

Tree Removal Chapel Lane

Background:

Sefton Council manages approximately 30,000 highway trees and monitors the health of these trees over a period of years. The decision to remove a highway tree is always regrettable and not a decision Sefton Council takes lightly. Highway trees are removed only after careful consideration and always in the interests of Public Safety.

Two trees will be removed on Chapel Lane in Formby between the 4th and 15th October. The trees are located to the front of Cassidy's and the front of Boots. A road closure will be in place to allow these works to be completed safely.

- The tree to the front of Cassidy's greengrocers had very few leaves present this year (and has been slowly dying for a number of years). If left to continue to decline, then too high a risk would be placed on users of the highway. There is a considerable amount of deadwood within the crown currently, and this can clearly be seen currently within the village. There is a risk the tree may lose limbs in windy conditions and there is concern over its safety for this coming winter.
- The tree to the front of Boots is being removed due to concern about its structural integrity. There is decay within the crown of the tree, the level of decay found in this tree can lead to branch failure. Understandably due to the tree being in leaf it can appear to be of sound health, but we assure residents that this is not the case. Tree officers within the council have noted decay from both ground inspections and when the tree was climbed earlier this year. There is a risk the tree may lose limbs in windy conditions and there is concern over its safety for this coming winter.

Sefton Councils priority is the safety of residents and visitors to Formby. A number of maintenance options have been put forward by Formby Parish Council following an independent survey of the mature Horse Chestnut Trees in the village. Whilst Sefton is happy to explore these further with the Parish Council for the other trees in the village, and has discussed this with the Parish Council; any positive effects these improvements *may* have on these trees will not be timely enough to remove the risk this winter.

Sefton Council have a legal duty of care to ensure the public and our highways are kept safe. The risk of these trees dropping large limbs (branches), especially in strong winds is, significant, and it would be irresponsible to leave them in situ knowing the risk they pose. In order to ensure the public highway is kept safe for both pedestrians and motorists the two trees concerned must now be removed.

FAQ:

Q. When will removal take place?

Tree removal is scheduled to be undertaken between the 4th October and the 15th October and a road closure will be in place whilst these works are undertaken.

Q. Does Sefton Council employ qualified Arboriculturalists?

Yes 3 Officers:

19 years' experience and a First-Class Honors Degree in arboriculture (Bsc Hons)

17 years' experience and an ND in Arboriculture

13 years' experience Foundation Degree in Arboriculture ongoing.

Q. What is the opinion of Sefton Councils Tree Officers?

Sefton Council have an inhouse Tree team which contains three Tree Officers. All three officers agree that these trees pose too great a threat to users of the highway to remain in situ this winter. Both trees have been climbed by the contractor employed by the council, concern was raised by the climbers with regards to the decay found in both the crowns of the trees.

Q. Why is the Council not considering the treatments laid out within the independent survey commissioned by Formby Parish Council?

Sefton Council is happy to consider these treatments for any remaining trees and is awaiting proposals from the Parish Council. The two trees identified for removal pose too much of a risk in the short term, any maintenance or treatments will not be timely enough to remove the risk to public this winter.

Q. Why can't pruning be considered rather than full removal?

If we were to remove all of the dead wood out of the crown of the tree outside Cassidy's there would be little sound live wood left, this would further stress the tree and would not improve the trees health. The tree to the front of Boots does not have enough sound wood within the centre of the tree to successfully prune the tree and remove the hazard. Following the recommendations within the Parish Councils first independent survey we instructed our contractor to prune the tree, due to the amount of decay within the crown, a safe anchor point could not be found, demonstrating the extent of decay.

Q. Will the trees be replaced?

Following the removal of one tree last winter 7 trees were planted within the village. This follows a number of planting schemes in recent years. The Parish Council are also considering funding further replacements following these removals.

Q. Why hasn't the Council previously carried out maintenance to these two trees?

Sefton Council undertakes maintenance to highway trees as and when required. Sefton Council undertakes visual tree inspections to highway trees every 3-5 years. At the time of these inspections trees are checked for elements which may affect the safe use of the highway such as low branches, or whether some, or all of the tree could fall in windy conditions. These two trees have been inspected several times and various pruning works carried out over the years.

Due to Government austerity measures the Council only has funding to carry out essential health and safety related tree maintenance work this currently includes, removal of trees which have become unsafe and pruning of branches which impede the safe use of the highway.

Q Can the same sort of tree be planted in place of the one being removed?

The two trees that are being removed are Horse Chestnut trees. We have already planted several Horse Chestnut trees within the village last winter. Sefton Council look to plant as suitable a species as possible depending on the size of footpath and available space in maturity. A highway tree stock which stands the test of time is one that has varying tree ages and sizes, which is what Sefton Council is endeavouring to achieve throughout the borough.

Q Why aren't bigger/more mature trees planted when older trees are removed?

The highway is a difficult place to establish young trees. When planning tree planting we look to plant as young a tree as possible as younger trees establish quicker and have a higher success rate.

Formby Parish Council have requested we explore the costing to plant a more mature tree following these removals.

Q. What will happen to the tree stumps once the trees are removed?

The tree stumps will be removed, and footpath repaired. The stump will be removed as a second operation once the felling has taken place. A stump grinder will grind the woody tissue to below ground level to allow the surface to be repaired and made safe.

Q. What will happen to the log produced as part of these tree removals?

Logs will be left at Deansgate Lane Playing Fields Car Park for any residents who wish to take them for personal use.