

## **Holmehill Community Buyout**

### **Chairman's Report 2014/5**

This is the second report I have had the honour to present in this our tenth anniversary year. It will be quite short as it has been a relatively quiet year, at least up until August, but nonetheless a satisfactory year.

In the autumn of 2014 the sorry saga of the illegal tree felling by the Stirling's came to its conclusion. After considerable pressure from us, Stirling Council forced Allanwater Developments (AWD) to carry out some tree planting (about 15 trees) around the perimeter of the devastated area on the top of the hill. The Council accepted this desultory effort as compliance with their Tree Replanting Order.

During the planting work a JCB rampaged across the hill ripping up tree roots on the site of the old house and garden and scraping earth and brambles off large parts of the rest of the hill. Some poor condition trees were removed and not replaced. Since then no other physical activity has occurred.

The long awaited Tree Preservation Order was finally issued and confirmed.

The Heras fencing was left in situ and only removed a few days before Holmehill's petition was heard by Stirling Council on 15<sup>th</sup> January, where it received a favourable reception. Another indication of the value to applying proper pressure on AWD.

Holmehill has now returned to being a tranquil place, free of disturbance.

AWD have not proposed Holmehill for housing in the current Local Plan Housing Consultation. But they have made a Full Planning Application for a single mansion on the site of the old house, making full use in the application of the open space they created illegally. The Holmehill team has swung into action in strong opposition to this new threat to take away nearly a quarter of the area from public access.

Fund raising and public awareness has continued with another very successful Halloween afternoon, attendance at the Girl Guides' Christmas Fair and a lovely sunny day at the Fling. At all these events strong community interest was in evidence for which we are very grateful.

Your chairman attended a committee session of the Scottish Parliament's RACE Committee as a witness representing Holmehill, as an example of a Community Buyout Group who has not yet succeeded in buying their land. Some of the clauses in the Community Empowerment Act are designed to close loopholes that we exposed. Subsequent to that we also participated in an afternoon workshop on how to extend community ownership of land. We will continue to engage in the wider issues of the Land Reform Agenda

With the availability of the money from the Thomas Brittain Trust, Forth Housing Association has started planning for the small development on the Bogside site, where eight flats and bungalows are to be provided for let to people from, or associated with, Dunblane. Holmehill has been represented on the Steering Group.

As a Community based group we continue to enjoy widespread support. This is recognised by some of our Councillors and key Council Officers, who provide ongoing advice, which is fully appreciated.

My thanks go to the small band of fellow travellers who form the nucleus of the Holmehill Group. I had originally written: "Ever vigilant we must continue to watch for the next move by AWD, so that we can protect this vital public space from any further damage and destruction. " But events have overtaken us and we are in action again and will be pressing to neutralise this latest threat to Holmehill. The events of the last month demonstrate why we need to continue to be vigilant and to build our support in the community.

So now I must add - thanks to all those who have come to our support when it is most needed.

David Prescott - Chair of Holmehill Community Buyout - 2 September 2015