

Tree Martin Management Plan

Strategic Alignment - Our Environment

Public

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City Planning, Development
and Business Affairs
Committee

Program Contact:

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Approving Officer:

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report presents the Tree Martin Management Plan (**Attachment A**) as part of a two-phase response to Tree Martin management:

- Phase 1 – A coordinated approach to community amenity, public safety, business vitality and the welfare of wildlife for the 2025-26 roosting season (operational response).
- Phase 2 – A Tree Martin Management Plan that looks at operational, medium and longer-term strategies for managing the annual Tree Martin roosting season.

Phase 1 – 2025-26 operational response, is the subject of a separate report in this Agenda (Item 7.1).

Tree Martins (*Petrochelidon nigricans*) are a “protected animal” under the *National Parks and Wildlife Act 1972* (SA), and under this legislation a person must not interfere with, harass or molest a protected animal unless they act in pursuance of a legislative provision or a permit granted by the Minister for Climate, Environment and Water or their delegate. Similarly, the *Animal Welfare Act 1985* (SA) requires that all reasonable measures are taken to prevent unnecessary harm, injury, or distress to wildlife.

This legislative structure places obligations on the City of Adelaide to avoid harming Tree Martins when they roost in the public realm managed by Council, and the City of Adelaide must also ensure that public health obligations included in the *South Australian Public Health Act 2011* (SA) are upheld and public amenity in retail and hospitality precincts is supported.

The Tree Martin Management Plan (the Management Plan) has been developed within this regulatory context by the City of Adelaide with the support of wildlife management specialists Avisure Consulting (with initial scoping contributions from Ecosure Environmental Consultancy).

2025-26 represents the first year where a daily and comprehensive Tree Martin count and operational response was in place, in effect representing a base year data collection. The findings and recommendations contained in the Management Plan are informed by the monitoring data, stakeholder engagement, incident records, mitigation effectiveness assessments, and operational experience accumulated during the 2025–26 roosting season at Rundle Mall.

The Management Plan has been prepared to provide the City of Adelaide with an overarching strategic framework for the ongoing and coordinated management of Tree Martins roosting across its local government area.

A central feature of the Management Plan is a structured Decision Support Framework, including a Primary Decision Tree and Roost Assessment Matrix designed to guide consistent, transparent and evidence-based responses to Tree Martin roosting activity wherever it occurs across the City of Adelaide.

At the time of writing, the majority of the Tree Martin population that peaked at 20,540 had migrated. There does however remain a small population of up to 1,500 birds roosting in Rundle Mall. While migration was anticipated by end of May 2026, higher minimum temperatures compared with 2025 delayed this and may be a contributing factor to a small number of birds still roosting. Advice from DEW is that it is not possible to conduct dispersal of the Tree Martins while they are roosting.

It is not proposed to net trees in Rundle Mall for the 2026/27 season but continue the operational responses currently in place. Minimum intervention and / or in-situ management is the recommended approach to all Tree Martin management issues in the City of Adelaide, except in cases of high human/Tree Martin conflict, where roosts become established in proximity to food and beverage businesses or other sensitive sites where public health must be prioritised. Communications will be sent to Rundle Mall businesses to advise them of the planned approach for the 2026-27 season.

It is not proposed to make changes to netting in Leigh Street. Tree netting in Leigh Street will remain in place on the basis of public health issues in a high food and beverage environment. Replacement of nets with wildlife friendly netting is being scheduled for the end of seasonal winter leaf fall. Communications will be sent to businesses in Leigh Street prior to the works commencing.

RECOMMENDATION

The following recommendation will be presented to Council on 11 August 2026 for consideration

THAT THE CITY PLANNING, DEVELOPMENT AND BUSINESS AFFAIRS COMMITTEE RECOMMENDS TO COUNCIL

THAT COUNCIL

1. Receives the Tree Martin Management Plan as contained in Attachment A of Item 7.2 on the Agenda of the City Planning, Development and Business Affairs Committee held on 4 August 2026, for the ongoing management of Tree Martins in the City of Adelaide.
 2. Authorises the Chief Executive Officer, or delegate, to amend the Tree Martin Management Plan as contained in Attachment A of Item 7.2 on the Agenda of the City Planning, Development and Business Affairs Committee held on 4 August 2026, for the purposes of finalising the document.
 3. Notes the City of Adelaide must consider its legislative obligations and has limited controls available to influence the selection of alternative roosting sites by the migratory Tree Martin population.
 4. Notes that the Tree Martin colony will be managed in accordance with the Tree Martin Management Plan, including the Management Decision Matrix and associated roost management strategies for the 2026–27 roosting season.
 5. Notes that communications will be sent to Rundle Mall businesses to advise them of the planned approach for the 2026-27 season.
 6. Notes the existing tree netting in Leigh Street will remain in place and is scheduled for replacement at the end of seasonal winter leaf fall 2026, with new netting to be in place prior to the 2026-27 roosting season. Communications will be sent to businesses in Leigh Street prior to the works commencing.
 7. Notes the Department of Environment and Water and Green Adelaide provided in kind advice for the 2025-26 Tree Martin roosting season management response and that Administration will approach the State Government for direct funding support and/or via any eligible grant funding streams.
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IMPLICATIONS AND FINANCIALS

City of Adelaide 2024-2028 Strategic Plan	Strategic Alignment – Our Environment Lead and advocate for the environmental value, productivity, quality and biodiversity of the Park Lands, squares, open space and streetscapes. Protect and restore native habitat in our city.
Policy	Management of Tree Martins aligns with the Adelaide Park Lands Management Strategy – Towards 2036, the City of Adelaide's Integrated Climate Strategy 2030, and the 2024-2028 Strategic Plan's commitments to biodiversity protection, city amenity, business vitality and community wellbeing. It supports the Council's objectives for a sustainable, liveable, and biodiverse capital city where people and wildlife coexist harmoniously. Management of the Tree Martins has been undertaken with regard to implications for businesses and Council's Economic Development Strategy 2024-2028. The State Biodiversity Plan is yet to be developed following the assent of the <i>Biodiversity Act 2025</i> (SA).
Consultation	The Administration has continued to consult with Department for Environment and Water (DEW) and Green Adelaide to align approaches to Tree Martin management and protection. During the roosting season Administration has maintained contact with businesses in Rundle Mall and representatives from the Adelaide Economic Development Agency (AEDA) who also form part of the internal Working Group overseeing the operational response. A briefing will be provided to the AEDA Board in September 2026.
Resource	The Tree Martin Management Plan was prepared using a combination of internal and external resources, including specialist consultancy services from Ecosure Environmental Consultancy and Avisure Consulting. Guidance and advice was provided by DEW, Green Adelaide, AEDA, and business stakeholders.
Risk / Legal / Legislative	Tree Martins are listed as a marine species under the <i>Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999</i> (Cth) (EPBC Act). Under ss 254–254E of the EPBC Act, offences apply to actions that harm, take, trade, keep, or move listed marine species; however, these provisions only apply within a designated "Commonwealth area" as defined in s 525. Based on current review, this definition has little to no application within the Council area, and neither Leigh Street nor Rundle Mall fall within Commonwealth land. Consequently, these EPBC Act provisions do not apply to Council actions. Tree Martins are a "protected animal" under the <i>National Parks and Wildlife Act 1972</i> (SA). Under ss 68(1) a person must not interfere with, harass or molest a protected animal unless he or she acts in pursuance of a legislative provision or a permit granted by the responsible Minister (the Minister for Climate, Environment and Water) or their delegate. Advice from DEW is that a permit is not required for the netting of trees if this action does not lead to any protected animal being caught, restrained or trapped and subsequently relocated and the trees are netted prior to being used by the protected animal (i.e. outside of the Tree Martin roosting season). The <i>Animal Welfare Act 1985</i> (SA) requires that all reasonable measures are taken to prevent unnecessary harm, injury, or distress to wildlife. This includes monitoring for impacts of netting. The <i>Biodiversity Act 2025</i> (SA), which has not yet come into operation, introduces a general duty of care, requiring reasonable practical measures to prevent harm to biodiversity in any acts or actions undertaken. The City of Adelaide considers public health and safety risks in the public realm, noting responses actioned at previous roosting sites to address conflicts for public health at outdoor dining venues.

Opportunities	In 2025/26 the City of Adelaide took a planned and measured approach to managing the Tree Martin roosting season and planning for future roosting seasons. This approach enabled data and evidence to be collected to inform future management actions.
26/27 Budget Allocation	Pending a Council decision on the Tree Martin Management Plan, a budget allocation was not sought as part of the 2026/27 Business Plan and Budget. As the season occurs across financial years, Administration indicated it would seek allocation for the 2026-27 season following the end of the first full season as part of the 2026/27 Quarter 1 budget review.
Proposed 27/28 Budget Allocation	Not as a result of this report
Life of Project, Service, Initiative or (Expectancy of) Asset	Tree Martins typically migrate annually between November/December and April/May. While the roosting season was anticipated to conclude by end of May 2026 based on the previous season, at the time of writing this report, a small population of up to 1,500 birds remains roosting in Rundle Mall.
26/27 Budget Reconsideration (if applicable)	A budget review in Quarter 1 is foreshadowed in this report.
Ongoing Costs (eg maintenance cost)	Operating costs for delivery of the response and additional cleansing as part of the 2025-26 Tree Martin roosting season were managed within existing resources. Ongoing operating costs will be assessed as part of future Tree Martin management decisions.
Other Funding Sources	DEW and Green Adelaide provided in kind advice for the 2025-2026 Tree Martin roosting season management response. Administration has raised the potential for external funding support from the State Government, but no eligible grant funding stream has been identified.

13. Council and the City Planning, Development and Business Affairs Committee considered Tree Martin management in April, May, October, November and December 2025.
14. Further background information is provided in the separate report on Tree Martin Management 2025-26 End of Season Report, in this Agenda (Item 7.1).

Tree Martin Management Plan

14. The Management Plan has been prepared to provide the City of Adelaide with an overarching strategic framework for the ongoing and coordinated management of Tree Martins roosting across its local government area.
15. The Management Plan:
 - 15.1. Draws on the experience, data and operational learnings of the 2025–26 roosting season, the first year in which the City of Adelaide delivered a structured, resourced on-ground response at Rundle Mall, which included the rigorous collection of Tree Martin roosting and casualty data, and regular observations of Tree Martin behaviour.
 - 15.2. The data set provides a new and unique evidence base from which to guide monitoring, operational responses, mitigation actions, stakeholder engagement and communications across future roosting seasons.
 - 15.3. Complements the Tree Martin Management Operating Guidelines ([Link 1](#)) developed to support the operational response in 2025-26.
16. The objectives of the Management Plan are to:
 - 16.1. Guide the management of Tree Martin roosts within the City of Adelaide local government area.
 - 16.2. Inform the assessment of, and responses to, newly established Tree Martin roosts.
 - 16.3. Minimise community and business impacts and reduce the potential for future conflict.
 - 16.4. Improve community understanding and appreciation of Tree Martins, including their ecological role and conservation significance.
 - 16.5. Support the community and businesses in co-existing with Tree Martins in the urban environment, where it is considered manageable.
 - 16.6. Clearly define roles and responsibilities for management actions across all relevant stakeholders.
 - 16.7. Ensure all management activities are undertaken in accordance with relevant legislation, including the *National Parks and Wildlife Act 1972* (SA) and the *Animal Welfare Act 1985* (SA).
15. The Management Plan provides a structured approach to addressing obligations for bird welfare and assessing business, public health and amenity impacts that may require mitigation or intervention. It provides:
 - 15.1. A review of past issues and challenges associated with the Tree Martin roosting aggregation, including a timeline of actions taken since 2015.
 - 15.2. A Tree Martin species profile and cultural significance assessment.
 - 15.3. Site assessments of Leigh Street, Rundle Mall, Vardon Avenue and Ebenezer Place, including assessment of roost suitability and entrapment risk at each location.
 - 15.4. A comprehensive review of the 2025–26 Tree Martin roosting season monitoring data, triage outcomes, and observations from the Rundle Mall roost.
 - 15.5. A management options analysis evaluating passive management, landscape modification, deterrents, physical barriers, infrastructure modifications, population management, and active dispersal options, each assessed for effectiveness, feasibility and estimated cost.
 - 15.6. A Decision Support Framework, including a Primary Decision Tree and assessment matrix, to guide the City of Adelaide's response to Tree Martin roosts depending on roost size, proximity to sensitive uses, setting, welfare impacts, and cost and likelihood of management success.
 - 15.7. Roost-specific management recommendations, including strategies for Rundle Mall, Leigh Street and any other potential roost locations.
 - 15.8. A structured monitoring program to evaluate mitigation effectiveness on an ongoing basis.

Decision Support Framework

16. The management of Tree Martins is a complex undertaking, requiring careful consideration of a range legal obligations and management options to achieve a realistic balance between economic factors, public health and safety, animal welfare and ecological sustainability.
17. A central feature of the Management Plan is a structured Decision Support Framework (the Framework), designed to guide consistent, transparent and evidence-based responses to Tree Martin roosting activity wherever it occurs across the City of Adelaide.
18. The Framework recognises that roosting locations, colony sizes, and the nature and severity of associated impacts will vary from season to season and site to site, and that management responses must be proportionate, adaptive and informed by the best available evidence. Not all Tree Martin roosts will require active management, and the level of intervention should be proportionate to the assessed conflict level.
19. The Framework comprises the following integrated components:
 - 19.1. Primary Decision Tree, supported by a Roost Assessment Matrix used to assess the severity of conflict and determine the appropriate management pathway.
 - 19.2. Minimum intervention strategies, applied where the Roost Assessment Matrix returns a low to moderate score, focused on monitoring, community education and stakeholder engagement.
 - 19.3. In situ management strategies, applied where the Roost Assessment Matrix score indicates that active management is warranted but dispersal is not yet appropriate, or where dispersal carries unacceptable risk of displacement to a higher-conflict location, to reduce impacts while the colony remains at the roost site.
 - 19.4. Roost dispersal strategies, applied where the Roost Assessment Matrix score indicates that preventing roosting or dispersing an established colony is warranted. Dispersal is only pursued where in situ management has been exhausted or is assessed as insufficient, and where there is reasonable confidence that displacement will not result in greater conflict or harm at an alternative location.
20. Minimum intervention and / or in-situ management is the recommended approach to all Tree Martin management issues in the City of Adelaide, except in cases of high human/Tree Martin conflict, where roosts become established in proximity to food and beverage businesses or other sensitive sites where public health must be prioritised.
21. An outline of management strategies available for each roost management category is summarised in Appendix C of the Management Plan.

Next Steps

22. Pending Council decision, the following next steps are planned:
 - 22.1. Finalisation of the Tree Martin Management Plan by the Chief Executive Officer.
 - 22.2. Communications with State Government Agencies, businesses, wildlife organisations and key stakeholders on the Management Plan and approach to the 2026-27 Tree Martin roosting season.
 - 22.3. Preparations for the 2026-27 roosting season including, renewing existing Wildlife Management (Controller) Permits, and preparation of a community and business engagement program.
 - 22.4. Replacement of netting on trees in Leigh Street following the end of seasonal winter leaf fall.
 - 22.5. As the season occurs across financial years, Administration indicated it would seek allocation for the 2026-27 season following the end of the first full season as part of the 2026/27 Quarter 1 budget review.

DATA AND SUPPORTING INFORMATION

Link 1 –Tree Martin Management Operating Guidelines

ATTACHMENTS

Attachment A –Tree Martin Management Plan

- END OF REPORT -