

# Press Release

## SHEFFIELD TREE ACTION GROUPS

### (STAG)

#### 26th July 2017

### Street Tree Campaigners in Court to Fight Injunction Huge support for their unequal struggle

It is the first day of the three-day High Court hearing in Leeds. Supporters of the Sheffield Tree Action Groups (STAG) continue to resist an attempt by Sheffield City Council (SCC) to impose blanket injunctions designed to stop their highly effective street protests. A huge number of people in Sheffield and across the country are watching in disbelief at SCC's latest round of their escalating 'double or quits' policy to intimidate and block the campaign to save healthy street trees.

Since the street tree campaign started in 2015, 16,894 people have signed the petition that started on one street, Rustlings Rd, and grew to cover thousands of threatened healthy trees across the whole city. Eleven separate local groups have formed under the STAG umbrella. Tree experts from across Britain and beyond have lined up to argue for a change in the felling policy. All are appalled that normal good practice that has proved effective and economic in the rest of the UK and elsewhere have been abandoned in the highly secretive highway maintenance contract between SCC and Amey. Amey is the British arm of a huge multinational company, Ferrovial of Spain.

Chris Rust, Co-Chair of STAG and one of the people served with a notice of injunction said:

*Big companies have deep pockets so Ferrovial can afford top lawyers to enforce their will on SCC. In turn, SCC seem determined to spend large amounts of Council Taxpayers' money to fight citizen protesters on behalf of the multinational. There have been talks between SCC and STAG but we have come to the conclusion that SCC have never been serious about exploring solutions that would suit all sides in this mess. Instead they have just tried to make us go away.*

*It's hugely intimidating. Individuals could end up losing their life savings and their homes, despite a magnificent fundraising effort with over 700 donors contributing tens of thousands of pounds. We have been given only a few days to prepare our defence against a case that SCC have been plotting for months. So we have to be very careful with our limited resources, unlike the Council who are throwing public money at the case.*

The tree campaigners' defence against the injunction case is being led by three of the people who are threatened with injunctions: Alison Teal, a Sheffield City Councillor (Green Party) who has also been arrested for peacefully resisting tree fellings; David Dillner, one of the founders of the campaign and the first Chair of STAG and Calvin Payne, a long serving campaigner who, together with Simon Crump, was one of the first people to be arrested. All previous charges against Teal, Payne and 12 others were dropped for lack of evidence when barrister Paul Powlesland convinced South Yorkshire Police that they has no case to answer.

Campaigners said:

*We have a brilliant legal team from Howell's Solicitors together with John Cooper QC. We are very confident that we will put right the dreadful wrong that is being done to our local environment, and maybe we can convince Sheffield City Council to start serious talks.*

The case will run for three days: Meanwhile the protests on Sheffield streets carry on, fuelled by the continued anger of large numbers of citizens who refuse to be intimidated by Council threats and video crews. The tree felling programme has been pumped up with crews of tree fellers being shipped in from many parts of the country. This has prompted even more peaceful protesters to come out on the streets to oppose them.

## **Contact:**

STAG press team: [sheffieldtreeactiongroupsmedia@gmail.com](mailto:sheffieldtreeactiongroupsmedia@gmail.com)