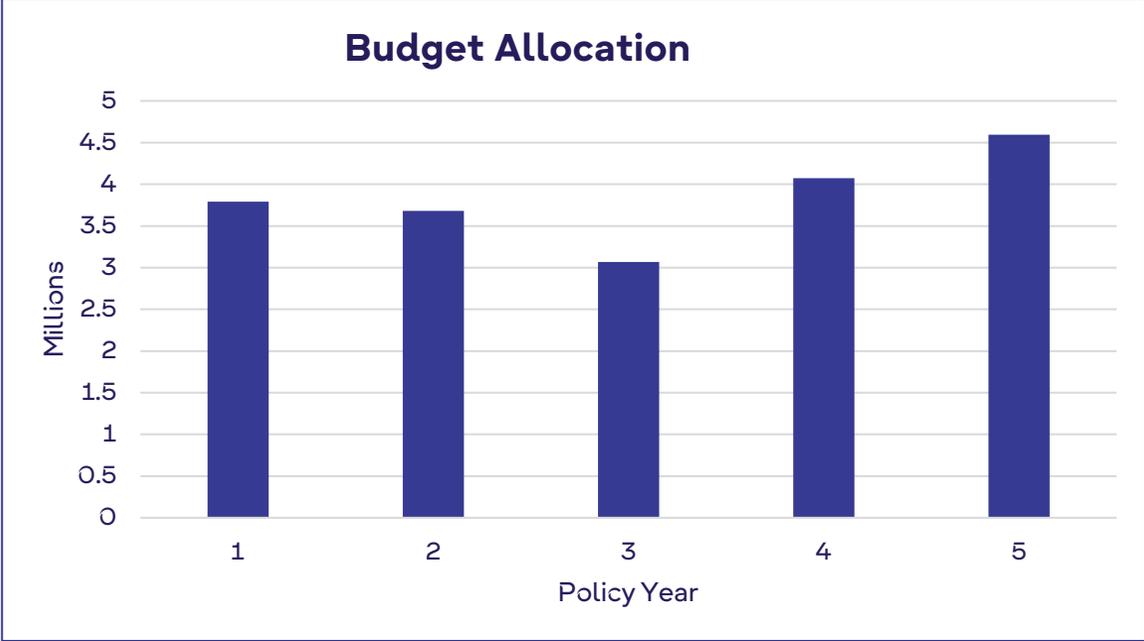
2017 - 10%

2025 - 14%

European Average - 15%

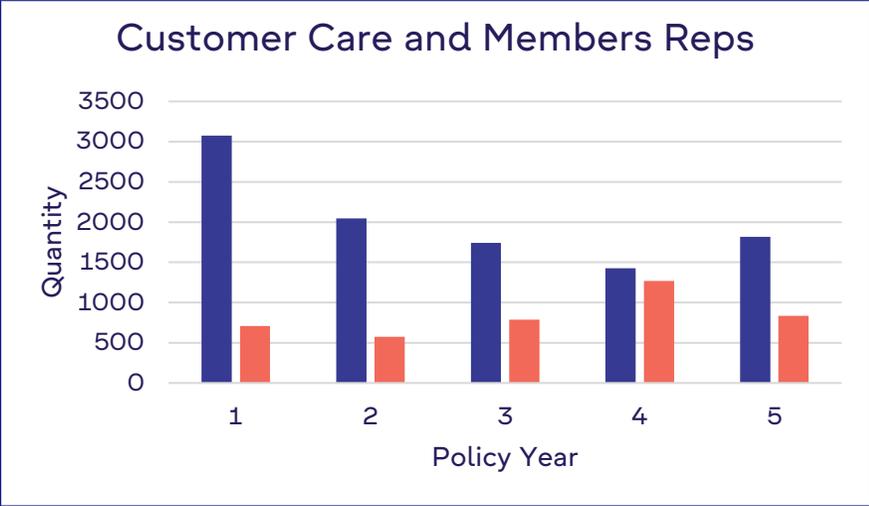


Budgets & Outputs 2021-2025



Year	Surveys	Prunes	Removals	Stumps	Planted	Budget
2021	14,466	7,734	570	415	688	€3.79m
2022	18,676	8,290	673	819	2,303	€3.68m
2023	7,436	3,954	696	218	752	€3.07m
2024	9,475	9,633	1,144	625	3,651	€4.075m
2025	14,605	9,204	1,332	861	3,572	€4.595m
Totals	64,658	38,815	4,415	2,938	10,966	€ 19.05m

Customer Cares & Members Representations



Year	Customer Contacts	Members Reps	Totals
2021	3,074	709	3,783
2022	2,046	576	2,622
2023	1,744	786	2,530
2024	1,426	1,269	2,695
2025	1,818	836	2,654
Total	8,926	3,695	12,621

Year	Additional Prunes	Additional Fells
2021	263	102
2022	985	128
2023	1,601	434
2024	2,617	310
2025	2,070	372
Total	7,536	1,346

Why do we need a Tree Policy?



‘Living with Trees’ (third iteration) represents continued strategic approach to more integrated, proactive & sustainable urban tree management

Reflects Council’s commitment to safeguarding key natural assets through structured inspection, planned maintenance & informed planting programmes

Aim to deliver efficient, cost-effective & responsive tree management service
Seeking to build on positive achievements to date by continued implementation of policy

Process to implementation

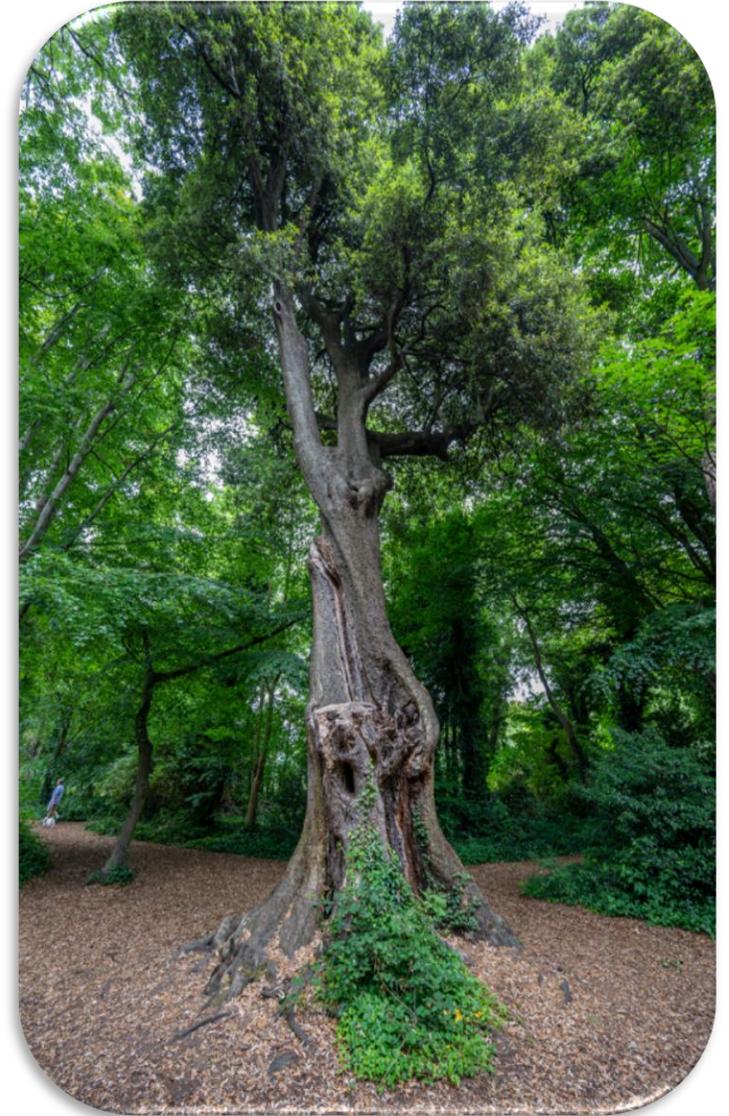
Sept '25: Review & appraisal of existing policy

Sept – Oct '25: four week non-statutory public consultation process for new draft policy. 21 submissions comprising 36 relevant observations on:

- Management (45%)
- Maintenance (22%)
- Planting (22%)
- Public engagement (11%)

Nov '25: Updated draft policy (reflecting submissions during consultation) & presented to SPC

Feb '26: Final draft presented to council
Key changes relate to: public engagement, planting, conflict with the built environment, & solar panels



Submission Details

Submission	Summary	Response
Tree removal protocol	Request for approach to clarified	Several sections of policy detail approach to removal of trees
Routine inspection	Request for approach to clarified	The approach is outlined under Section 2.7.2 & the policy will be available for viewing/download on our website
Pruning & crown management	Query whether works are standardised across all local authorities	Work standards align with British Standard 3998:2010 with crews & contractors required to work to most current & relevant standards
Tree planting	Request for native/climate resilient species to be used along with improved guidance	Section 4.1 commits to planting as many native trees as possible. Tree planting as part of policy implementation will evolve based on analysis, best practice and other relevant information including 'Trees for the Future' (Forestry England)
Structural damage & tree removal	Request to remove/amend relevant section to clarify requirements of residents & to detail relevant processes	Policy amended to include step-by-step process for residents
Stump removal & security	Timeline for stump removal & security concerns where stumps are left in place next to boundary walls/homes	Our objective is to remove stumps within six months of tree felling
Measurable milestones	Accountability & transparency	Our clear and measurable objectives are to maintain 10,000 trees per year & to plant 3,500 new trees during the lifetime of this policy
Legacy trees	Concerns where trees are considered to large for surroundings	Rationale for tree removal is detailed and includes such scenarios
Tree maintenance oversight	Concerns about missed trees and need for greater scrutiny of works	Policy provides for monitoring & tracking of works by crews & contractors to ensure works are complete as required and we will follow up on any queries from members of the public where they believe a tree has not been properly maintained
Community engagement	Request to engage with community groups on planting locations & species	Proposals from local communities will be used to inform planting where appropriate
Public information on tree removals	Looking for residents' associations and local councillors to be informed	Where trees are listed for removal, residents in adjacent locations will be notified unless safety considerations necessitate immediate removal without notification
Actionable nuisance	Concern over absence of term in draft policy & whether this may lead to less work being achieved	The terms is vague & ambiguous & does not assist with identifying specific issues to be addressed
Storm damage debris	Query on possible omission as not specifically listed	Included in policy under Priority 1 & Priority 2 works

Submission Details

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Public engagement in policy development	Request for in-person engagement & policy development	Consultation not statutorily required for this process but was undertaken in a manner consistent with formal public consultation requirements
Data	Request for data to be published	Will be examined during implementation of policy
Tree protection	Protection of council-owned trees	The policy guides management of SDCC tree stock. Tree Protection Orders can be used as a planning mechanism where required.
Tree canopy coverage	Request to improve tree canopy coverage	This is a continued objective of the policy
Tree planting	Query on approach to planting in urban spaces & conflict with built environment	Tree planting in such scenarios will be informed by best practice
Ancient woodlands	Request to identify & protect same	Relates to planning & does not form part of this policy
Correction to placename	Conflict over derivation of placenames from trees species	Removed from policy to prevent any misleading information
Impact of climate change	Inclusion of 'Trees for the Future'	Fully considered during policy development
Trees & urban environment	Clarify position on tree retention in scenarios where a tree is causing issues	Various scenarios impacting on tree retention are outlined in the policy
Inspections	Attention to trees on unregistered land	Where necessary, we will intervene to address specific health& safety concerns arising from trees on lands where ownership is unidentified but will not assume ownership/maintenance of areas not in our charge
Autumn leaf management	Request to consider open leaf composters	Not currently available but will be examined during implementation
Tree sculptures	Considerations of themes & carvings	Such proposals are welcome & will be considered where possible
Right Tree, Right Place	Root spread consideration	Included in policy
Post-planting maintenance	How to get public involved in assisting in tree establishment	Our tree planting contracts provide for watering & therefore public involvement is not required. However, we will explore opportunities for educational & community engagement initiatives in this regard.
TPOs	Simplification of process	This process is managed by Planning

5.5 Trees in Conflict with Built Environment

The Council will not normally consider tree removal where structural damage can be repaired or reasonably addressed through appropriate engineering solutions

Where a homeowner believes that a council-owned tree is causing or has caused damage to their property, they are encouraged to contact us with such concerns. Each situation will be evaluated on its merits to identify an optimal resolution & this may be supported by the relevant homeowner submitting an engineer's report outlining the issues being experienced.

Such scenarios will be managed as follows:

- Concerns relating to possible damage to be submitted through any channel to SDCC with all relevant details & supporting information including photographs where possible
- Submissions will be evaluated & SDCC staff will inspect & assess on site with relevant parties
- Action will be taken to alleviate issues where a council-owned tree is the cause of damage
- Where it is not possible to determine that a council-owned tree is causing the problem, the homeowner should provide evidence of this along with a recommendation for resolution
- If such a report is submitted, we will undertake appropriate measures to alleviate any issue relating to the particular tree (*Conducting any such works is not an admission of liability*)
- Claims of damage to private property will have to be submitted & evaluated by the council's insurers

5.19 Tree and Solar Panels

The importance of renewal energy is recognised, both in terms of environmental benefits & value to individual households while noting that trees, particularly mature specimens, provide significant environmental, aesthetic & ecological benefits while also contributing to broader public wellbeing. This necessitates a balanced & proportionate approach to resolve conflicts between solar panel performance & tree presence.

Where a homeowner believes that a tree is impacting operation or preventing installation of solar panels, a site inspection will be conducted to assess the situation, taking into account proximity, orientation & aspect. If a council-managed tree is impacting, we may consider appropriate pruning measures to improve solar panel performance while retaining the tree in-situ with each case to be assessed on its own individual merits.

While more renewable energy solutions are fully supported, we must also safeguard the long-term value & contribution of trees to the broader public, local amenity, biodiversity, air quality & climate resilience. Therefore property owners should take account of the presence and future growth of nearby trees when considering solar panel installation.

Action Plan 2021-2026

1. To continue to implement a proactive tree management programme
2. To expand the tree canopy in the county
3. To implement a public awareness & education programme

Action Plan 2026-2031

- 1.1 Continue surveying all street trees in county
- 1.2 Work with infrastructure & utility providers on a regional basis to deal with trees when required
- 1.3 Present annual review of action plan
- 1.4 Review outcomes of policy implementation & prepare for new iteration of policy in 2031
- 2.1 Update & action annual tree planting programme
- 2.2 Continue to develop woodlands in parks & open spaces
- 2.3 Use planning powers to retain & protect trees on development sites & enforce as necessary
- 2.4 Review existing Tree Preservation Orders
- 2.5 Use the Helliwell system to value council-owned street trees as required
- 2.6 Agree procedures & protocols with stakeholders to ensure protection of council-owned trees from avoidable damage
- 2.7 Continue monitoring contribution of council-owned trees to climate action & carbon capture
- 3.1 Promote 'Tree Week' & 'Tree Day'
- 3.2 Prepare social media tree information campaign
- 3.3 Prepare information videos on importance of trees





Comhairle Contae
Átha Cliath Theas

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Thank you