

Holmehill Ltd AGM 2013/4

Chairman's Report

This is my first report as Chairman, having followed on from Chris Spray at the last AGM

Firstly I wish to express my thanks to Chris for handing on the Holmehill team in fine shape and giving me a strong foundation on which to build.

In summary the past year has been frustrating with no obvious progress being made in terms of preventing the on-going damage to Holmehill that is being perpetrated by the owners– Allanwater Developments. Following the illegal felling on the trees in June 2013 the Council stated enforcement action against Allanwater Developments. This eventually elicited a replanting plan, which was produced by the Council, and from Allanwater Developments a “Woodland Management Plan” which was merely a bar chart stating what activity would take place, when, but with no description of the activity.

All the time Allanwater Developments have continued to chop down the shrub layer and lower branches of the trees around the top of the hill, chipping and burning much of the smaller material and causing a considerable local smoke nuisance.

They have sprayed the ground, presumably to kill off the brambles (unsuccessfully) and as expected the rhododendron that had been cut back is vigorously re-growing.

All of the destruction is in spite of the protection afforded to the woodland by virtue of it being within a the Dunblane Conservation Area. This protection has belated been reinforced by the uncontested provision of a Tree Preservation Order (TPO) over the whole of the site, thus ensuring there is now no ambiguity about the protection afforded to the trees on Holmehill. This does not appear to have stopped the ongoing destruction.

In addition a fortification of Heras fencing has been erected with the clear aim of barring public access to the top of the hill. It does not appear that the Council can prevent this denial of public access, or that they wish to challenge the position.

Subsequently the Council have served a Tree Replanting Order on Allanwater Developments which was again uncontested. However at the time of writing that it is not being complied with. The Council have the power, in the event of non-compliance, to replant themselves and charge with costs to Allanwater Developments. So we are looking forward to the planting of a number of new trees this autumn.

Perhaps of more concern is the outline of Allanwater Developments' plans for the rest of the year where, given the times scales that they have allocated to the individual tasks that they plan to carry out on the top of Holmehill, there is a real risk that they will seek to remove or destroy a lot more of the mature trees on the site.

So a year of mixed fortunes – improved protection, but continued destruction and lack of any consideration of the community by the landowner Allanwater Developments. This reinforces the need to take the land into Community ownership.

The Holmehill team has continued to work with the community and ran a very successful Halloween event in the Braeport – attended by it seemed like hundreds of families. The weather was disappointing and prevented the planned trip onto the hill, but everyone still had a good time.

We attended the Girl Guides Christmas sale and the Dunblane Fling to raise awareness

David Prescott Chair Holmehill Community Buy-out 27 October 2014.