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ARBORICULTURAL REPORT

Health and Condition Survey

**Rear of 107/109 March Hywel
Cilfrew
Neath**

Grid reference: SN76950 00198

w3w: volunteered.event.pinks

Date: April 2025

Client: Mr Lyndon Gough

Consultant: Nick Thomas Dip.Arb, RFS Cert.Arb

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

1.1 On the instructions of Mr Lyndon Gough a tree survey was undertaken at 107 / 109 March Hywel, Cilfrew, Neath on the 2nd April 2025.

1.2 The purpose of the survey was to evaluate the biological health and structural condition of the trees which are within falling distance of the two properties. All the inspected trees are to the south of and to the rear of 107 / 109 March Hywel. All the trees above 10 centimetres stem diameter at DBH (diameter breast height) have been inspected.

The number and species of the inspected trees are listed below.

TABLE 1

LOCATION OF THE TREES	TREE SPECIES – English / Botanical	NUMBER OF TREES
Rear of 109 March Hywel	Douglas Fir / <i>Pseudotsuga menziesii</i>	15
Rear of 107 March Hywel	Douglas Fir / <i>Pseudotsuga menziesii</i>	14
	Lawson Cypress / <i>Chamaecyparis lawsoniana</i>	2
	Sitka Spruce / <i>Picea sitchensis</i>	1
	Corsican Pine / <i>Pinus nigra</i>	1
	Scots Pine / <i>Pinus sylvestris</i>	2
Land south of 107 March Hywel	Douglas Fir / <i>Pseudotsuga menziesii</i>	21
	Corsican Pine / <i>Pinus nigra</i>	2
	Scots Pine / <i>Pinus sylvestris</i>	2
	Silver Birch / <i>Betula pendula</i>	4
	Western Hemlock / <i>Tsuga heterophylla</i>	2
TOTAL		66

1.3 For the period of the survey the weather was calm, dry and sunny.

1.4 Please note that this is a health and condition survey and is not intended as a substitute for a structural engineers report. Unless stated, no information was received and no evaluation of the tree's roots in relation to their effect on underground services, utilities or structures has been considered in this report.

1.5 This report is a basic tree survey with its conclusions and recommendations drawn from the visual evaluation as seen at the time of the inspection / survey.

1.6 Unless stated otherwise, all inspections were undertaken from ground level in accordance with current good practice using the Visual Tree Assessment (VTA) system. This provides a consistent and systematic evaluation for the inspection of trees. A steel rod was used to probe and an acoustic sounding hammer was used for identifying possible areas of decay. Due to

undergrowth, Ivy on the tree's main stems and branches, the terrain and the proximity of other trees, some parts of the trees were not fully visible from ground level.

1.7 Ivy (*Hedera helix*) is an important plant for a wide range of birds, mammals and insects. Its benefits include providing shelter for birds and bats, nectar for bees and pollinating insects and nutritious berries for feeding birds. Its severance and removal will only be recommended if dense Ivy growth on a tree's main stem and branches has become excessive. Excessive Ivy growth can reduce the trees ability to photosynthesis, increase the tree's sail area and wind resistance and may hide structural defects such as open cavities and fungal fruiting bodies.

1.8 All Ash trees infected with Ash dieback disease (*Hymenoscyphus fraxineus*) are evaluated for the level of infection and crown dieback. There is a possibility that some Ash trees have varying degrees of natural resistance to the disease. For ecological and amenity reasons these trees should be retained. Except in high risk areas or if the tree has other safety issues only trees with crown dieback which is in excess of 50% are recommended for removal.

1.9 Due to unpredictable weather conditions, unforeseen events and pest and disease attack it is not possible to guarantee the safety of any tree and no such guarantee is given or implied in any part of this report. The information in this report is as seen during the time of the inspection and is valid for a period of one year from the date of the inspection. Due to their form and structure the health and condition of any tree can change suddenly and dramatically therefore any observations and recommendations may require modification or a complete reappraisal.

1.10 It is advisable that recorded tree inspections are undertaken by a suitably qualified and experienced arborist. Any tree(s) in high risk locations should be regularly inspected especially after a storm and high winds.

1.11 The frequency of the inspections will depend on a number of factors such as the size, location and general health of the tree. It is the landowners responsibility to decide on the time period between inspections but in areas of low pedestrian and traffic volume or where there are low value targets the time periods between inspections can be extended. The time periods are usually between one and three years and for maximum accuracy and benefit, consecutive surveys should be completed during different seasons / times of year.

1.12 All the trees are covered by a tree preservation order. Prior to the start of any work, written permission must be obtained from the local planning authority. Felling licence requirements can be checked via the relevant statutory body which in Wales is Natural Resources Wales and the Forestry Commission in England and Scotland.

2.0 SITE AND TREE DESCRIPTION

2.1 This group of trees are located to the rear and west of the two houses 107 and 109 March Hywel which were constructed in 2022. Directly to the north are further residential properties and to the south and west is the Craig Gwladys country park with its large area of deciduous woodland.

2.2 The trees were accessed via the public highway which is on the western side of the trees. Except for the four Silver Birch all the trees are coniferous species which are listed in TABLE 1. The understorey is very sparse but consists of small numbers of Holly and Hazel with Ivy and Bramble dominating the ground flora.

2.3 The trees are growing on an elevated east facing embankment and due to their size and the site's topography, the larger trees provide a prominent feature in the local landscape and are clearly visible from the surrounding area.

2.4 The ground conditions indicate a shallow topsoil layer with a subsoil of shale which is restricting the trees rooting area.

2.5 At their nearest point the trees are five metres from the house of 107 March Hywel and the branches overhang the roof by a number of metres. This is causing significant light reduction and maintenance issues and has resulted in debris such as leaves and branches falling onto the roof, rear garden areas and highway. As shown in IMAGE A a number of these branches were in excess of six metres in length.



IMAGE A: Some of the fractured branches

2.6 Typically for this type of group there are a range of physiological and structural conditions. The trees' age class are semi to early maturity and the larger trees are up to 26 metres in height with a trunk diameter at breast height of 69 centimetres. The larger Douglas Fir are producing healthy growth but the smaller Douglas Fir, Lawson Cypress, Pine and Spruce specimens have been suppressed which has resulted in whip type trees which are in a poor physiological and structural condition.

2.7 As shown in IMAGE B below the trees are a significant height above the roof of the two dwellings. Due to their species, increasing growth and wind exposure the trees are now shedding large branches on a regular basis.



IMAGE B: The group of trees to the rear of the houses

2.8 The static targets within the site are primarily the adjacent houses, overhead telephone lines, parked vehicles and boundary fencing. Mobile targets include the residents, visitors to the properties and passing vehicles and pedestrians.

3.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

1. If these trees are not removed they will continue to increase in height which will increase their wind resistance and the risk of further branch failures and possibly stem or root failure. Due to the above facts I would recommend that the 62 conifers are removed to near ground level.
2. To mitigate their loss and provide a natural screen the area should be replanted with a mixture of native species. Smaller species such as Hazel , Blackthorn, Holly and Hawthorn should be planted near the houses with Silver Birch being limited to the area next to the highway. Further information on the replanting proposals is available in Appendix 1.
3. If they are not removed all the trees should be re-inspected every two years or as decided by the property owners.
4. Prior to any tree pruning or removal the structure of the trees should be checked for roosting, nesting or hibernating species such as bats and birds. (Refer to the biodiversity section below).
5. Where the severance of Ivy has been recommended to avoid any damage to the bark of the trees this work should be undertaken with hand tools and the use of a chainsaw should be avoided.

4.0 BIODIVERSITY

4.1 Trees have the potential for bat roosts and nesting birds. Various legislation such as the Wildlife & Countryside Act 1981(as amended), Countryside and Rights of Way Act (CROW) 2000 and the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 make it a criminal offence to interfere with protected species such as bats, birds or their roosts and nests.

4.2 Prior to any tree work all trees and the land around them must be checked for protected species by a suitably qualified and competent person. If protected species are identified all work must stop and the appropriate authority contacted e.g. Natural Resources Wales for further advice. Where bats or their roosts are present, no works shall take place unless a licence has been granted in accordance with the relevant legislation.

4.3 Where work has commenced and bats or any evidence that bats are using the site as a roost are found, work must cease and Natural Resources Wales (NRW) contacted immediately. NRW can be contacted at Ty Cambria, 29 Newport Road, Cardiff CF24 0TP. Tel. 0300 065 3000. Further advice can also be obtained from the Bat Conservation Trust, 5th Floor, Quadrant House, 250 Kennington Lane, London. SE11 5DR. Tel. 0345 130 0228.



IMAGE C: The trees looking south

5.0 BIBLIOGRAPHY

D. Lonsdale Principles of Tree Hazard & Management (1999)

N. Fay, D. Dowson & R. Helliwell Tree Surveys – A guide to good practice (2005)

C. Mattheck Field Guide to Visual Tree Assessment (2007)

British Standards Institution BS3998:2010 Tree Work – Recommendations

National Tree Safety Group Common Sense Risk Management of Trees (2011)

C. Mattheck The Body Language of Trees (2015)

D. Slater Assessment of Tree Forks. Assessment of junctions for risk management (2016)

S. Cox & P. Malarange Arboricultural Association Guidance Note 11 - Aerial inspections A guide to good practice (2017)

<https://treeterms.co.uk>

SITE AND AREA LOCATION PLAN - pre-development



APPENDIX 1: Replanting proposals

Proposed species:

Silver Birch / *Betula pendula*

Blackthorn / *Prunus spinosa*

Hazel / *Corylus avellana*

Holly / *Ilex aquifolium*

Hawthorn / *Crataegus monogyna*

Mixture and planting density: 20% of each species at 2 metre centres with the total number of trees dependent on the restricted planting area from the remaining tree stumps.

Seed source: Local provenance

Supplier: TBC

Planting method: Forestry type notch planting

Industry guidance:

BS3936-1:1992 Nursery Stock Part 1 Specification for trees and shrubs

BS8545:2014 Trees: from nursery to independence in the landscape

Post planting maintenance:

Watering, weeding, mulching, replacement of any failures.

TERMS & CONDITIONS

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