

Felling Licenses

A felling licence is required by law if you wish to fell growing trees including trees in hedges as well as woodlands unless one of the exemptions below applies:

- In any calendar quarter you may fell up to 5 cubic metres (m³) of growing trees on your property without a felling licence, as long as no more than 2m³ are sold.
- Tree surgery works by way of lopping or topping, for example, pollarding. Such works are used today to maintain a tree in good health and to extend its lifespan in highly modified environments, such as streetscapes. These works do not require a felling licence.
- Trees of small diameter - an exception applies to felling trees that, when measured at a height of 1.3 metres from the ground:
 - have a diameter over bark of 8cm or less;
 - if thinning (i.e. felling carried out in order to improve the growth of the remaining trees), the trees have a diameter over bark of 10cm or less;
 - or if underwood or existing coppice (i.e. previously managed by cutting to promote multi-stemmed growth arising at or near ground level), individual stems have a diameter over bark of 15cm or less.
- Trees are also exempt if they are:
 - fruit trees, for example, orchard species like apple, pear or plum;
 - Trees standing or growing in an orchard, garden, churchyard or public open space.
- Dangerous and nuisance trees - An exception applies for the felling of a tree or trees necessary for the prevention of danger. These trees must be actually dangerous and not perceived dangerous.
- An exception applies where the felling of trees is immediately required for the purpose of carrying out development that is authorised by the approval of full planning permission (granted, or deemed to be granted, under the Town and Country Planning Act 1990). The approved planning permission will detail the extent of the approved development and may also define the trees that are allowed to be felled or those that must be retained. Any tree felling outside that boundary will require a licence.

Other Considerations

Tree Preservation Orders (TPO) and conservation areas are made by the local planning authority (LPA), usually a local council, under the Town and Country Planning (Tree Preservation) (England) Regulations 2012. They protect specific trees and areas of woodland from deliberate damage and destruction. You should contact your LPA to find out if these designations apply to the trees you want to fell and discuss if there are any issues in felling them.

Conclusion

Approved felling licenses are valid for 5 years and are suitable for when you wish to fell / manage a few small areas or woodland compartments. If you have a larger woodland area with more complex compartments and management requirements, then a Woodland Management Plan would be more appropriate and cost effective. These are longer term strategic documents which come with a 10-year felling license once approved.

If in doubt, do not hesitate to contact us to discuss. The Forestry Commission takes illegal felling very seriously and have a duty to investigate every suspected case.