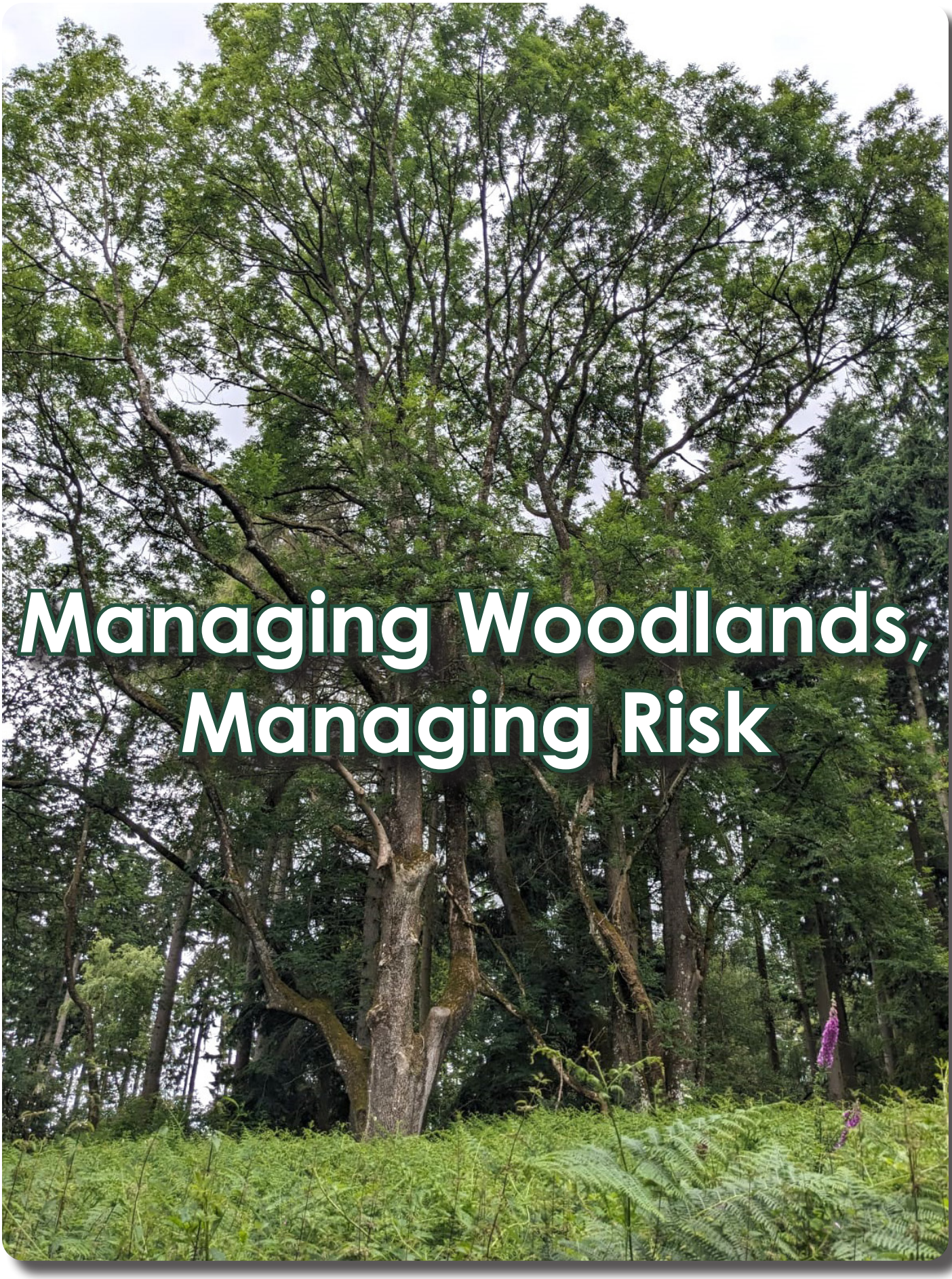


Managing Woodlands, Managing Risk

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Cedarwood TREE CONSULTANTS





As a landowner, the woodland owner has a Duty of Care to both visitors to the site and passers-by and neighbours. Issues worth of consideration include:

- Checking whether the boundaries of your site are clear and secure.
- Identifying whether your woodland shares a boundary with a road, public right of way (PROW), or with other properties. Trees within falling distance of these have the potential to cause problems.
- Assessing the woodland's accessibility/vulnerability to trespass; is the boundary fence robust and fit for purpose?
- Checking whether any footpaths within the site are clearly defined and hazards such as surface roots, uprooted trees and lower branches are minimised.
- Checking whether the mix of tree species are known/plotted and if their condition has been surveyed?

Risks within woodlands are usually low, and many woodland owners can enjoy their woodland without any concerns. However, risks do exist. Where they are present, being informed helps manage the risk and minimise the potential for claims or accidents.

If a claim is made, whether it has merit, or otherwise, evidence of a tree/woodland condition survey can be very beneficial in presenting a defence.

The Duty of Care of the owner can change if guests are invited to the site, if the site is owned by a business, and if visitors pay to visit. This can include forest schools, forest activity centres, quad bike usage, running crafting events, even selling firewood. A site management plan can be useful to identify tree safety and areas of activity, which is helpful in zoning for risk management.

What level of survey?

Note that a tree safety survey is different to one that assesses the timber present and its value, or one for ecology. A tree safety and condition report assesses a tree (for trees within a woodland): is it in good condition with good vigour, and is it safe. (A timber assessment focuses on the timber value of trees). Depending on the level of information that you require, there is a range of surveys.





- A basic boundary walk-by safety survey, noting any safety concerns, with a written summary.
- A site-wide walk-by safety survey, noting any safety concerns, with a written summary.
- A detailed site-wide safety survey, noting key features within the site.
- A detailed site-wide safety survey and Woodland Management Plan

Frequency

How often should a condition survey be undertaken? Formal guidance is limited. The general principle is that there should be evidence of a survey within the past five years, and, depending on the species and setting, re-inspections between 1-5 years. The setting requiring greater frequency would typically be having a target such as a highway or residence. A baseline survey is invaluable when unforeseen events such as storms occur.

Benefits of a Site Management Plan (SMP)

- This provides recommendations and prioritises for tree works for scheduling and budgeting.
- Identification issues of species vulnerable to specific diseases, such as ash, larch and alder, with suggestions for management options including species diversification.
- Identification of species for specific management, such as hazel, which benefits from being coppiced, (with the aim of habitat enhancement or harvesting, e.g. hazel poles).
- Assessing species diversity and spacing of trees and open spaces within the woodland, with management plans to enhance the natural undergrowth whilst allowing optimum growing space for selected trees.
- Allowing the active management of dead timber within a site in a safe and sustainable manner. This can include identifying existing veteran trees and veteranizing other trees for habitat creation.
- Providing guidance on obtaining consents for tree work from the Local Planning Authority (LPA), felling licenses from the Forestry Commission (FC)or grants for tree works, depending on the context.







Qualifications of Surveyors

It is worthwhile checking the level of training that a woodland surveyor is accredited to. It is useful to have a qualification in arboriculture/urban forestry to at least level four, and training in one or more of: Professional Tree Inspector (PTI), Tree Risk Assessment Qualification (TRAQ) or Quantified Tree Risk Assessment (QTRA).

In addition, having a member of your own local team with basic training in surveying trees for safety, Basic Tree Surveying and Inspections (BTSI), can be beneficial. It ensures that key parts of the woodland can be assessed regularly, supported by a more formal survey undertaken periodically by a trained specialist.

Cedarwood Tree Consultants have a team of specialists trained in surveying trees and woodlands. Our reports can provide the reassurance that you and your insurance provider will require. They can inform future management and budget allocation. Training for your own local team members in BTSI is also available by arrangement.

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