

Buzz

Toton Sidings birch fellers barked up the wrong tree

MANY will already have heard the news, issued in mid-March, regarding the Toton Sidings tree felling. MP Nick Palmer had referred the issue to the Forestry Commission after the initial logging of the silver birch trees earlier in the year.

The Forestry Commission (FC) had said that the investigation could take up to six months. The MP was therefore pleasantly surprised to receive an email from the Commission in March saying that the felling had now been fully investigated and had

concluded that the trees had been felled illegally.

The Commission's email said: "With reference to your concern over the recent tree felling at Toton Sidings, the FC has fully investigated this matter and concluded that the trees were felled illegally. We will shortly be issuing a restocking notice. The details of this, in relation to tree species and planting location, are currently being worked upon."

Gail Holliman of the Toton Sidings focus and pressure group said: "I am sure that people will be pleased to read

this. I am equally sure that this outcome should only be seen as a battle won and not the end of the campaign. We still have to ensure that the area is re-instated and maybe even designated as a nature reserve and, above all, that Broxtowe doesn't allow future development on the area.

"In the meantime, congratulations to everyone involved in the fight so far."

Since the news from the Forestry Commission, a visit from a Health & Safety Executive inspector has found asbestos on the site,

in the form of conduit pipe used to carry electrical cable. The advice is that the levels are not dangerously high, but that it will either need to be re-buried and marked or removed by experts. However, the fact that there is some asbestos on the site will have implications for any plans for development forming part of the government's 'Core Strategy' housing plans.

Snippets

Coffee morning raises funds for women's charity

THE coffee morning held at Chilwell Road Methodist Church on March 27 raised £210.28 for the Women's Friendship Group, the church's chosen charity for 2010.

Service of Remembrance

A SERVICE of Remembrance is to be held at Bramcote Crematorium, Coventry Lane, Bramcote, on Sunday, April 25, at 2pm.

Led by Civil Celebrant Laura Read and Rev Dan Corcoran, the service will include musical contributions by soprano Sarah Simmonds and the 'Arioso' string trio. People are invited to attend and light a candle in memory of their loved ones. After the service, doves and balloons will be released in the grounds, and refreshments will be available in the chapel.

Winning Heroes Ball

MORE than £1800 was raised at the Broxtowe Borough Heroes Charity Ball at the end of March, which included a Charity Casino and a Grand Raffle with prizes donated by local businesses.

The Mayor of Broxtowe, Cllr John Longdon, invited fellow councillors, colleagues, employees, friends and members of the public, as well as troops from the 170 (Infrastructure Support) Engineer Group based at Chetwynd Barracks, Chilwell, to help celebrate the Civic Year and raise money for his chosen charities, Help for Heroes and Breathe Easy.

Between you and me...

BROXTOWE MP Nick Palmer writes his monthly column for The Beeston Express to keep us, his constituents, up-to-date and informed. We would like to remind you, however, that the views he expresses are his own and do not necessarily reflect those of The Beeston Express. If you would like to comment on any of the issues he raises, please write to the address on page 2.

The Beeston Express has no allegiance to any political party. Please also note that Mr Palmer officially ceases to be an MP on April 12, 2010, at least until the General Election on May 6.

Would you let your daughter marry an MP?

If the rumours are correct, we'll be in election mode by the time you read this, after which I'll adjourn this column until you've decided whether I should carry on as your MP. Here are some non-partisan thoughts before we get plunged into the fray.

I gave a talk to the Beeston & District Civic Society recently on, "Would you like your son or daughter to marry a politician?" Since the obvious answer for many people is, "Euuu! No!" I wanted to put the case for politics – as something to be proud of doing, as an interesting and satisfying career.

An MP essentially has two jobs. At the constituency end, you're essentially a village elder. If people get into trouble, they often come to you for help; if the community as a whole has a problem, you should be in the lead in seeking a solution

or defending it against outside threats.

On the whole, any energetic MP will succeed in these things most of the time. There are few unreasonable landlords who continue to harass their tenants when the MP has been on the phone to them; not many unpleasant bosses who really welcome an MP suggesting he is considering writing an article about their employment practices. And if you get someone awkward, you can call in the heavy artillery. I once had a case where a lay magistrate was being threatened by his boss with the sack because of the time he had to spend in court (firms are required to give time off for magistrates, but naturally they don't always like it). I had a word, and the boss had a call the next week:

"This is the Lord Chancellor speaking. I understand you are

attempting to interfere with the operation of the legal system? I trust you will desist."

The magistrate has had no further trouble.

On the bigger local issues, too, you can often mobilise local opinion and force a rethink. In cases like the Toton Sidings trees, the essential thing is to act quickly: if you delay, a fait accompli will be so established that it will be impossible to roll back.

All this is enjoyable and there are real rewards in human terms – after a while, you can't get round a supermarket without running into people you've helped, making for slower but happy shopping as each in turn stops you for a chat. There isn't anything party political in this – any MP can do it.

Meanwhile, at the Westminster end, you have

direct access to the people – ministers and civil servants – taking decisions that affect the life of millions. The free TV licences at 75 resulted from a 2-minute discussion that I had with the Chancellor at the time. He was under pressure to offer them to everyone over 65, but had decided that would be too expensive. I suggested 75 as a sensible compromise (at 75 your savings may be running down and you may be less mobile and more dependent on TV for pleasure), and it was extraordinarily satisfying to find it in the Budget a month later.

Moreover, you're the direct link between constituents and the decision-makers – if someone has a good idea, you can pass it directly to the person who can make it happen. In a country of 60

million people, it's as direct as democracy gets.

What's more, you can follow up any conceivable interest. I'm particularly interested in economics, energy, the environment, prisons and animal welfare, so I've served on the Treasury committee, worked as assistant to the energy minister and the environment team, sponsored numerous animal welfare bills and currently sit on the Justice Committee. The Conservative MP Patrick Mercer is especially interested in the army (he was aide-de-camp to my cousin, General Palmer, so we've always got on well), so he's a front-bench spokesman on military issues. The LibDem MP Evan Harris is passionate about science, so he's called in every debate on the issue. There isn't a subject in the world that isn't a bit

influenced by politics, and you can specialise in it and become one of Parliament's recognised experts who ministers and their shadows will ask for advice.

So you get to help large numbers of people individually and influence the lives of millions. Isn't that a great job? And isn't it a pity if the sordid behaviour of some politicians makes people despise them all?

In the coming weeks, you'll be wooed by half a dozen of us seeking to represent you. It will be an honour and a privilege for whichever of us wins. But I hope that, as you listen to each of us, however much you disagree with things we say, you'll give us all a bit of credit for wanting to do some good for our community – and maybe you'll encourage your children to think about doing it too?

