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# Dangers of tree-felling highlighted

by Peter Swindon

WORKERS WHO felled trees in Dunblane's conservation area risked "serious injury", according to the government department responsible for forestry.

Woodland was destroyed at Holmehill over a weekend last month and landowner Ian Stirling has since apologised.

However, his firm faces tough sanctions from Stirling Council, and the Forestry Commission could also take action.

In an email seen by The Courier, the Forestry Commission's woodland officer for the area said: "I could see no obvious silvicultural reason for the felling and it is clear that whoever cut down the trees was no professional and would have put themselves at considerable risk of serious injury felling in that way.

"I have been in touch with the Stirling Council enforcement officer who is

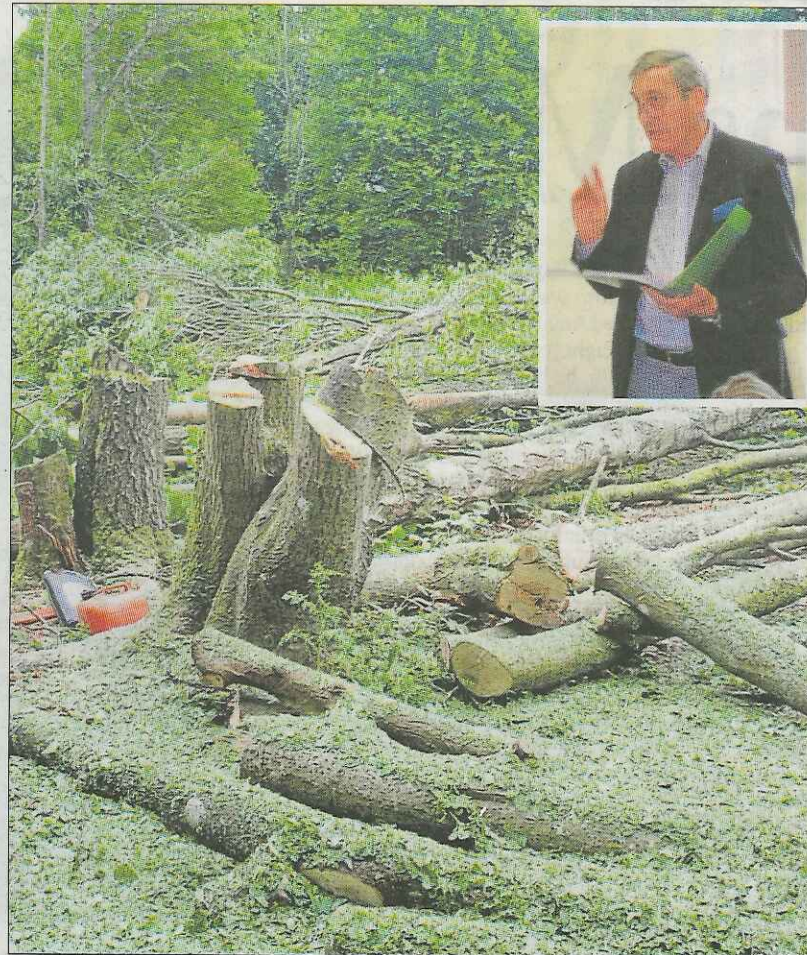
dealing with this case, and have been told that the council intend to pursue this with some vigour; once (the enforcement officer) has confirmed what action the council intend to take we will consider our position.

"However, as the felling took place in a conservation area and the council has greater powers through planning legislation than we have through the Forestry Act, it is unlikely that we will take action ourselves but will offer full support to the council in any capacity that may be required."

Mr Stirling, who could be fined up to £20,000 and forced to replant trees following the felling, wants to build on the site.

Chairman of Dunblane Community Council Terence O'Byrne said: "We are pleased that the Forestry Commission is taking an interest in this case.

"This tree felling action was reckless, carried out in an unsafe way and was



Felled trees at Holmehill and, inset, landowner Ian Stirling addressing a heated public meeting on the issue.

done without regard to the community of Dunblane.

"The community council has asked Stirling Council to impose the maximum fine of £20,000 on Mr Stirling's company, Wardlaw Gardens Ltd."

Stirling Council's spokeswoman said no

decision has been taken by enforcement officers. "We don't have any update yet as they still have to decide what they're going to do," she explained.

Wardlaw Gardens Ltd was asked to comment but failed to respond.

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of risk to the jumper bush, which is currently under threat from a deadly new fungal disease.

The plant can be identified by its distinctive blue-green needles, but if they are orange or brown in colour, they may be infected with *Phytophthora austrocedrae*.

Simon Rennie, chief executive of CSFT, said: "We're asking local communities in central Scotland to keep an eye out for the species in their local area and if out and about across Scotland during the summer holidays, and to complete the Plantlife Scotland survey at [plantlife.org.uk](http://plantlife.org.uk) if they do spot it."

## Autism study volunteers

People in Forth Valley who have Asperger's Syndrome or autism are being invited to take part in a survey which could lead to changes in the way support is delivered in future.

NHS Forth Valley speech and language therapy coordinator (adults) Anne Marie Irving said: "We are looking for adults who have Asperger's or autism without a learning disability to volunteer for the survey which, in effect, is seen as a needs analysis. However, the exper