

SHEFFIELD TREE ACTION GROUPS (STAG)

Press Release

10 July 2018

COURT SAYS TREE PROTESTOR NOT GUILTY OF THREATENING BEHAVIOUR Conditional discharge for withholding information

At Sheffield Magistrates Court on July 9th 2018, tree campaigner **Robert Pearson** was **cleared** of threatening behaviour and given a conditional discharge on a lesser charge of withholding personal details from a Police Officer.

Both charges related to events that took place 22nd February 2018 on Thornsett Road, Nether Edge where Sheffield City Council contractors, AMEY, planned to fell several healthy, 100 year old trees.

It was alleged that, during protests against the fellings, Robert Pearson committed a Public Order offence by threatening a council contractor. This he strenuously denied. After considering the evidence from defence and prosecution the Chair of the Magistrates bench, Liz Arundale, said *"the panel found both versions of events credible and it could not be sure of the exact circumstances"*

Therefore the Public Order charge was dismissed.

The second charge alleged that, after his arrest, Robert refused to give his personal details in public to the arresting officer. He told the magistrates panel that he was *"confused"* about his rights but ultimately gave his details. The magistrates ruled this was *"not a reasonable excuse"* and he was given a **12 month conditional discharge.**

Russell Johnson, of Save Nether Edge Trees said:

"The allegation was that the defendant refused to give his details to a constable. After a few minutes he did give details. It appears that the arresting Police Constable was on his first day at a tree protest and was not prepared for the situation. We at STAG believe a miscarriage of justice has occurred."

Speaking outside court Robert said:

*"I am jubilant at being found **NOT GUILTY** on the charge of committing a Public Order offence but I am upset to have been convicted of obstructing an officer because I should not have been arrested in the first place.*

This conviction will not prevent me attending future protests."

The prosecution has left Robert with legal costs of £330. A crowdfunder has been set up by STAG supporters to meet this expense.

Robert thanked his supporters on FaceBook saying:

"I would just like to thank STAG for all the overwhelming support I've received in this matter. I'm totally humbled. Power to the Peaceful and thanks again for your wonderful support to me and the Trees!"

Paul Brooke, Co-chair of STAG said;

*"Yet again we have seen unfounded allegations made against campaigners that rightly have resulted in a **Not Guilty verdict**. Only recently however a High Court judge confirmed what campaigners already knew when he referred to having seen video evidence of one campaigner being punched and another being kicked by security staff hired by Amey, the Council's contractor.*

When is the Council going to do something about the behaviour of its contractors?

When are South Yorkshire Police going to treat people equally and fairly in this dispute?"

Contact:

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