

6 May 2017

The Chief Executive
Sheffield City Council
Town Hall
Pinstone Street
Sheffield S1 2HH

Copy to: Leader of Council
Chief Legal Officer

Dear Mr Mothersole,

Recently the City Council asked the Sheffield Tree Action Groups (STAG) to circulate a document to its supporters. It included this statement:

*We believe it's very important that everyone is fully aware of the critical distinction between peaceful protest and **unlawful direct action**...*

Despite your stating that the distinction is clear, it is not actually clear what the distinction is. As a matter of urgency would you please clarify this distinction.

In doing so, please take into account that the actions of protestors have been overwhelmingly peaceful, as indicated by the Police in recent Freedom of Information releases. Recently, for example, two people were arrested on Chippinghouse Rd during a programme of fellings. They came forward in a peaceful and polite manner to be arrested in protest at the high-handed use of the law to prevent, without advance warning, householders and their friends from occupying their property during the felling work. Their action was partly informed by the intimidating actions of police officers towards a householder who had asked STAG supporters to enter his garden in protest at the felling of a tree which overhung his property.

Not only was the action of the two people arrested both peaceful and a protest, the fact that the Director of Prosecutions withdrew charges for lack of evidence makes it clear that it was not unlawful. The story in other cases of arrests during protests by STAG supporters is very similar.

Finally we feel it is important for SCC to clarify how their approach to tree protestors challenging the right of a huge multinational company to deny us healthy mature street trees relates to the Council's policy of explicitly supporting the Kinder Scout Mass Trespass where organised protestors challenged the right of powerful people to deny them access to the countryside. We draw your attention to page 2 of the Sheffield City Council booklet "Sheffield, The Outdoor City, Draft Strategy" which has been widely circulated and promoted by the Council:

Sheffield has a very proud history of leadership in the outdoors, as one of the bases for the Kinder Mass Trespass, which led directly to the national 'Right to Roam'.

The removal of significant proportion of the tree canopy on a street is a very big loss of amenity that will not be restored for decades, it affects the health and wellbeing of residents in ways that have been scientifically measured and you have been notified previously of the scientific evidence for this.

We look forward to your reply,

Yours Sincerely
Chris Rust

Rebecca Hammond

Co-Chairs, Sheffield Trees Action Groups Steering Group.