

RICS Practice Standards, UK

Valuation of trees for amenity and related non-timber uses

1st edition, guidance note



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The valuation of trees for amenity and related non-timber uses

RICS guidance note

1st edition

Published by the Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors (RICS)

Surveyor Court

Westwood Business Park

Coventry CV4 8JE

UK

www.ricsbooks.com

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Produced by the Rural Professional Group of the Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors.

ISBN 978 1 84219 586 4

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Typeset by Columns Design Ltd, Reading, Berks

Printed by Annodata Print Services, Dunstable, Beds

Contents

RICS guidance notes	1
1 Scope	2
2 Introduction	2
3 Background and preliminaries	3
4 Valuation basis	4
5 Establishing the facts	5
6 Valuation methods	6
7 Arriving at a view	11
8 Reporting the valuation	12
9 Conclusion	12

Acknowledgments

This guidance note was produced by the RICS Rural Professional Group. RICS would like to express sincere thanks to the following for their contributions to the publication:

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RICS guidance notes

This is an RICS guidance note. It provides advice to members of RICS on aspects of the profession. Where procedures are recommended for specific professional tasks, these are intended to embody 'best practice', that is, procedures which in the opinion of RICS meet a high standard of professional competence.

Members are not required to follow the advice and recommendations contained in this guidance note. They should, however, note the following points.

When an allegation of professional negligence is made against a surveyor, the court is likely to take account of the contents of any relevant guidance notes published by RICS in deciding whether or not the surveyor has acted with reasonable competence.

In the opinion of RICS, a member conforming to the practices recommended in this guidance note should have at least a partial defence to an allegation of negligence by virtue of having followed those practices. However, members have the responsibility of deciding when it is appropriate to follow the guidance. If it is followed in an inappropriate case, the member will not be exonerated merely because the recommendations were found in an RICS guidance note.

On the other hand, it does not follow that a member will be adjudged negligent if he or she has not followed the practices recommended in this guidance note. It is for each individual chartered surveyor to decide on the appropriate procedure to follow in any professional task. However, where members depart from the good practice recommended in this guidance note, they should do so only for good reason. In the event of litigation, the court may require them to explain why they decided not to adopt the recommended practice.

In addition, guidance notes are relevant to professional competence in that each surveyor should be up to date and should have informed him or herself of guidance notes within a reasonable time of their promulgation.

1 Scope

- 1.1 The aim of this guidance note is to assist the valuer in addressing some of the more complex issues which might arise when dealing with the presence of significant trees or groups of trees – either as part of a property or as separate entities.
- 1.2 This guidance note has application only in the United Kingdom.
- 1.3 Terms that appear in *italic* font are ‘defined terms’ in the RICS *Red Book*.

2 Introduction

- 2.1 The valuer may need to reflect the presence and impact of trees in valuations of real property required for almost any purpose, and from time to time may also be called upon to place an opinion of value or worth on one or more trees as an identifiably separate asset. A number of methods have been developed, principally by arboriculturists and landscape appraisers for application in specific circumstances, and this guidance note discusses their relationship to generally accepted standards for the valuation of real property.
- 2.2 The guidance does not cover the assessment of the timber value of trees – either in standing or felled form, raw or processed – as this topic is considered to be adequately covered in a number of existing publications and is an area well understood by chartered surveyors who practise in forestry. It may sometimes be difficult to distinguish a valuation of trees for their timber from their valuation for amenity and other non-timber uses, and in practice the two types of valuation may need to be considered alongside each other. For example, a small block of potentially valuable timber on a rural estate may be a wood that adds considerably to the amenity and sporting value of the estate, while having considerable value as timber in its own right. In a case like this a number of approaches may need to be considered in building up a soundly-based valuation. Particular care may be needed to avoid ‘double-counting’ the value of the trees, for example, by regarding them as a valuable timber asset and an important amenity asset if the one use could only be exploited at the expense of the other. It will be for the valuer to choose which is the most appropriate approach, or combination, in the light of the physical circumstances, economic conditions and the purpose for which the valuation is required.
- 2.3 The guidance is not, however, limited in its application to individual trees. The principal value associated with small groups of trees in urban or rural settings will often derive from their landscape and amenity value, and in more open and rural areas this principle might extend to large groups of trees. It is not, therefore, appropriate to place a ceiling on the number or area of trees to which this note applies. This will again be a matter for the valuer to judge in the physical circumstances and economic conditions of the instruction, and with regard to the purpose for which the valuation or appraisal is required.
- 2.4 This guidance note has been prepared with regard to valuation practice in the United Kingdom. It is acknowledged that there is a wider worldwide interest in the valuation of trees, and the information may therefore be of some interest to valuers practising in other countries. Practice varies from one legal jurisdiction