



Arboricultural Association

www.trees.org.uk

The industry standard for quality assured, compliant arboricultural contracting

ARB Approved Contractor Scheme



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ARB Approved Contractor Scheme

Arboricultural Association

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For nearly five decades the Arboricultural Association has been working with arborists to establish and improve the arboricultural industry. It has become the UK's largest professional home for arborists from every background: tree surgeons (contractors), local government tree managers, tree advisors (consultants) and those in training and education.

“ARB Approved”

Nearly 40 years ago the AA established its Approved Contractor scheme to set the standard for tree work – an industry not regulated by government but one that cares for the largest living organisms on the planet in some of the most hostile growing environments.

The Approved Contractor scheme has evolved over the years. The 2011 scheme is significant in that it incorporates a number of key changes including linking the standard to business size and dovetailing it to other health and safety schemes – making it more accessible and of more value to scheme members than ever before.

This information pack tells you about the 2011 ARB Approved Contractor scheme, how it works, what it costs, the benefits to you and a summary of the technical standards against which businesses are assessed. The full set of technical standards can be found on the Association's website www.trees.org.uk/find-a-professional/Become-an-ArbAC.

In addition to running the **ARB Approved Contractor** scheme the AA also offers

- career-linked **membership** at various grades to reflect the National Qualifications Framework
- access to **Chartered Environmentalist** status for arboriculturists who can demonstrate their commitment to working sustainably
- an accreditation scheme for tree advisors: the **AA Registered Consultant** scheme
- **training, events, conferences** and **shows** – in fact almost anything that helps it to

Set Standards

Promote Standards

 and

Enable Compliance

...in the arboricultural industry.

The main benefits of the ARB Approved Contractor scheme are shown opposite, and the benefits of AA membership are shown on page 19.



ARB Approved Contractor Scheme

Arboricultural Association ARB Approved Contractor Scheme

Information and Application Pack

The ARB Approved Contractor (ArbAC) scheme is the industry standard for quality assured, compliant arboricultural contracting.

Now providing more possibilities for more contractors than ever before, the scheme works for all sizes of business, from small operators working from a home office through mid-sized firms and up to large companies operating from multiple sites.

For more than four decades the Arboricultural Association (AA) has been setting the standard for arboricultural contracting in the UK – protecting trees, protecting people and enhancing the business opportunities for ArbACs. If you ...

- undertake good quality tree care
 - look after your customers
 - comply with modern health and safety requirements
 - work within the bounds of the law
- ... then the AA can offer you a tangible business advantage by awarding you ArbAC status.

The benefits to you are

- being able to charge a professional fee for a professional service
- access to select contracts
- Pre-Qualification Questionnaire (PQQ) points in some contracts
- a level playing field – compete with your contemporaries, not with the cowboys
- a focus for continuous improvement and investment
- access to financial discounts, especially insurance
- access to CHAS (Contractors Health and Safety Assessment Scheme)
- through CHAS accreditation, automatic exemption from the health and safety elements of other health and safety schemes – of particular value to arb contractors are **Constructionline**, **exor** and **SAFEcontractor**.
- the use of the prestigious ArbAC logo
- peace of mind, knowing you have achieved the industry standard
- member discount on AA training (even if not an AA member)
- a listing in the AA's online and hard copy Directories



The benefits to trees

Trees are living, dynamic organisms that need appropriate management and care to ensure their safety, longevity and continued contribution to the landscape.

The benefits to tree owners

Quality assured tree care services from contractors assessed and approved by the nation's largest representative arboricultural body bring security to tree owners and managers in an industry renowned for more than its fair share of unscrupulous contractors. Tree owners can rely on ArbACs for appropriate advice and services.

An achievable standard

The ArbAC scheme sets a standard that is achievable by all good tree work contractors. See our Frequently Asked Questions section (page 17) to de-bunk various myths about the scheme.

ARB Approved Contractor Scheme

SECTION 1: The ARB Approved Contractor scheme – a brief summary

An ArbAC is a business that has been assessed by the AA, has met and continues to uphold the AA's standards (both the ArbAC Standard relevant to the size of the business and the AA's Codes of Ethics and Professional Conduct), and has paid the appropriate annual scheme management fee.

Standards

The scheme Standards are described in section 2 (page 6). The Standards are broken down into four broad headings or modules, as follows:

Module 1: Site safety

Module 2: Finished work

Module 3: Office support

Module 4: Health and Safety

The content of each module varies according to the size of the business: the Standard for smaller businesses contains fewer criteria than the Standard for larger businesses. Further detail can be found in section 2. The scheme Standards do not include any assessment of 'reports' because the provision of advice or opinion (other than that involved in the preparation of quotations) is excluded from the ArbAC scheme.

Assessment

The assessment process is described in section 3 (page 8). Contractors achieving ArbAC status are reassessed regularly. The process and cost of assessment and reassessment are linked to business size. Further detail can be found in section 3.

Who can become an ArbAC? Are you eligible?

Most tree work businesses are eligible to apply for ArbAC status. You don't have to be big, you don't need specific qualifications and it doesn't cost the earth. In the following pages you will find the scheme rules and procedures. **If you have any questions or concerns please don't hesitate to contact us.**

ArbAC status is awarded to many different types and sizes of business undertaking tree work. To apply to become an ArbAC your business must meet *all* of the following criteria:

1. comprise a minimum of two people (which may be one person and a sub-contract labourer). There is no maximum size
2. undertake most of its work with its own staff (whether employed or self-employed). Note: subcontracting work to other businesses is acceptable so long as the majority of work is undertaken in house
3. have a competent Manager(s) (see Standards, page 6)
4. have appropriate insurance (see Standards, page 6)
5. have been trading for a minimum of two years

The underlying values of the scheme are:

- good quality tree care
- good customer care
- compliance with modern health and safety requirements
- compliance with the law

A great deal of importance is placed on the person (or persons) who control the tree work business ('the Manager(s)') whom the AA holds responsible for the control of all employed staff and subcontract labour, the control of subcontractors and the operation of the business in general.

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When you become an ArbAC

1. You will be promoted by the AA on its website www.trees.org.uk, in its hard copy Directory, its responses to customer enquiries and in the trade and general press through press releases and comment.
2. You will be permitted to use the prestigious ArbAC logo.
3. You will be promoted by many organisations and public bodies who recognise the significance of the Standard.

Are you ready?

Before you request an assessment, there are easy ways to find out if your business is ready:

- attend an ArbAC preparation workshop
- ask the AA for a pre-assessment visit

These options could help you find out more and may save you from the costs of a premature application. However, whilst strongly recommended, they are not obligatory and you can apply for assessment at any time.

Contact us for current 'lead in' periods for assessments.

Check out the AA's training and publications resources to help you meet the standard:
see centre of this booklet.

Key resources relevant to achieving ArbAC status have been highlighted.

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SECTION 2: The Standard

Insurance

Applicant businesses and ArbACs must hold as a minimum:

1. Public Liability £5 million (minimum) for each and every claim
2. Employers' Liability to an appropriate level commensurate with the size of the business



The type of cover in each area must be applicable to tree work business and must not include any unreasonable exclusion clauses (an unreasonable clause would be, for example, no work more than 15m above ground level, or no felling of trees greater than 20m in height etc.).

Manager(s) Criteria

3. No formal qualification is required but it is essential that the Manager(s) has arboricultural knowledge to at least NVQ level 2¹ and is capable of controlling a business and staff.
4. The Manager(s) should have at least five years' experience in arboricultural contracting.
5. The Manager(s) may be a sole trader, an employer, an employee, a partner or any combination.

Technical Standards Summary

A full schedule of the Technical Standards required can be found on the AA's website (see www.trees.org.uk/find-a-professional/Become-an-ArbAC). The following table is a summary outlining the areas included in the assessment, dependent on business size.

Module	Section	Business size up to 5 	Business size more than 5 	
Module 1 Site safety	1.1 On site operation	✓	✓	
Module 2 Finished work	2.1 Completed works (pruning & planting)	✓	✓	
	2.2 Arboricultural knowledge	✓	✓	
	2.3 Reference material	✓	✓	
Module 3 Office support	3.1 Customer care and office systems	Basic	✓	
		Detailed	✗	
	3.2 Insurances	✓	✓	
	3.3 Licences	✓	✓	
	3.4 Wildlife and ecology	✓	✓	
Module 4 Health and Safety	4.1 Health and safety management	Basic	✓	
		Detailed	✗	
	4.2 Health and safety communications and controls	✗	Up to 19 20+ & multi site ✓	
	4.3 Training and competence	✓	✓	
	4.4 Environmental policy	Basic	✓	✓
		Detailed	✗	✓
	4.5 Workshop	Basic	✓	✓
		Detailed	✗	✓
	4.6 Yard (if you have one)	Basic	✓	✓
Detailed		✗	✓	

¹ e.g. to a level of the RFS Certificate in Arboriculture or the ISA Certified Arborist – but no actual qualification is required

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The ArbAC scheme recognises that the requirements for health and safety management vary for different sizes of business. The AA requires all businesses, irrespective of size, to operate safely and within the law. Taking the health and safety policy as an example: for a business up to 5 people the requirements can be met with a basic policy (see website www.trees.org.uk/find-a-professional/Become-an-ArbAC for template examples), for those more than 5, a detailed policy will be required. Practical examples of how this works are provided in the box below.

As a consequence there are two different technical standards – one that applies to businesses up to 5 people and one that applies to businesses of more than 5 people. The table on page 6 highlights the difference between the two standards. To access the full detail of the technical standards see www.trees.org.uk/find-a-professional/Become-an-ArbAC. To see which set of standards applies to your business you need to determine your business size according to the following criteria.

Business size

Business size is determined by the number of people who work in your business, including yourself (the employer). Businesses are classed as either:

- (a) up to 5 people in the business, *or*
- (b) more than 5 people in the business (including larger businesses of 20+ and across multi-sites)

In working out your business size you need to add up the number of people working in the business, full time and part time, including:

- yourself (the employer)
- employed arborists
- self-employed labour-only arborists
- employed or self-employed administrators
- anyone else who is part of your business, e.g. mechanic, sawmill operator, timber truck driver
(Do not include people to whom you subcontract work such as other arboricultural businesses.)

Examples of how the standards differ for businesses up to 5 and businesses more than 5 (in all cases please see full details in the relevant standard)

Section 4.1 Health & Safety Management:

- **BASIC:** Basic level H&S documentation available to include policy, risk assessments, CoSHH assessments, training records etc. (see AA website for download documents) and a basic understanding of H&S legislation and employers duties.
- **DETAILED:** As 'BASIC' (above) plus an integrated H&S management system, including documented policies and procedures relevant to business size, client sectors and operational complexity. A nominated 'H&S competent person', can be the employer or manager, must have a good understanding of H&S legislation and the duties and responsibilities of employers, employees and sub-contractors.
NOTE: those businesses with more than 5 people, but less than (e.g.) 10, will not be expected to demonstrate the same level of H&S documentation and knowledge as those of larger sized businesses (e.g. 15 people).

Section 4.5 Workshop:

- **BASIC:** basic workshop facilities, i.e. domestic garage or container ('lock up'), to enable simple machinery and equipment repairs and maintenance to be undertaken. This will also include a check of fuel storage arrangements, i.e. combi-cans/jerry cans/fuel tank(s), as applicable, and a general premises check for safety and basic welfare arrangements.
- **DETAILED:** as 'BASIC' (above) plus a more appropriate workshop facility dependent upon business size, machinery and equipment levels. A more detailed premises check will be undertaken including fire precautions, signage and escape routes etc., electrical compliance certification (if appropriate) and adequate welfare facilities. Fuel storage arrangements will be checked including fire risk assessment and 'DSEAR' (Dangerous Substances and Explosive Atmospheres Regs.) assessment where applicable.
NOTE: those businesses with more than 5 people, but less than (e.g.) 10, will not be expected to have the same size/level of facility for machinery etc. maintenance and storage as that of a larger sized business (e.g. 15 people).

SECTION 3: Assessments

To become an ArbAC you will need to be assessed by the AA, and once you have achieved ArbAC status you will need to be reassessed regularly. Following your application we will:

- agree an assessment date with you
- send one or more² assessors to measure your compliance with the Standard

AA assessors are briefed to be friendly and helpful and will give detailed advice and guidance where required. The assessment process is not designed to catch you out but to be beneficial to you and your business – even if you don't become an ArbAC. Assessors may even provide advice on items that are not covered by the assessment criteria – either verbally on the day or as an advisory note in the written report – if they think this would be helpful to you. Even though this will not affect the assessment outcome the assessors are here to help you wherever they can.

The assessment criteria are broken down into modules. It is possible to assess all modules in one day or to spread the modules over 12 months. Spreading out the modules will increase the cost as multiple visits will be required.

In addition to ArbAC status, the AA is able to award CHAS (Contractors Health and Safety Assessment Scheme) registration. CHAS is established as the market leader for health and safety pre-qualification assessments in the UK. It is a non-commercial scheme available to suppliers and to buyers looking for suitably competent contractors. It is dedicated to completing health and safety pre-qualification assessments to a nationally recognised and accepted standard.

The ArbAC scheme is recognised as being CHAS compliant. That means that CHAS registration and accreditation are available to contractors who meet current ArbAC scheme standards. Applicants who are successful at their ArbAC assessment will automatically be registered with CHAS, and CHAS accreditation is achieved simply by paying an annual administration fee (directly to CHAS) with no further audit required. Maintenance of CHAS accreditation is automatically achieved by maintaining your ArbAC status and undertaking annual H&S audits with the AA by a combination of document submission and assessments – see 'The reassessment cycle', page 10.

The first assessment

After the AA receives an application and payment for an ArbAC assessment the procedure is as follows:

1. The application form (see centre pull-out) and associated documents will be reviewed.
2. The applicant's payment will be processed.
3. The applicant's insurance questionnaire (see centre pull-out) and policy will be assessed to ensure that they provide adequate and appropriate cover and do not include any unreasonable exclusion causes. Any inadequacies must be corrected before the application can proceed.
4. The applicant's references, ideally including at least one from a local authority, will be taken up.
5. An assessment date will be arranged to the mutual convenience of the applicant and the AA. It is advisable to expect the assessment date to be some six weeks from the date of application.
6. On the assessment day(s) the assessor(s) will measure compliance with the Standard. This will necessitate access to:
 - the applicant's office systems and paperwork
 - the applicant's stores, workshop and, if there is one, yard
 - sites of work completed by the applicant, including tree planting, crown reduction and crown thinning
 - work in progress at a 'live' site. This must include a demonstration of rigging competence (ideally as part of a sectional felling operation).

Working through the Standard will enable the arboricultural, business management and health and safety competencies of the Manager(s) to be assessed.

7. After the assessment day the AA will inform the contractor of the outcome of the assessment and subsequently issue a report to the applicant. In most instances this report will be issued within 14 days.

² Depending on the size of your business

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The outcome of first assessment

The following are the possible outcomes:

1. ArbAC status is awarded as a result of full compliance with the Standard and no further action is required.
2. Provisional ArbAC status is awarded as a result of minor non-compliance and a time period (usually 3 months) is given in which these minor issues are to be rectified.

In the case of full compliance and minor non-compliance the AA issues a certificate, Manager's identification card(s), sample vehicle livery and an electronic copy of the ArbAC logo (Collective Mark). In the case of minor non-compliance ArbAC status is temporary during the time period given for rectification. The status is either confirmed or expires depending on whether the minor non-compliance matters are rectified within the agreed timescale to the satisfaction of the AA.

3. ArbAC status is deferred because of non-compliance until compliance is demonstrated by either submission of documents or by a further assessment visit. If a further assessment visit is required it is normally restricted to the assessment of areas of the Standard where compliance has not been achieved.
4. ArbAC status is not awarded because of major non-compliance. A further assessment visit will be required, normally covering the full Standard.

Maintaining ArbAC status

Once ArbAC status has been attained, the process for maintaining it is as follows:



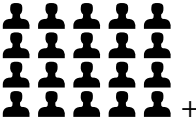

1. pay the annual scheme management fee when due and make the necessary submissions³
2. pay the relevant reassessment fees when due (see reassessment section page 10 and fee structure page 19)
3. maintain compliance with the Standards (see page 6)
4. pass the ArbAC reassessment.

³ Insurance documents, health and safety policy statement and declarations of compliance with scheme standards

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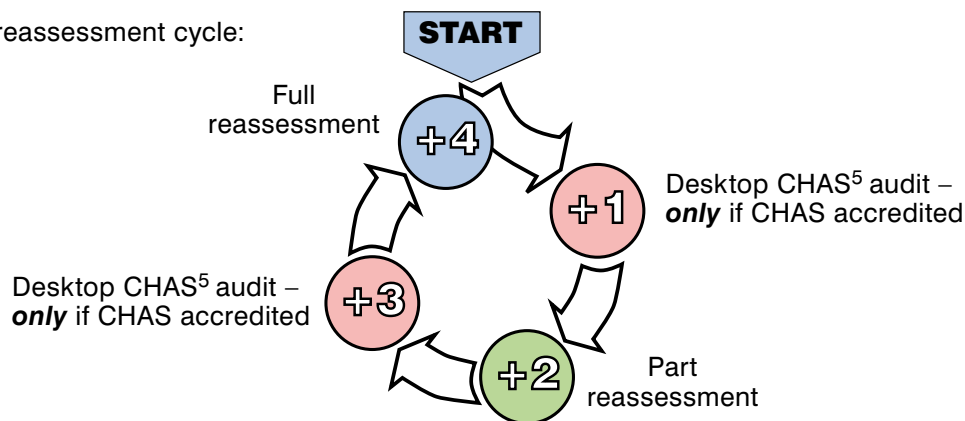
The reassessment cycle

In order to ensure the standards of ArbACs are maintained, ArbACs are reassessed on a regular cycle. The nature of the reassessment depends on the size of the business and whether it is registered with CHAS through the AA.

	Small business	Larger business (more than 5 people)		
Business size ⁴ and assessment type	up to 5 people 	more than 5, fewer than 20 	20 or more 	Multi-site 
To achieve ArbAC	Full criteria 1 assessor	Full criteria 2 assessors	Full criteria 3 assessors	Full criteria multi assessors
1 year on from achievement	Desktop CHAS assessment only if CHAS accredited through the AA			
2 years on from achievement	Part criteria 1 assessor*	Part criteria 1 assessor	Part criteria 2 assessors	Part criteria 2 assessors
3 years on from achievement	Desktop CHAS assessment only if CHAS accredited through the AA			
4 years on from achievement	Full criteria 1 assessor	Full criteria 2 assessors	Full criteria 3 assessors	Full criteria multi assessors

*This part-criteria assessment is not expected to take a full day

The four-year reassessment cycle:



The AA will arrange your reassessment dates in advance and these are normally non-negotiable, other than in exceptional circumstances.

Reassessment may be required before the dates determined by the above cycle. The grounds for an early reassessment are:

1. change in the Manager(s)⁶ will require a reassessment
2. change in business location⁷ will require a reassessment
3. an upheld complaint against the ArbAC may require reassessment, depending on the circumstances
4. changes of business ownership, business name or other significant change to the business that could affect client satisfaction may also trigger reassessment. The Scheme Manager will decide whether reassessment is required and may liaise with the Arboricultural Association's Professional Committee for guidance.

⁴ See Guidance in Section 2 (page 7).

⁵ If you choose to maintain CHAS registration/accreditation through the AA you will be required to undergo a desktop health and safety assessment at 1 year on and 3 years on from assessment.

⁶ If (a) the only Manager moves on or (b) if both of two Managers move on or (c) to add a Manager to the business

⁷ Any change that affects the operation of the business – such as stores, yard or depot. Movement of an administration base without moving operational areas will not normally require reassessment.

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If a reassessment is triggered by any of the above the ArbAC will be liable for reassessment fees. The fees will be charged at the day rate shown for Pre-assessment visits (see section on Fee Structure, page 18) and the number of days or part days will depend on the extent of the reassessment.

In addition to the above the AA reserves the right to reassess ArbACs for their compliance with the Standard at any time. No reassessment fee will be charged for reassessment in such circumstances.

The reassessment process

Four years on from the initial achievement of ArbAC status the cycle starts again. The reassessment process is the same as for the first assessment except:

1. no application form is required
2. you will be invoiced for your reassessment and your invoice must be paid prior to the reassessment
3. no insurance questionnaire needs to be completed (as the AA holds your insurance record on file and updates it annually)
4. references are not required
5. you will automatically be notified of the reassessment date well in advance

The outcome of reassessment

The following are the possible outcomes:

1. ArbAC status is maintained as a result of full compliance with the Standards
2. ArbAC status is maintained for a time period (usually 3–6 months) whilst issues of non-compliance are rectified. Failure to demonstrate that these areas have been rectified within the time period will result in ArbAC status being withdrawn. ArbAC status will only be reinstated when compliance with the Standard is demonstrated, either as a result of submission of evidence relating to non-compliant criteria or by a full reassessment, whichever is determined appropriate by the scheme manager.
3. ArbAC status is withdrawn because of major non-compliance. ArbAC status will only be reinstated when compliance with the Standard is demonstrated, either as a result of submission of evidence relating to non-compliant criteria or by a full reassessment, whichever is determined appropriate by the scheme manager.

SECTION 4: After first assessment or reassessment

What happens if approval is not granted?

1. At first assessment

The consequence of non-compliance depends on the degree of non-compliance:

- Minor non-compliance will result in provisional ArbAC status being granted for a limited period whilst evidence of compliance is submitted and approved.[†]
- Non-compliance will result in ArbAC status being deferred until evidence of compliance is submitted and approved[†] within a given time period.
- Major non-compliance will result in ArbAC status being withheld until an assessment at a later date[‡] proves compliance.

2. At reassessment

- Non-compliance will result in ArbAC status being maintained for a limited period whilst evidence of compliance is submitted and approved.[†]
- Major non-compliance will result in ArbAC status being withdrawn either immediately or at the end of the year, and it will not be reinstated until an assessment at a later date[‡] proves compliance.

In all the above circumstances it is the job of the ArbAC scheme lead assessor to determine the degree of seriousness of the non-compliance. The factors that will normally be used to determine this will be the impact of the non-compliance on safety, tree health and customer experience.

A right of appeal exists for applicants aggrieved at the decision. Appeals will be heard by the AA's Professional Committee. In exceptional circumstances the AA's Board of Directors may consider an appeal against the decision of Professional Committee.

[†] Evidence of compliance is normally submitted by post or email (e.g. supplying a copy of a NPTC certificate or a photograph of a more suitable oil storage facility). It does not normally require an assessor to visit the business.

[‡] Evidence of compliance can only be assessed by an assessor visiting the business.

When approval is granted

The AA will be keen to promote your ArbAC status as soon as it can. Upon payment of the appropriate proportion of the scheme management fee (see Fee Structure, page 18) the AA will add your business details to the AA website Directory within 14 days and to The ARB Directory (hard copy) at the time of next issue and will refer local clients to you when contacted.

Advertising in the web and ARB Directories in the region where the ArbAC business resides (the "main address") is included in the scheme management fee. Advertising in additional regions of the Directories is possible by the payment of the "additional region" fees (see Fee Structure, page 18). Additional region advertising will advertise the ArbAC name and main address. Additional addresses can be advertised in the Directories after a full or partial assessment (as necessary) at the additional address.

Complaints against ArbACs

Complaints will normally only be accepted from clients of the contractor. Complaints from non-clients will only be accepted at the discretion of the Chairman of the AA's Professional Committee.

If the complaint relates to standards of work this will normally be assessed by the ArbAC scheme manager or lead assessor(s) who will measure the ArbAC's work against

1. the Standard normally accepted for inclusion with in the scheme
2. the client's instructions and contractor's written specification
3. any applications, notifications, consents, licences and conditions under planning Acts or other relevant Acts or regulations.

Where it is considered that the work falls short of an acceptable standard the ArbAC will be required to rectify the work (if possible) and/or may be required to submit to reassessment within a reasonable time period. The scheme manager or lead assessor(s) may refer to Professional Committee for guidance.

If the complaint relates to an alleged breach(es) of the Code of Ethics and/or Code of Professional Conduct by a Manager(s) or someone under their control, the AA's procedure for assessing such breaches will be implemented as published on the AA's website.

Note: The AA cannot impose a financial penalty on the ArbAC but reserves the right to withdraw their status.

ARB accreditation 'opening new doors'

Steve Hewlett, Director of Steve's Industries Ltd, gives his perspective on becoming an Approved Contractor

We have recently passed the AAAC test, which has probably been my most difficult accreditation achievement since I've been in business. We are already approved with SAFE Contractor, Mainstay Contractor and ISO 9001.

My business started out as a few lawn-mowing jobs at the age of 14. As the business grew, so did my love for working with trees. With expansion came higher staff levels and greater responsibilities. Before I knew it, I was employing over 10 members of staff; this can be quite challenging, especially ensuring high levels of health and safety practice. Although I felt very confident that we worked safely and did a good job, I wanted to take my business to the next level.

In 2005 I approached the local council and asked to be added to the list of approved tree contractors, but they said that they were only adding AAACs. I phoned the AA and asked what this involved and was sent a long list of requirements. Although the list was very detailed and a lot of work had to be done, I felt there was a lot that we were already doing but that maybe needed to be more formalised.

In 2008 I decided it was a good time to go for AAAC accreditation. I was determined to succeed. It took a lot of late nights working on H&S policies, various forms and brushing up on my arb knowledge. I also had the support of all my staff, which was great, and they worked really hard to achieve the standards needed for accreditation. It meant a lot of additional training for us all in various aspects of our work, including using MEWPs and slinger-signaller, first aid, CS41, and using woodchippers, stump grinders and telescopic handlers. These items were not new to us, but I realised we needed to get the certificates to back this up.

We have two managers, to ensure a more even distribution of the workload. Adam Hayles has over 10 years' experience in tree work; he runs the daily work operations and quotes on most jobs.

AA Technical Officer Guy Watson came in for the day earlier this year to give us a run through the accreditation process. This was very useful. Guy left us with a long to-do list, but he was also very encouraging that we were compliant in

most areas. When it came to the day of our first test, we thought we'd got everything prepared. However, Paul Smith and Steve Coombs did manage to find some faults and partially failed us on the first attempt. We understood where we'd gone wrong and although we were disappointed we knew what we had to do. Unfortunately, there was a long three-month wait for our retest. This gave us plenty of time to get things right, and I'm glad to say we got there!

I can now say that our business is pretty well overhauled. We can do a good job for the customer (something we've always prided ourselves on), but we are also fully compliant with best practices, H&S and the law.

The AAAC is a well-recognised benchmark in tree work. It has only been a week since we passed and we're already opening new doors. It has also given the team an extra sense of pride and the knowledge that this achievement comes with a responsibility to keep the standard high and be the best. ■



Team from AAAC Steve's Industries carrying out roadside work.



Steve's Industries team. Left to right: Alistair Scriven, Adam Hayles, Scott Haynes, Tom Cox and Steve Hewlett.

Becoming an ARB Approved Contractor

I run a business called Broadleaf Tree Services based near Reigate in Surrey and I want to share my experiences of our recent journey to becoming an Arboricultural Association Approved Contractor.

We provide practical tree work services to private and commercial customers throughout Surrey and Sussex but were not really different enough to stand out from other companies operating locally. I have always been proud of our work standard and our ability to do what we do

in a very customer-orientated way, and so I decided to have a look at becoming an Approved Contractor; this could be one of the ingredients that would give local authorities and larger commercial clients greater confidence and help us to stand out from the crowd.

I began to form a sort of master plan a couple of years ago after reading articles by Paul Elcoat in the Association's newsletter. One article was about differentiation and how we all think that we will seem better than our competitors

by constantly striving to do better tree work whilst in reality it is giving appropriate attention to the hundreds of other things – like customer service, looking after all of the wildlife and ecological considerations, risk management and communication systems – that marks us out.

Of course reading the articles brought new things onto the agenda in our organisation but it also served to confirm ideas that I already had. I had been an instructor at Merrist Wood and so was well used to working within control systems that ensure things get done.

I asked Paul to come down and check us out to see if he thought we were anywhere near Approved Contractor standard and he spent the day listing the aspects that needed a bit of work. I thought that I had an eye for detail but I had never encountered anything like this before! The theory was that if we could spot absolutely everything that could possibly be picked up by the Association, we would have the ultimate 'to do' list. He said to me that if I could get



Crane and MEWP used to dismantle a Populus serotina, home to bats and with less than one-third residual wall, over a red route in London!

ARB Approved Contractor Scheme



Mark Hyland of Broadleaf training as part of Treevolution's modern rigging techniques programme.

to the point where I had everything crossed off the list, I would probably get through the AAAC assessment day with only minor observations.

The list took us about a year to bottom out to Mr E's satisfaction, which makes it sound like we had a lot to do but in reality this was the result of some unexpected things happening along the way.

The list is obviously comprised of physical things to do, such as 'make sure you put a spill kit in each vehicle', for example, and these tasks are easy to complete. The unseen part of Paul's strategy was how much I would come to understand about why the controls needed to be in place. Over the course of the year I have learned an enormous amount about risk, marketing, sales and customer service.

All of this focus on controls and getting things just right resulted in our impressing several agencies fairly quickly and so picking up some good work which

obviously delayed my ticking things off the list. This is no problem, I was told, as this is why we are doing all of this stuff in the first place – it's marketing!

I probably make it sound easy but I can tell you that it wasn't: it was hard work – early mornings, late nights, some people had to go and other people joined us. It has been a full-on 12 months. However, looking back now that we are through it, I didn't notice any recession and I feel really great about the organisation and our ability to cope with whatever comes next.

The assessment ranks as one of the best and one of the worst days ever. I was told it was going to be intense and that I would need to lie down in a darkened room afterwards but I didn't really believe it.

Paul Smith and Pete Best spent the day with us and they looked at and questioned everything to make sure that what they saw was not just a show for the day. A good

example would be that it is not good enough to have a health and safety policy: they opened the policy and said things like, 'I see it says here that you do this and that – can I see an example of that please.' If there is a gap they will find it; if there is a skeleton in the cupboard it will come tumbling out.

At times it was hard not to become defensive and I must admit to getting the hump at a couple of points during the inspection. If you can imagine someone as dead pan as Jack Dee asking you really difficult questions – that was what it was like.

The AAAC scheme picks up everything that must be in place and my plan is now to improve upon the systems. I want to achieve ISO9001 by the autumn and then ISO14001 by early 2010 as this will demonstrate our commitment to great systems and to environmental matters. ■

Matt Boast
Broadleaf Tree Services

Code of Ethics and Code of Professional Conduct

Code of Ethics

Every member shall uphold the integrity of the profession

Every member shall strive for increasing an objective knowledge of trees and of arboriculture in all their contexts and apply this knowledge to the benefit of society

Every member shall endeavour to promote public understanding of trees and arboriculture and to increase the public regard for the profession

Every member shall practise his or her profession with due regard to sound ecological, social, economic and environmental principles to the advantage of present and future generations

Every member shall perform only those services which are within the member's competence

Code of Professional Conduct

A member shall not voluntarily disclose any confidential information

Unless a member has previously obtained in writing the permission of the relevant client or employer, a member shall not be engaged by, not have an interest in nor accept remuneration from any other business or principals which may give rise to any conflict with the interests of the member's said client or employer

A member shall only act for more than one party in any transaction if all parties agree in advance in writing

A member acting for a client shall inform the client in advance in writing of any other interest the member may have in any activities undertaken on behalf of the client

A member shall not, by unfair or unprofessional means, do anything that could harm the business or prospects of a fellow member

A member shall not knowingly investigate the professional competence of another member without the knowledge of that member

A member shall be scrupulous in acknowledging the help obtained from others

A member shall ensure that advertisements and other public announcements placed or made by the member are fair and accurate and are not such as could reasonably be seen to bring the Association or the profession into disrepute

Advertisements and other public announcements relating to the scope or nature of the services to be provided by a member shall not contain any material which compares the member's services with the services offered or provided by any other member or members

The assistance of the Institute of Chartered Foresters in the development of these Codes is acknowledged and appreciated.

ARB Approved Contractor Scheme

FAQs and common misconceptions

- 1. Do I, or the business, have to be an AA member to become an ArbAC?**

No. You will receive many benefits from AA membership but membership is not an essential requirement.
- 2. How long does an ArbAC licence last?**

Four years, provided that you comply with the requirements of the scheme during that period (which include maintaining the Standard, paying an annual subscription, making annual paperwork submissions or declarations and being successful at a scaled-down interim assessment after two years).
- 3. What is checked at the interim assessments?**

Interim assessments (two years after full assessment) do not examine the full Standard but focus on health and safety compliance, worksite management and work (tree surgery) quality.
- 4. What qualifications do I need to become an ArbAC?**

None, but attainment of an arb specific qualification is encouraged. See further information in the section *Manager(s) Criteria*, page 6
- 5. Can an ArbAC use sub contractors?**

Yes, so long as the majority of the ArbAC's work is undertaken "in house"
- 6. Am I too small to be an ArbAC?**

The minimum size is two people (which may be one person and a sub-contract labourer).
- 7. I don't have a yard or workshop. Is this a problem?**

You do not have to have a yard or workshop. Some small businesses operate from a home-office with vehicles kept on the driveway and tools and equipment kept in the garage. This is perfectly acceptable.
- 8. Do I need NPTC CS41 (Undertake sectional felling operations involving the use of rigging equipment)?**

It depends what you do: the answer is yes if you undertake sectional felling operations involving the use of rigging equipment. It is unlikely that all operatives in the business will need this certificate of competence but at least one operative will need it.
- 9. Do I get CHAS⁸ accreditation with ArbAC?**

The health and safety elements of the ArbAC scheme are CHAS compliant. By becoming an ArbAC we will automatically register you with CHAS (unless you tell us not to). Thereafter, for a small administration fee, you can apply directly to CHAS for 'accreditation' status (no further assessment is required at this stage)
- 10. I am already CHAS accredited, will that affect my ArbAC assessment (can I omit the H&S parts of the assessment)?**

No, the AA still needs to satisfy itself that the business is H&S compliant and in an arboricultural context.
- 11. Can I object to a particular assessor undertaking the assessment?**

Yes, but you will have to explain your reasons. The Scheme Manager will look at your reasons and provided he considers them to be reasonable (normally a possible conflict of interest), alternative assessor(s) will be found. The Scheme Manager may refer to the AA Professional Committee for guidance.
- 12. If I am not successful at assessment can I appeal?**

A right of appeal exists for applicants aggrieved at the decision – see page 12 for further details. But do bear in mind that a full explanation of any areas found not compliant/competent will be provided by the Lead Assessor and advice will be offered on how best to rectify these.

⁸ The Contractors Health and Safety Assessment Scheme.

ARB Approved Contractor Scheme

Fee Structure (all plus VAT)

1. Pre-assessment visit by the AA (optional)

All businesses: £495 per day

2. Assessment and Reassessment fees

Business size ⁹ and assessment type	Small business		Larger business	
	1–5 people	6–19 people	20 or more people	Multi-site
Assessment prior to achieving ArbAC status (including CHAS registration)	£495	£995	£1,495	TBA, usually £995 or £1,495* + £595 per additional site
1 year on from achievement (only if CHAS accredited)	£75	£140	£160	TBA, usually £140 or £160* + £75 per additional site
2 years on from achievement (including CHAS re-registration)	£345	£595	£1,095	TBA, usually £595 or £1,095* + £495 per additional site
3 years on from achievement (only if CHAS accredited)	£75	£140	£160	TBA, usually £140 or £160* + £75 per additional site
4 years on from achievement (including CHAS re-registration)	£495	£995	£1,495	TBA, usually £995 or £1,495* + £595 per additional site

* Dependent on whether the main site is under 20 people or 20+ people.

Notes

- These fees are for your assessment, advice, verbal feedback and written report. Once the standard has been met
 - the scheme management fee (see 3 below), becomes payable, initially pro-rata
 - if you wish to upgrade your CHAS registration (automatically included with ArbAC status) to CHAS accreditation a fee is payable direct to CHAS¹¹
- The fees shown cover one day of assessment with one, two or three assessors, dependent on the business size (2–5, 6–19 and 20+ people respectively). Fees for multi-site businesses will vary according to size and the number of sites.
- It is possible to complete the full assessment (all four modules) in one day. Applicants may, however, choose to spread modules across two or more days. The fees shown will be applicable for each day of assessment.
- To help small businesses where, for example, the main manager is also the main climber, the AA can offer to undertake the assessment over two consecutive days with a reduced daily fee for the second day of £295.
- If the outcome of an assessment is non-compliance further assessment will be required. The type of further assessment will depend on the degree of non-compliance (see section 4, page 12) and will be either:
 - submission of evidence of compliance by post or email, when a charge of £90 will apply,
 - or
 - revisit of assessor(s) when a charge of £495 per assessor per day will apply.

3. Annual scheme management fee

Business size ¹⁰ and assessment type	Small business		Larger business	
	1–5 people	6–19 people	20 or more people	Multi-site
Scheme management fee (includes advert in one Directory region)	£260	£460	£660	TBA, usually £460 or £660* + £260 or £460* per additional site
Entry in additional Directory regions, per region	£60	£75	£100	

* Dependent on whether the main site is under 20 people or 20+ people.

Note: The above subscription fees are for 12 months. A pro-rata amount will be due following initial approval (e.g. if your initial approval is in September the subscription amount will be 4/12ths of the amount shown).

⁹ See guidance in section 2.

¹⁰ See guidance in section 2.

¹¹ This fee is set by CHAS and at the time of going to print is £60.

The Arboricultural Association

As well as running the ARB Approved Contractor scheme the AA is central to the arboricultural industry. The AA is

A Membership organisation

- For the trade
- For the profession
- With grades suitable for every position in the industry



A publishing organisation

- The ARB Magazine: industry news, events, science and opinion
- The scientific peer-reviewed Arboricultural Journal
- Technical guides, books and information leaflets



A Representative body

- Representing the needs of industry to government and other regulators
- Representing the needs of society and its reliance on trees



A training organisation

- Short courses for specialist arboricultural issues
- Industry accredited training courses
- Technical advisor for academic arboricultural qualifications
- Technical conferences for utility and amenity arboriculture



An awarding body

- for AA Registered Consultant status
- for ARB Approved Contractor status
- for Chartered Environmentalist status, under licence from the Society for the Environment



Why Join the Arb Association?

Save money

with the AA Membership Benefits Scheme¹ on AA training and up to 20% on trade supplies



Stay ahead

with the information in The ARB Magazine: the AA's member only publication (formerly the AA Newsletter) and the Arboricultural Journal¹



Receive Professional Recognition

through our progressive membership grade structure

[Your Name] TechArborA [Your Name] MArborA [Your Name] FArborA

Enter the **Arb Show** free¹

[Entry fee refunded if you join at the Show]



Broaden your horizons

and **contribute** to the development of worldwide arboriculture



¹ The AA Membership Benefit Scheme, free Trade Fair entry and the Journal are not available to members at Ordinary or Retired Fellow grades.

See also the benefits of becoming an ARB Approved Contractor on page 3.



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