

Watch ched



city regularly helped in ches under the banner officials at Police Scot- gy don't intend to use the age among volunteers. The spirit of volunteer- munity and it seems ut off links with these

The group has been involved in searches for many missing people prior to and including the recent hunt for an Angus marine, and has been credited with saving two lives in Loch Tay.

Police Scotland's Assistant Chief Constable Bernard Higgins said that since the air support unit previously belonging to Strathclyde was available nationwide, they don't need Skywatch.

See full report on page 3

Land owner 'sorry' for trees

by Peter Swindon

A LAND owner has said sorry after trees in Dunblane's conservation area were destroyed by chainsaws and wood chippers.

Ian Stirling's company Wardlaw Gardens Ltd, which owns part of Holmehill, issued a statement yesterday which included an apology and an admission that the council should have been informed before the felling.

However, the land owner insisted that the work is necessary to maintain the neglected site.

Police were called when locals confronted workers who were chopping down trees in the protected area on June 29.

Stirling Council officials then stepped in to stop the tree felling and the local authority later suggested sanctions could be imposed.

A statement from Wardlaw Gardens Ltd said: "The company has a right to manage the land which has been neglected for so many years that it is now a wilderness of tangled undergrowth, self-seeded trees and garden and household rubbish.

"The tree felling which took place was the start of a programme of woodland management. There is no Tree Preservation Order in place and the company did not require a felling licence by law."

Continued on page 4

Row with council over trees continues

TREE ROW LATEST:

Continued from page 1

"ALTHOUGH IT is the objective of the owner to address the problem of past lack of site maintenance, the company acknowledges that it should have consulted Stirling Council before undertaking the action.

"Wardlaw apologises for this, this is now in hand and Wardlaw Gardens Ltd is working with the council to come up with a solution to the problem."

The statement went on to attack Holmehill Community Buyout Group, which aims to take control of the land. Mr Stirling insists he offered to hand over a section of Holmehill to the group for free, and also asked them to put an offer on the table for the entire site.

"The group has never taken up either of the offers or given any indication that they have or can raise the funds to buy the land or even have a coherent plan if it were to be gifted to them for free," said the statement from Mr Stirling's firm.

The company also set out its stall on the future of the site, which has been the subject of a recent planning application. Mr Stirling's son David's firm, Allanwater Homes, had proposals to build an office block at Holmehill rejected in February.

"Wardlaw has a legitimate interest in seeing limited development of the site — which in this time of continuing recession would bring new jobs and investment to Dunblane," Ian Stirling's firm said.

Green councillor for the area Mark Kuschell urged both companies to give up on their ambitions to build on Holmehill.

"Mr Stirling's company and Allanwater Developments need to wake up to the reality of planning policy," he said. "There is next to no chance of development in Holmehill under Stirling's emerging Local Development Plan.

"If they are struggling to manage Holmehill, then now is the time to cut their losses and negotiate transfer of the entire site to the Holmehill Buyout Group."

David Percott of Holmehill Community Buyout Group said: "We are holding a public meeting and that will inform our response."

pswindon@thecourier.co.uk