

# **SHEFFIELD TREE ACTION GROUPS (STAG)**

**Press Release  
26th June 2017**

## **Strange Coincidence or Election Manipulation? Did Labour get Amey's help to win By-Election?**

Street tree campaigners believe that the Labour-controlled City Council has asked their Streets Ahead contractor, Amey, to help them retain a marginal Council seat.

Last week (Thursday 22 June) Labour narrowly held on to their second seat in the Nether Edge and Sharrow Ward, with only a small majority over the Green Party. One of the big issues in this Ward is the Streets Ahead tree felling programme with over 200 big healthy trees imminently facing the chop by Amey (the Streets Ahead contractor). Over the past three weeks Amey's tree fellers have stayed away from Nether Edge almost completely. In the week before the council by-election, tree felling across the city died away. This lull followed several weeks of intensive felling activity

On the morning after the election, Amey felling crews rolled out of their Olive Grove depot, mounting a mass attack on trees in nearby Meersbrook and Norton. After weeks of inaction they had five felling crews working on several streets including Cliffe Road, Thorpe House Rise and Hollythorpe Crescent. Across the city in Hillsborough, crews attempted to fell trees on Grove Avenue despite the protests of residents who wanted the trees to be retained.

Chris Rust, Co-Chair of Sheffield Tree Action Groups said:

*"This stinks of political manipulation. Some would call it cheating. I challenge the Labour Council Leader Julie Dore to explain this crude 'coincidence'. Can she promise us that no Councillor or Council Officer has asked Amey to hold back on tree felling during the pre-election period?"*

*It's obvious that it suits the Labour Party to have no upsets or conflicts on the streets during the election campaign and the Green Party were challenging strongly, partly through their opposition to unnecessary tree fellings. If there has been any political interference the public needs to know and the Police may be called upon to investigate whether there has been any breach of electoral law.*

*The majority of these fellings are not needed, and we still don't really understand why Amey and SCC are insisting on them. They seem to come from SCC's obsession with having straight continuous kerbs, instead of following the sensible practice of other authorities who will leave out kerbstones where trees need a bit more space."*

Parties opposed to tree felling polled 55% of the Nether Edge vote, reflecting the strong sentiment in the area against the unnecessary felling of healthy and valuable street trees. The STAG campaign is not affiliated to any political party, and has many active campaigners from across the political spectrum. STAG is opposed to unsustainable street tree destruction under the 25 year PFI 'Streets Ahead' contract, and has the support of reputable figures in the arboricultural and highways management sectors.

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