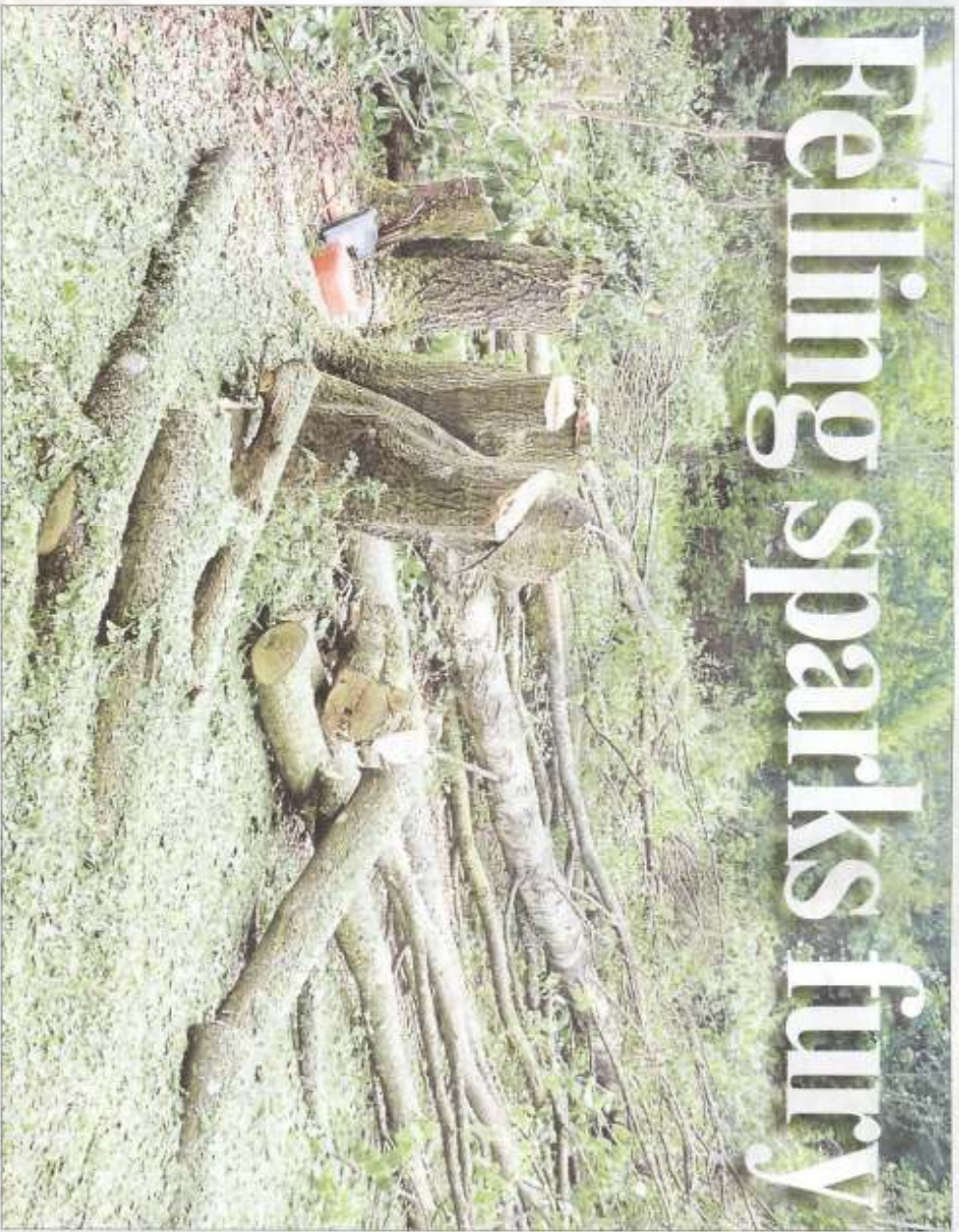


Felling sparks fury



by Peter Swindon

POLICE WERE called to a protected green space in Dunblane at the weekend after a developer began felling trees.

Angry locals were involved in a standoff with site owner Ian Stirling when chainsaws and chippers were used to destroy woodland at Holmehill.

The area lies behind the city's cathedral, inside Dunblane Conservation Area.

Allan Water Developments, a firm run by Mr Stirling's son David, wants to build an office block at Holmehill.

The application was refused by Stirling Council in February after more than 100 residents objected.

Ian Stirling on Saturday and police were alerted amid allegations of wildlife crime. Stirling Council officials then intervened to stop the tree felling.

Green councillor for Dunblane Mark Russell, who renegotiated with Mr Stirling on Saturday, accused the landowner of treating the community with "contempt".

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accused of contempt for community

FELLING SPARKS:
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HE SAID: "The landowner has displayed an utter disregard for the environment, the law and the local community in clear felling this much-loved area of woodland."

"The contempt that the landowner has shown to our community needs to now be matched by a collective will to prevent further destruction."

Libby Hughes of Holmehill Community Buyout Group, which aims to take control of the land, described the tree felling as "devastating".

She said: "The Holmehill Community Buyout Group has always been assured that the trees on Holmehill are afforded the same protection as trees with tree preservation orders, as they are within the conservation area."

Ewan Watson, Stirling Council land services duty officer, came out today (Saturday) and advised Ian Stirling that he should stop felling the trees.

"The police were informed that he may be committing a wildlife crime by felling trees during the bird breeding season."

However, a police spokeswoman said no offences were committed.

The Courier contacted Allan Water Developments yesterday but no one from the firm was available to comment.

pswin@thecourier.co.uk

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