

SHEFFIELD TREE ACTION GROUPS (STAG)

Press Release

27 November 2017

Updated 28 November 2017

Private security assault protesters as Amey ramp up intimidation

Bouncers use excessive physical force to restrain peaceful protesters

Sheffield City Council's highways contractor Amey has adopted aggressive new tactics in response to peaceful protests by tree campaigners. Numerous witnesses on several city streets have today reported protesters being manhandled by Amey security staff after they attempted to enter safety zones around tree works. Police officers called to the scenes declined to intervene.

STAG supporter Paul Grimshaw gave this first-hand account of an incident on Lismore Road (S8) this morning:

*"I saw the campaigner arrive and start to scale the fence. The security staff and Amey workers were caught off guard and ran in a panic to where the campaigner was climbing the fence. Two security men, neither of whom were, as far as I could see, wearing security I.D. badges, tried to physically pull the campaigner down from the fence with scant regard for his/her safety or wellbeing. The campaigner evaded their grasp and vaulted the top of the fence to land safely inside. At this point he/she was violently manhandled by two further staff (again with no licence to operate as security on display). Despite clear warnings from watching members of the public that they should leave the protester alone and that their actions constituted assault, **the two men repeatedly engaged in physical manhandling of the campaigner even after he/she had fallen to the floor.***

"What I witnessed today was the purest form of reprehensible bullying by people who seem to think that because they are working for the council they are above both the law and basic decent standards of human behaviour."

Accounts of similar incidents have also emerged from other streets where tree works have taken place today, including Abbeydale Park Rise (S17) famed for its Christmas lights display, Chatsworth Road (S17) and Crescent Road (S7). None of the security staff on the streets today were wearing Security Industry Authority (SIA) licenses, and they refused to show them when asked, and some kept their faces covered.

It is telling that this turn in events has followed closely on a meeting between campaign representatives and council leaders, arranged at STAG's instigation and aimed at setting up talks to reach a mutually acceptable solution to the present situation. While STAG awaits a diplomatic response from the council, its corporate contractor is being permitted, or perhaps encouraged, to wage open war on the campaign.

SCC and Amey have recently adopted a more antagonistic approach to dealing with peaceful protest. Today's events were preceded by the erection of safety barriers around trees on a number of streets in the early hours of this morning. Roads have not been officially closed but the presence of the barriers makes some footpaths impassable and restricts access to private property. Concerned residents who asked for an explanation for activity taking place as early as 1.00 am were told by Amey workers that it was an 'emergency' but given no further information.

Last week it was reliably reported that arborists working for Amey have been instructed not to engage in friendly conversation with tree campaigners, as has been the norm up until now. Accounts of the campaign appearing in the local press and media have also adopted a markedly more hostile tone. They have attempted to present protesters in a sinister light and suggested that the campaign has been typified by anger and abuse rather than the peaceful approach which even SCC's legal team has accepted to be the case.

Contact:

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

Supporting media:

Photographs are available at <https://we.tl/f0Q41cj8KM> (expires 4 December 2017) - credit for each photo is in brackets in the file name

Film clip: Coverdale Road https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fG2rU1_DF0o

Film clip: one of the assaults on Lismore Road (credit Pixelwitch Pictures)
<https://youtu.be/q6RJmmSMm2Y>

Statement from Janine Thomson, a former police officer now working as an SIA licensed door security:

Today (27 November 2017) I saw blatant breaking of rules, videos of door supervisors actually assaulting and man handling peaceful protesters. On one occasion actually knocking someone to the ground with some force. I have been an SIA badge holder for just over 2 years and also an ex police officer. I love my job and we are taught the laws and entitlement of wearing that badge right from the start:

Only 11 restraining moves allowed to remove people off private property.

Always to have your badge openly displayed, in case of complaints, as we have nothing to hide should you be doing your job properly.

We always use open handed, open arm gestures to move people on.

We do not swear at people and will only use minimum force if absolutely needed. We are always aware of CCTV footage that may be taken at the time.

What I saw on these videos goes far and beyond against official SIA rules.

Very sad indeed. Our reputation as professional caring genuine badge holders has taken a knock with all this.

Why were they not displaying their badges? It's wrong on many levels.

Thanks

Janine Thomson