

Sheffield Tree Action Groups

PRESS RELEASE

Friday 24th March 2017

Tree campaigners accuse City Council of 'Fake Statistics'

City Councillor Bryan Lodge is claiming that only a small percentage of citizens are opposed to street tree fellings, but a leading expert on survey methods says that the City Council's survey of residents' views on street trees has been so badly conducted it amounts to a **'denial of democracy'**.

Tree campaigners say that the street tree survey was just not noticed or seen by the great majority of residents, arriving in plain envelopes that looked like junk mail. Only one person per house was allowed to have their say. Some people tried to complete the survey but were unable to because they did not have internet access or could not understand the complex information. On Chippinghouse Road only one person completed the survey to say that they were against the fellings but a recent door-to-door check showed that at least forty were against the 'Tree Replacement' programme on their street.

Dani Adams, a resident of Chippinghouse Road, said, "I was devastated when the beautiful big Horse Chestnut opposite our house, the only tree in our part of the road, was chopped down. I'm angry that the council are claiming we were consulted because I and my neighbours never saw the survey letters."

Professor Greg Brooks, who has studied the City Council's street tree survey methods, says that the survey fails all four of the important tests of reliability: Not enough people were included, not enough was done to ensure that residents knew about the survey, it was not straightforward for residents to respond and the very small response rates make the results very unreliable. In 88 streets less than 5% of residents responded.

David Glass, a local resident said, "After the tree fellings on Chippinghouse Road I decided to do my own survey by knocking on doors on that street. Of 40 householders that I spoke to, 30 said they were against the tree fellings, and I obtained 40 individual signatures from residents who were against the replacement of healthy street trees."

Chris Rust, of Sheffield Trees Action Groups (STAG) commented, "Sheffield City Council are using a dodgy survey to mislead citizens, we are looking at how we can take this forward to the the Office for Statistics Regulation as case of misuse of statistics and maladministration. I don't know if this is deliberate deception or just incompetence but either way the result is fake statistics."

"Sheffield City Council are using a highly secretive contract to chop down thousands of healthy trees that are causing insignificant damage. STAG does not oppose tree fellings when there is a real problem but far too many are being chopped just to keep the kerb straight or because of very minor disturbance of footways."

Notes to Editors:

Emeritus Professor Brooks was provided with survey letters, screen-shots of the online residents' survey and SCC's own detailed response rate data.

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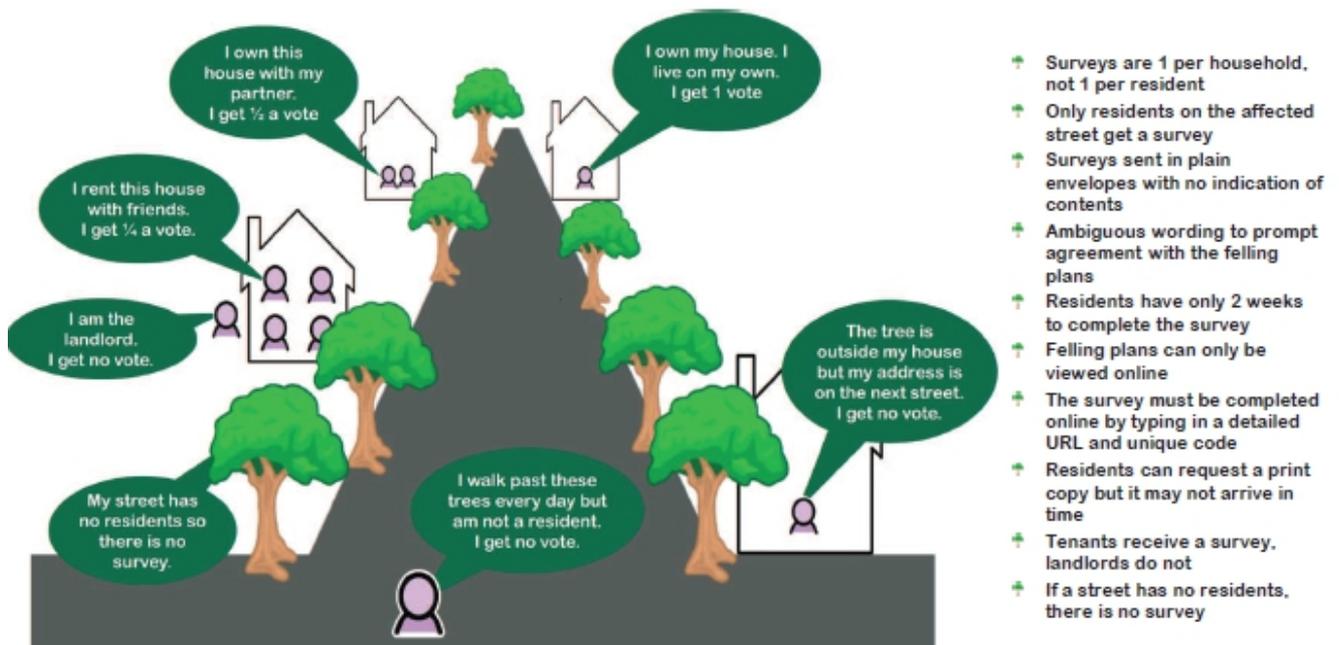
The critique can be accessed here <https://drive.google.com/open?id=0B9rdXfkIDv7IekZSc1NmQ1cxcW8>

The survey is considered to be deeply flawed in its design and execution, hence the often low response rates. Expert opinion suggests that at least a 75% response rate should be aimed for. SCC decisions were often based on responses rates below 10%. **Such low response rates cannot be regarded as providing reliable data.**

One survey response per property does not allow for different views within one household.

The Residents' Survey

The first fellings were carried out by SCC/Amey with no public consultation. After a number of complaints, they agreed to survey residents, but the survey process is highly flawed and not fit for purpose.



(A higher resolution version of this diagram is available in the accompanying booklet, and is available for use, credited to *Save Crookes, Western Road and Walkley Trees*.)

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