

It's 12 months since the tree-felling started on Holmehill



29 June will be the first anniversary of the destruction of trees on Holmehill, yet nothing has been done to repair the damage or to restore access to much of the hill. The Heras fencing remains although the public should have access to all of the hill *as of right*. The top of the hill looks like a scene of mass destruction. Bird song has been notably reduced this Spring.

Holmehill is loved by many as 'The Green Heart of Dunblane'. The Local Development Plan, produced after much public consultation, recognizes that this special place should remain as open green space for all to enjoy. It is a valuable educational resource for children from St Mary's Primary School and Nursery, and from Dunblane Nature Kindergarten. The Core Path over Holmehill is well used by residents and visitors.

Dunblane residents were horrified on 29 June 2013 to find Mr David Stirling, of Allanwater Developments, and Mr Ian Stirling, of Wardlaw Gardens, wielding chain saws and chippers and destroying trees on this much loved space, and during the bird nesting season, thus contravening The Wildlife and Countryside Act.

More than 100 people attended a public meeting on 4 July 2013 to express their outrage. The attendees were from all sections of the community, and all age groups, despite this being a time when many families were on holiday, and that the meeting had been called with only 2 days' notice.

As Holmehill is in the Conservation Area of Dunblane, the landowner is obliged to give notice to Stirling Council before carrying out tree work. Mr Stirling had not done this. He only stopped the destruction when Stirling Council's Tree Officer intervened.

The landowner of Holmehill has continued to act in defiance of Stirling Council, continuing to cut trees without permission, failing to plant new trees, and fencing-off the area to prevent public access.. He was required to plant new trees before the 31st of March 2014: a deadline that has long passed without any new planting taking place. The Council has now issued a Tree Replacement Notice to Mr Stirling.

A Tree Preservation Order was placed on all the trees on Holmehill on land owned by Mr Stirling's company on 31 March 2014, but further work has been undertaken without him seeking necessary consents.

The landowner's actions have been widely condemned, in particular by Councillors Mark Ruskell and Graham Houston, and by Terence O'Byrne, Chairman of the Community Council. The strength of the anger felt by local people and their representatives is clear, as is their frustration by the apparent inability of Stirling Council to enforce restoration work and access to much of the hill.