



SHEFFIELD TREE ACTION GROUPS (STAG)

Press Release

15 July 2019

SHEFFIELD COUNCIL 'SAVES' A TREE THAT DOESN'T EXIST

**Council Cabinet Report misleading and contains basic errors.
STAG to hold rally at 13.15 on Wed 17 July and put questions to Cabinet**

On Wednesday 17 July the SCC Cabinet will discuss a report on the long running tree dispute. The report focuses on the proposed development of a Street Tree Strategy, as well as the new approach to managing the city's street trees.

In the mediated talks between SCC, STAG and contractors Amey in 2018 that resulted in a [Joint Position Statement](#) by the three parties, Amey and STAG have been doing joint assessment/investigations of 309 trees that had been due to be felled during the Core Investment Period of the Streets Ahead 25-year PFI. (5,700 trees have already been felled in this scheme, including a very high proportion of healthy trees.)

Sheffield City Council has failed to undertake all the actions agreed in the Joint Position Statement. It has not considered or published any of the evidence from STAG from the joint assessments/investigations. This has resulted in the Cabinet Report being inaccurate and misleading.

STAG will be holding a rally outside the Town Hall at 13.15 on Wednesday 17 July and will be asking public questions during the Cabinet meeting.

Rebecca Hammond of STAG said:

“Despite our telling the Council that information in their report was wrong and misleading, they've still published it. The figures they use come directly from the contractor Amey. STAG has repeatedly urged the Council to use STAG's evidence gained from joint investigations but they have not.

“Two trees they now say can be retained after Amey have repaired them are simply no longer there. One blew down in a storm in September 2018 and was widely reported at the time (picture below). The Council have also said that Amey have repaired kerbs and pavements around trees where in fact no work has taken place because the site crew could find nothing wrong.”

Paul Brooke, Co-Chair of Sheffield Tree Action Groups (STAG), said:

“Sadly SCC seem determined to ignore the evidence coming from STAG observers on the joint inspections. SCC said (in the Joint Agreement) they would hold a review and publish lessons learned from the first phase of investigation but they have refused to do this. If they were to, it would highlight that SCC cannot keep believing everything their contractor Amey tells them. We told the Council on Monday 8 July that the information in their report was inaccurate and misleading. This is because SCC keep saying that Amey are doing something ‘extra’ at extra cost as a result of the compromise. The reality is quite different.

“We have documented every tree jointly investigated and most have been repaired by the installation of thin kerbs and the removal of layers of old tarmac. They have used the basic engineering solutions that the public and the High Court were told were always considered before a decision to fell was taken. This is why we will continue to try to get a proper inquiry into this whole mess.”

Sheffield City Council asked STAG for a quote for their own press release but in the end they declined to use the following comments:

Co-Chair of Sheffield Tree Action Groups (STAG), Paul Brooke said:

“Over the last few months we have been able to observe Amey workers doing simple highway repairs to a good standard, such as fitting thin kerbs and removing old built-up tarmac. The announcement that 62% of the 309 trees that were due to be felled ‘as a last resort’ can now be retained indefinitely is great news but no surprise. It is what we campaigned for.

“We look forward to reviewing the lessons learned and publishing the joint assessments with the Council. We are confident this will show that very few healthy trees needed to be felled in order to complete the Streets Ahead road scheme. At some point in the future I have little doubt that we will reflect on how we, as a city, got this so wrong.

“We hope that the development of an exemplary Street Tree Strategy will protect the future of our much-needed urban forest and will result in an increase in the street canopy cover with all the health and environmental benefits that brings.”

Notes below

The Cabinet Report sets out the following figures.

- 309 trees were due to be felled. These are the trees we focused on in the mediated talks and the agreement to jointly investigate.
- To date 218 trees have been 'investigated' by Amey – only some of them jointly with STAG.

- Of the 218 investigated, SCC's report states that 191 can be retained and 26 will need a 'bespoke solution' which Amey are recommending but have yet to be agreed by the Council.
- SCC says one tree can't be fixed.

In simple terms this means:

- 62% of 309 are now classed as 'retained' (91 yet to be assessed)
- 88% of those that have been investigated are now referred to as 'retained'
- 11.5% need a bespoke solution but Amey have identified and are recommending a way to retain them.
- 0.5% SCC says must be felled, i.e. one tree
- 99.5% of trees of trees that the Council previously said must be felled 'as a last resort' can now be retained after being properly investigated.

Of the 191 trees the Council say can be retained, two have already gone, including this one on Myrtle Rd:



Tree outside 207 Myrtle Rd that Amey report they can retain after investigating it in the last few months. This picture is from September 2018 when it blew down, as reported in local papers. This is one of the 191 trees SCC say they can now retain because Amey have done 'additional work'.

SCC have sent us a detailed report on the 309 trees, which at this point they are not publishing. For every tree retained the report states that Amey have redone the kerb and tarmac and the tree will have extra monitoring and maintenance.

This tree on Whirlowdale Rd is now classed as 'retained' following what Amey report as fixing the kerb and the pavement. SCC have accepted this and agreed for it to be retained. The following picture was taken yesterday:



As you can see they have done absolutely no repairs at all. Any previous repairs were done years ago. This is because there was nothing wrong with the footway other than it being in need of standard road and pavement resurfacing that Amey are contracted to do as a matter of course. We were all told this tree must be felled 'as a last resort'.

