



FEATURE 8, DECEMBER 2006

AA Utility Arboriculture Group Quarterly Update

By Paul Hornby, AUS
Chairman UAG

As of late the energies of the Utility Arboriculture Group's core group have been concentrated on the two main areas of concern - engagement with the Energy Networks Association (ENA) and the thorny issue of G55/1 (*Electricity Association Engineering Recommendation G55/1 Safe Tree Working in Proximity to Overhead Electric Lines*) and the re-certification of the NPTC units.

It is essential that the utility arboriculture industry has a professional, clear and unified voice in all debate that affects the industry. To enable us to do this we must be credible in the eyes of those with whom we seek to engage in discussion.

It is therefore with some pleasure that I can report progress on both issues.

ENA

During September 2006 members of the core group have attended 2 separate meetings with the ENA. The first of these was with SG19, a committee formed by the ENA to look at ETR 136 – *Engineering Technical Report 136, Vegetation Management near Electricity Apparatus – Principles of Good Practice*.

During September 2006 the core group members were afforded the opportunity to introduce themselves and the UAG to members of SG19 who were initially unaware of our activities. Once the aims and objectives of the UAG were explained it was soon apparent that we could be of some assistance in drawing up this document. I am hopeful we will be asked to contribute as the 'voice of the industry' in any future work on the document.

The second meeting with the ENA occurred at their London headquarters and the was attended by both representatives of the UAG and NPTC. This particular meeting was with a committee charged with looking at G55/1. Again we were given the opportunity to introduce the UAG and in the following discussion we were able to establish that we had a lot of common ground and a huge untapped resource of knowledge and experience in the utility arborists' side of the industry.

The main outcome of the meeting was that the UAG has been asked to present the arboriculture industry's view on G55/1 and its proposals for re-certification. This is a huge leap forward and represents

a chance for arboriculturists to participate as partners in the review of this fundamental standard and also to involve the ENA in its review of the industry's training and accreditation.

NPTC/ Re-Certification

One of the most pressing concerns of the industry has been the re-certification of the NPTC units. Over the last few months the UAG has been in close discussions with NPTC in order to find a way forward. I can report progress has been made and having resolved the issues between it and the NPTC the UAG is happy to support the NPTC as the industry's certificating body. Having now found common purpose we have collectively moved to initiate a temporary auditing procedure as a stop gap until such times as the NPTC certificates are revised.

The auditing procedure will be site based and it is hoped that the backlog of operators with out of date certificates can be seriously addressed as soon as possible after its launch on 1st January 2007. We then hope to move on to a revision of the NPTC units them selves – a process that is inexorably bound up in G55/1 and any revision of that document. Through this process the opinions and thoughts of the wider industry are most important and I would urge you to participate fully by responding to information distributed to the virtual group.

40th National Arboriculture Conference

This year saw the Conference being held at the University of York from 1st to 4th of October. As has become usual over the last few years a dedicated Utility Arboriculture section featured as part of the overall event. This specialist part of the conference has grown steadily and this year featured its biggest array of Utility centred conference presentations and outside events. The indoor presentations included cutting edge topics such as climate change, suspension trauma, arb skills and techniques as well as manufacturers presenting the latest in rechargeable site lighting, insulated hydraulic tooling and chainsaw protection.

The UAG was well represented and started proceedings with a session outlining its role and function, book ending the day with a real time meeting of the virtual group. This session was particularly lively and featured debate from a cross section of members which included strong Distribution Network Operator representation.

To complement the inside programme a full day of outside events was presented, always well attended and this year was no exception with full use being made of the University's excellent gardens and trees. The weather was particularly kind and helped swell the audience for the competitions and a demonstration of chainsaw sculpture by Pete Bowsher of Tilhill.

Those making their way to the competition site were able to see at close hand exactly what Utility Arb was all about, the skills and safety standard ably demonstrated in the two competitions on offer.

The Tilhill Safety Challenge was taken up by record number of entrants all attempting to spot the deliberate safety errors introduced in four realistically portrayed work sites. The eventual winner of the £500 prize was Kevin Moore.

INSERT PIC – DSCF0055 “Kevin Moore receives his trophy and cash reward from Pete Jackson of competition sponsors Tilhill.”

Benefiting from a superbly built 2 span section of overhead line by NEDL the 7th AUS Utility Skills Competition was very closely contended by 10 teams from across the UK. Again standards were set even higher in this supreme test of the utility arborists' skills. The eventual winners were Tilhill B – Andy Huggins, Jamie Waite and Steve Toase closely followed by fountains C and Tilhill A. The magnificent

prizes were donated by fountains plc. The expert team of judges lead by Bill Kew-Winder were Kevin Wholey, Jason Dunn, John Dixon and Tony Parsons.

INSERT PIC – DSCF0064 “Tilhill B being presented with their trophy by Paul Hornby of competition sponsors AUS Ltd.”

All in all Utility Tuesday was a great success; I trust I can look forward to seeing you all next year.

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