

# CHECKLIST FOR CHOOSING A TREWORK CONTRACTOR

Do some research first and find out:

- What do you want to do?
- Why do you want to do it?
- Will you need a faculty?
- Are the trees covered by a Tree Preservation order or are they within a Conservation Area? (Do you know the difference)
  - If you are unsure of any of the above ask the Tree Officer of your council or ask an Arboricultural Consultant. Your council will be able to direct you to a Local Consultant. He will be able to make the application to the council if you need permission to carry out the work and he will advise you on the best practices to follow. **Carrying out work on a protected tree without permission can be a criminal offence and prosecution would be both against the client and the contractor.** Fines can be significant as can reputational loss.
  - Make sure that you have a defined objective for your contractor. This will be set out by your consultant or by the Local Council when the Tree Officer gave the planning permission. The contractor may wish to see the permission notice or will check it with the council. Defining the work will also help you think through the stages of the work and the capabilities needed by the contractor.
  - Avoid saying something to the contractor like *fell the trees*. He will price the work according to your instructions. A more useful definition of the work might be: *Fell the six marked trees to ground level and poison the stumps in a safe and correct manner. All timber and debris to be removed and the site to be left tidy and with minimal ground damage.*
  - By all means ask the contractor for his views but remember he is paid when he cuts trees or climbs not when he gives advice. The situation is like asking your local garage if your car sounds OK...there will always be something that needs fixing.

There are two types of contractors:

Those with formal accreditation. They will have submitted themselves for examination by a third party who will have looked through their procedures, visited their premises, checked their insurance and kit and charged them an annual membership and inspection fee. Contractors working on larger projects for commercial firms such as builders and developers may follow this route and may be more expensive than smaller firms who are not accredited. Perhaps 5% of Tree Care companies come into this category. Using this type of contractor will save you time and worry but may mean that your contractor is not local to your town or village.

Those without a formal accreditation. They will tend to be smaller firms with a staff head count of less than three and may well do most of their work in the domestic rather than commercial sector and aim to work within 20 miles of their yard or home base. Many of these firms follow good safety rules, have the right kit and a good reputation. You will have to ask searching questions of them and they will be aware of the need for accurate answers.

The kind of questions are as follows:

1. How long have they been in business, who does their Public Liability Insurance and what is the financial limit on claims? £5-10m is normal.
2. What sort of equipment do they have and if they were working at Height would they climb on ropes or use a Mobile Elevated Work Platform (MEWP). Do they have one or do they hire one. They may carry a short ladder *but free climbing without a rope is not best practice*. If they have a website this will answer some of your questions.
3. How many working staff do they have? A tree Gang is always more than one person and often more than two for good safety reasons. Are their climbers and chainsaw users certificated? Some small firms will augment their team with trained subcontractors on big jobs. If there is a climbing job involved two climbers will be required. (One to act as the rescue man in emergencies...both will be certified to operate as a rescue climber)
4. How long will the job take and will they let you have a risk assessment prior to start. The best practice is to do a risk assessment on paper before they start. It makes you think through the job rather than plunging in at the deep end.
5. What will the job cost and will the bill include VAT. If the firm does not charge VAT that suggests that they may be small or not everything is going through the books.
6. Ask them to look at the job and then email you a quotation within 5 days. Explain that you will advise if they have got the job AND if they have not. Explain your payment terms, (cheque or BACS rather than cash.) Payment should never be before a job and ideally within 7 to 30 days of completion

#### **Some Do's and Don'ts**

1. Do get prices from two or three contractors if the price bracket feels over £500. If less than £500 one quote may do. Good contractors don't want to waste time doing tenders for little jobs
2. Do ask for a Day work price (a price per hour for each man and equipment) so extra work cost can be anticipated and allowed for.
3. Do check that the contractor will remove all the lop and top and chip and remove the debris (unless the wood is good firewood and it can be cut, split, dried and used). If the firewood is to be left on site for church use agree where it will be left and in what lengths. Asking a Treecare contractor to cut up the wood into log lengths and get it split will be expensive.
4. Do take photos of the site prior to start and after finish (the contractor may do so)
5. Do try and make tea and toilets available
6. Don't leave the site unattended. If you have to, leave a mobile number so you can be reached.
7. Don't deal with contractors who turn up suggesting they can help *because they are in the area*
8. Don't deal with people with no signage or landline phone number on their van/lorry.
9. Don't add *while you are here items* on during the work. You will have an argument about charges at the end of the job.
10. Don't ignore the contractors safety requirements/notices/tapes etc. He will have experience and good reasons for taking safety precautions.

**IF YOU WANT MORE HELP OR GUIDENCE PLEASE CONTACT KEN LINFORD ON  
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