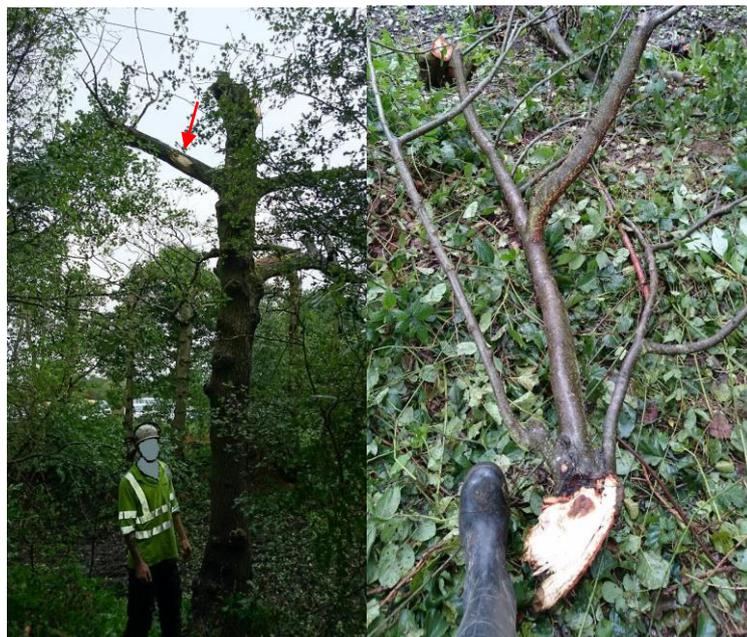


Safety Bulletin



NEAR MISS - FALL FROM HEIGHT

A utility arborist had completed the reduction and side pruning of a mature Alder. He had been attached to an anchor point high on the tree's stem and used strops for a second attachments when moving and completing the pruning. He decided to reposition his main anchor to a lower branch to descend the last 3.5m and ensure a safer landing area. A 100mm diameter branch attached to main branch was selected and he attached his climbing line and removed his secondary attachment. He started to descend in a vertical position using a friction knot when the anchor branch stripped away from the larger branch it was attached to. He dropped 2m to the ground and landed safely on two feet. The assessment of the anchor branch's union had not spotted weaknesses and included bark caused from old pruning cuts. It was only luck that allowed him to land safely and avoid what could have been a very serious injury.



The Learning

Best practice requires that:

Anchors and anchor points must be:

'Selected judiciously based on a thorough understanding of the structure of the tree to which the attachment is to be made'

'All anchor points should be capable of supporting and withstanding, with an appropriate margin of safety, any foreseeable loading within the context of their correct use'

'The choice of anchor involves assessing its strength and suitability in relation to its intended purpose. Anchor points must be selected and assessed with care'



Assessing any anchor point is a safety critical process. It cannot be rushed or assumptions made. Being close to the ground should make no difference.

The main tree stem can and should provide an excellent permanent anchor. Assessing branch strengths can be challenging especially when a tree has been pruned on many occasions. Previous utility arboriculture activities can influence the strength and stability of tree stems and branches. Always be vigilant and thorough.

Removing trees where possible can have many benefits.

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