



FEATURE 2, JUNE 2005

AA Utility Arboriculture Group Quarterly Update

Article by Peter Neighbour, fountains plc.

The UAG has now held its second meeting. A copy the group's terms of reference, which were ratified by the AA's professional committee on 7 April, are available from the secretary Halley McCallum (halm@btsgroupuk.com) or the AA website (www.trees.org.uk go to News go to Utility Arboriculture Group). The terms of reference outline the aim of the group and the following three key goals have been identified:

1. Unification of utility arboricultural contractors
2. Unification of clients' tree care and safety standards
3. Unification of the sector's training and accreditation schemes.

Progress towards achieving these goals will be reported upon in future Newsletters.

It was agreed that the membership of the core group should be broadened to include a representative from a medium sized as well as a small sized contractor. Nominations for these two vacancies are invited via the group secretary in the first instance. As mentioned in Newsletter 128 March 2005, a key element of the UAG is the establishment of a virtual group. Membership of this is open to all via email and, as well as receiving regular updates and copies of minutes of meetings, this will also provide the forum for debate and discussion among the wider membership. If you are interested in participating in this wider group, please email the secretary Halley McCallum as above.

Core group members have agreed to champion specific topics which will feature regularly in future meetings. The initial topics and champions are:

- Safety – Peter Neighbour (fountains plc)
- Training – Simon Richmond (Lantra Awards)
- Communication – Halley McCallum (BTS Group)
- Arboriculture – Gary Scammell (AA Professional Committee and Portsmouth Council)

On the safety theme we want to encourage a wider sharing of incidents and accidents as well as best practice. All members are encouraged to report incidents and accidents together with any lessons learned to the UAG. Wider discussion and dissemination will be via the virtual group and the AA Newsletter. Incidents should be reported anonymously but with sufficient detail for others to understand the root causes and the lessons to be learnt. Anyone interested in participating in this initiative should forward details of relevant incidents by email to Peter Neighbour at peter.neighbour@fountainsplc.com. Clearly the more people that are prepared to participate in this, the more effective it will be. Safety is a crucial issue for our industry and a sharing of knowledge and experience has proved invaluable in other hazardous industries. Safety issues cover all aspects of the workplace and are not just tree related.

Lantra Awards have now completed both their initial review of the proposed standardised training material and course content for the five Utility Arboricultural Units, and completed a wider consultation which closed on 13th May. The UAG were pleased to support the review and consultation which was mailed to known stakeholders and appeared on the Lantra Awards website www.lantra-awards.co.uk and as a link from the AA website Utility Arboriculture page. Lantra Awards are now considering the consultation responses and will report to the next meeting of the UAG on 29th June.

As in previous years the UAG will have a full programme at the forthcoming AA National Arboriculture Conference (19 – 21 September University of Exeter) including an introduction to the UAG by its Chairman, George McRobbie. There will also be a presentation by core group member Simon Richmond on Lantra Awards' proposed UA training courses. Everyone is encouraged to attend and participate at the conference to ensure the continued success of this vital part of our industry. We hope to see more of our utility customers present and we must all do what we can to ensure their attendance.

The full list of core group members and their contact details are:

George McRobbie (Chairman)	-	george.mcrobbie@upm-kymmene.com
Halley McCallum (Secretary)	-	halm@btsgroupuk.com
Peter Neighbour	-	peter.neighbour@fountainsplc.com
Simon Richmond	-	simon.richmond@lantra.co.uk
Paul Hornby	-	paul@aus.co.uk
Gary Scammell	-	gary@gandt.uk.com

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