

SHEFFIELD TREE ACTION GROUPS (STAG)

Press Release

14 June 2018

STAG WELCOMES THE APPOINTMENT OF NATIONAL TREE CHAMPION URGES VISIT TO SHEFFIELD AS SOON AS POSSIBLE

Michael Gove, Minister for the Environment, announced this week the appointment of Sir William Worsley as the Government's "Tree Champion".

Sir William has been tasked with responsibility for:

- Supporting the introduction of a new duty for local councils to consult before felling.
- Ensuring that ministers meet their commitment to plant 11 million trees by 2022.
- Identifying and promoting best practice across local government to prevent the unnecessary felling of street trees.

On his appointment Sir William said: "I am delighted to be appointed as the Government's Tree Champion. He also said: "*The first thing I have done is ask for a report so I can understand exactly what is being done . . . in places like **Sheffield** and Newcastle.*"

Co-Chair of STAG, Chris Rust said:

"We applaud the appointment of the new Tree Champion and invite Sir William to visit Sheffield as soon as possible. We have a lot to show him. We are sceptical about requiring consultation by Councils as it's almost always ignored in practice, but if he is responsible for developing good practice for the future that's very positive. Street trees today fall into a 'black hole' in terms of legal protection, and I hope that Sir William's appointment is a first step to rectifying this. We really don't want what's happening in Sheffield to be repeated anywhere else."

This welcome appointment comes when Lewis Dagnall, Sheffield City Council's new Cabinet Member for Environment, is visiting areas of Sheffield where the felling of healthy trees is hotly opposed.

Councillor Dagnall said on a recent visit to Meersbrook that he wants to "*listen to what people have to say about the trees.*"

Ann Anderson, of Save Dore, Totley & Bradway Trees, said:

"Listening to people is good but we also need a structured way forward. These informal walkabouts are not the proper negotiations that STAG have repeatedly asked for. The unnecessary removal of thousands of healthy street trees is a city-wide problem, and it needs a city-wide solution.

We must abandon wholesale felling of healthy trees because of minor disturbance to kerbs and footways. Numerous experts have explained that this is not sustainable, it's not normal practice across the country and it's bad for Sheffield. Our city needs a tree management strategy that takes a holistic approach to conserving street trees rather than viewing them as a problem."

Heather Mitchell of Save Gleadless Valley Trees, said:

Enlightened Government oversight and a SCC Cabinet member for the Environment willing to listen are a good start. Now we need all of this to be translated into mediated talks and positive tree-saving action.

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