



FEATURE 13, Spring 2008

AA Utility Arboriculture Group Quarterly Update

Developments and Growth

By Nick Eden and Pete Jackson

Core Group Expansion

The AA's Utility Arboriculture Group started in late 2004 and has grown in number and industry recognition. The UAG now has direct contact with the Energy Networks Association (ENA) and through this contact has had significant input into the new draft of G55/1. Through the core group and its members the UAG is recognised by the HSE, AFAG, NJUG, ENA and Network Rail.

The UAG's purpose is "to champion the development and maintenance of a safe and sustainable utility arboriculture industry through the establishment of unified and nationally recognised tree care and safety standards accepted by all stakeholders. It is to be outward looking and strives to serve the wider public benefit...". The impetus for the formation of the UAG came from a small handful of major utility arboriculture contractors, notably BTS Group, fountains and UPM Tilhill. Distribution Network Operators (DNOs) and other potential stakeholders were not initially invited to the Core Group to give the utility contracting fraternity some space to see if they could actually work together (in almost every other circumstance they are competitors) – and it worked – hence the time has come to broaden the base of the Core Group

The expansion of the Core Group was discussed by the Group at great length in September and again in December (as detailed in the meeting minutes available on the AA web site).

It was finally proposed, subject to AA Board approval, that the CG would be made up of the following groups and seats made available as follows:

- 4 Utility Contractors (suggested at least 1 small, 1 medium and 1 large)
- 4 Employers (suggested as DNO 2, DNO with In-House Teams 1, Rail 1)
- 1 Consultant
- 1 Training and Certification
- 1 Supplier
- 1 AA

It is suggested that this revision would provide a representative structure, more able to act on behalf of the utility arboriculture industry.

Secretarial Support

Secretarial support to the UAG has been provided by Halley McCallum (BTS Group) but with an expanding Core Group and broadening interests represented it was recognised that an independent secretarial service was required. It was decided that this will be provided by the AA but that it needs to be

funded. It was then proposed that funds could be raised by offering a new option to AA members; that of 'UAG Full Member' for a small subscription surcharge (free for 2008 and to be levied from 1 January 2009 onwards). Election to UAG Core Group would remain open to any Full UAG member and Virtual Group membership would be open to anyone, AA member or not.

UAG Membership Status	AA Membership required?	Cost	Benefit	
			Information ¹	Vote/View ²
Virtual Group Member	No	Nil	Yes	No
Full Member	Yes	AA + £9	Yes	Yes
Core Group Member	Yes	AA + £9	Yes	Yes

This proposal will be presented to the AA's Board and subsequently put to the AA's membership at its AGM on 15 September 2008. The surcharge of £9 is indicative only.

Virtual Group members are therefore invited to

1. Identify if they wish to be Full Members (free for 2008 but in 2009 it will be a requirement to be an AA member [starting for as little as £24 for student membership] and pay a UAG subscription surcharge of around £9) or remain Virtual Group Members only (free)
2. Forward nominations for election to the new expanded Core Group.

Responses on both these issues should be sent to the AA at admin@trees.org.uk, tel 01794 368717, fax 01794 368978 or by post to Ampfield House.

AA Board Membership

UAG Core Group Chairman Paul Hornby was co-opted to the AA Board at its November meeting – further positioning utility arboriculture within the AA as a significant force to achieve its purpose.

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¹ Minutes of UAG Core Group meetings, details of consultations and current issues

² Vote on nominees for Core Group membership and other significant issues, views invited on consultations and collated by the Core Group