



Issue 12, August 2013

Newsletter

and events calendar

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QTRA Developments

At QTRA, we are beta-testing the prototype of QTRA version 5 fresh from the laboratory, calibrating our Probabilities of Failure, and discussing how we can improve the training and support material for QTRA Registered Users. Based on feedback from QTRA users and their customers, we have substantially streamlined the assessment and recording process, and are looking for any additional feedback from users and tree managers with a view to setting up a consultation group.



Source: Forestry Commission

We've already got a number of improvements in the pipeline based on your feedback and our ongoing efforts to develop further reasonable and proportionate tree risk assessment. The current direction of our developments is to simplify the assessment process and record our numerical outputs only when necessary. We have found that the four colour **QTRA codes, which we've been using for a few years now**, are sufficient to inform most tree management decisions and that tree managers find it much easier to make decisions using the colours. These changes, are combined with a new approach to calculating the Risk of Harm, which is designed to take account of uncertainty in our input values, and **we're confident that, as a result, QTRA will be more robust than ever.**

The proposed updates will be set out in a revised QTRA User Manual. There will be a guidance note for tree managers and anyone else requiring information on the QTRA method, or using its outputs to inform management decisions. For registered users, we are also providing a series of one-day workshops to bring you up-to-date.

We are currently beta-testing a QTRA Calculator App that will be available to download from our website, free of charge for all registered to use on Windows® desktop, Android® and from iTunes for the iPhone® platform. All

of these will soon be updated to QTRA version 5. So, this is an ideal opportunity to have a say and some input to the development of a method that has already helped reduce the unnecessary loss of trees to risk averse management. QTRA version 5 will be ready in October. In the meantime, feel free to email us at info@qtra.co.uk if you have any suggestions or ideas as to what you might like to see from QTRA.

New QTRA Users: The past year has seen training of new users across the globe in Australia, Canada, England, France, Sweden and Wales. While David Evans and Mike Ellison have run workshops in Australia, the UK and Sweden, our French speaking training provider William Moore of Atelier de l'Arbre has run workshops in France and in June trained 20 people in Montreal, Quebec.

Over the coming six months there are training workshops scheduled at venues in Ireland, the UK, Australia and New Zealand. The QTRA training is supplemented by our **Practitioner's Guide to Visual Tree Assessment** workshop, which is designed to complement the QTRA training by helping the tree assessor develop skills in assessing the structural integrity of trees and the likelihood of tree failure.

Where have the woodsmen gone? The decline of woodland management

Our appreciation of woodlands has arguably never been greater, but our neglect of them has perhaps never been so woeful. From the Bronze Age to the middle of the nineteenth century, timber was the principal fuel and building material for almost every civilisation and our very survival depended on the management or exploitation of trees. The industrial extraction of coal followed by oil and gas saw a gradual decline in our dependence on wood as fuel. This along with the reduced demand for other woodland products has led to a gradual decline in the management of **many of Britain's woodlands.**

While timber production remains a significant driver for woodland management, recent years have seen a considerable shift in emphasis towards recreation, conservation and developing local community benefits from woodlands, including commercial enterprises

Events Calendar

UNITED KINGDOM

Exeter

07 Oct 2013 – QTRA
 08 Oct 2013 – VTA
 09 Oct 2013 – VTA
 10 Oct 2013 – QTRA Update

Sheffield

15 Oct 2013 – QTRA
 16 Oct 2013 – VTA

London

15 Oct 2013 – QTRA
 16 Oct 2013 – VTA
 17 Oct 2013 – QTRA Update

IRELAND

Dublin

21 Oct 2013 – QTRA
 22 Oct 2013 – VTA

other than timber production, such as tourism and sport. Along with this shift, a general apathy towards long-term management of woodlands has developed where both financial gains and resources are uncertain. Without regular management intervention, a high proportion of our woodlands are becoming poorly structured, often even-aged populations of closely spaced, spindly trees offering limited wildlife conservation benefits.



Source: WTPL/Judith Parry

In the municipal setting, park staff were once responsible for the ongoing management of a particular park and became familiar with the street trees, parks and woodlands they managed. Whether for the city council or the country estate, people usually worked on a small, local scale, and with relatively low labour costs, managers were able to plan and develop parks and woodlands towards particular objectives. Today, most forestry and woodland management operations are contracted out and budgets are constrained to the extent that only high priority work can be funded. And, of course, safety has an uncanny habit of jumping to the front of the queue and hijacking budgets. But, even when the management budgets are available, the technical expertise in long-term woodland management is often lacking.

The objectives of woodland management may have changed over time, but so too have the methods. Only recently has the UK Forestry Commission accepted the principles of *continuous cover* forestry into the management of its forest estate, previously preferring the production and cropping of even-aged stands of trees. The *continuous cover* approach, which is well established in mainland Europe, seeks to develop a structure of mixed age and species where individuals or small groups of trees are cropped and naturally occurring seedlings develop into the spaces that are created. This approach recognises that to have long-term continuity of tree cover, trees must be removed. Whether trees are to be harvested for marketable timber, firewood, woodchip, or simply left on the woodland floor, following the principles of *continuous*

cover should ensure continuity. In all but remote areas with difficult access, recovery of some costs should be possible through the sale of timber.

The *continuous cover* approach has a place in the management of amenity woodlands in both rural and urban settings. If we choose to ignore the potential problems of having unmanaged woodlands near people, the problems will simply be compounded and stored up for future generations who will have to deal with a diminishing asset and ever increasing costs. Perhaps one alternative is to develop simple, intelligible management policies and plans that enable, often considerable, resources to be redirected from reactive to proactive management. However we choose to manage our woodlands, avoiding proactive management will often result in higher long-term costs.

If you would like to learn more about the *continuous cover* approach, you should find **Rodney Helliwell's excellent new book 'Continuous Cover Management of Woodlands: A brief introduction' is a good starting point.** A forester, ecologist and long-standing proponent of planned tree management and *continuous cover* forestry, Helliwell gives us, in 66 pages, a clear and concise introduction to the *continuous cover* approach that should not be overlooked by any arborist, forester or woodland owner. Price £9.50 (ISBN 978-0-9576326-0-8) and available from www.treesource.co.uk

The importance of public participation in identifying tree pests and diseases

A recent survey carried out by the public opinion panel, You Gov, identified that 8 out of 10 Brits are unable to identify an ash leaf, and just over half of the population can identify an oak leaf. Perhaps not the most pressing of issues but The Forestry Commission are calling for better education in tree identification. With ash dieback threatening the health of our ash trees, and currently 15



Source: WTPL/Woodland Trust

We will be scheduling further training in February and March, so check the website on a regular basis for updates at www.qtra.info

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Events Calendar

AUSTRALIA

Brisbane

29 Nov 2013 – QTRA Update
02 Dec 2013 – QTRA
03 Dec 2013 – VTA

Perth

11 Dec 2013 – QTRA
12 Dec 2013 – VTA
13 Dec 2013 – QTRA Update

tree diseases listed by the Forestry Commission as being prevalent in the UK, it is perhaps more important than ever that the public have a basic knowledge of tree species so that they can help notify professionals of pests and diseases.

Studies have shown that younger people are **'less in touch with nature'** with 90% of 18-24 years olds being unable to recognise an ash leaf in contrast to less than 80% of adults aged over 55 (yougov.co.uk). To help people identify tree species and associated pests and diseases, The Woodland Trust have set up a website called loveitorloseit.org.uk, which tests existing knowledge and keeps the site user informed about key environmental issues associated with trees and woodland.

Of course, our environment will always be shaped by diseases and disease resilience, and there is little that can be done to stop the spread of many diseases. An example of this is Ash dieback, a fungal infection which threatens our estimated 126 million ash trees. When less than 20% of people can identify an ash leaf, perhaps the public could be both better equipped and better informed of the risks posed by the more serious pests and diseases.

If you are passionate about preserving our ancient woodland heritage and increasing tree cover in the UK, give a thought to supporting the Woodland Trust by making a donation or becoming a member for only £2.75 a month.



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Sydney

17 Dec 2013 – QTRA
18 Dec 2013 – VTA
19 Dec 2013 – QTRA Update

NEW ZEALAND

Wellington

05 Dec 2013 – QTRA
06 Dec 2013 – VTA

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