

The Story of the Riverside Park Protests

Part Two of the Story

The Council decide to go ahead with the shopping centre: John and Sara respond

Despite all the hard work of the protesters, the council decide to allow the building of the shopping centre to go ahead.

Many people, including John and Sara, feel angry that they have not been listened to. John and Sara are determined to stop the building of the shopping centre and decide to have one last go at preventing it from happening. Before the building work can begin, all the beautiful old trees in the park need to be cut down. So, the two friends chain themselves to the largest and oldest trees.

The workers from the building company cut through the chains with electric saws. The police arrest them and take them to the police station. The police charge them with 'disturbing the peace' and gave them a formal caution. The friends feel angry with the building company and the police about the way they have been treated. They feel that they have not been shown any respect.

Violent Protest

John and Sara are really upset that all their actions have not stopped the destruction of the park. They now decide that only direct action will save the park. John and Sara go on the Internet to see if they can find any groups that can help them. They easily find a group called 'Direct Action Now' that have taken action to try and stop the building of shopping centres in the past.

They have many emails and also a secret mobile phone conversation. Adam and Sophia from 'Direct Action Now' tell John and Sara that they are really brave and they were will be real heroes for being prepared to take action for their beliefs. They also tell them how to carry out an attack.

John and Sara decide to attack the office building of 'Newmarket Builders'. They think that this might make them change their minds about building the shopping centre. One Saturday morning, they attack the building, setting it on fire. They do not mean to hurt anyone. The offices are closed but there are two cleaners working there making sure the offices are clean for Monday morning. The two cleaners are badly burnt in the fire and are taken by ambulance to the hospital where doctors work hard to save their lives.

Both the local newspaper and the local TV station have the attack on the offices as headline news. The television news starts with a film of the burnt out offices and pictures of the burnt out offices are on the front page of the local evening newspaper.

(This story is adapted from an activity on pages 35 to 37 in the book 'Radicalisation and Terrorism' by Alison Jamieson and Jane Flint)