



# Media Release

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## **REWARD TO HELP FIND CHERRY TREE CULPRITS**

**FIFTEEN** hundred pounds has been put up as a reward leading to the arrest of those who were responsible for the destruction over this weekend of 28 of the 30 recently planted cherry trees on Harrogate’s much loved ‘Cherry Tree Walk’ which runs across The Stray.

Local businessmen Paul Whiers and Guy Tweedy are putting up this money to try and bring those responsible to a quick court hearing.

Hours of closed circuit television footage are being watched leading from the town centre to the The Stray and Harrogate Council’s park chiefs are already talking to the police.

Councillor Pat Jones, Cabinet Member for Leisure and Amenity Services, said: “I am absolutely heartbroken. How could they do this? The replacement of these trees has been hard won. Not least of which because they are expensive but also because they are difficult to source. As it is, they were planted for just four weeks before these criminals – and that is what they are, they are not mere vandals – have mindlessly snapped them off. All 28 of them. Interestingly enough, they have left the two nearest to the road perhaps thinking that they may be spotted. We will use whatever powers we have, either by finding CCTV footage or witnesses to the desecration, to run these criminals down.”

The original 100 cherry trees were planted on Milton Way as part of the celebrations to mark the Queen’s Coronation in 1953. And each spring, the avenue has been covered in a swathe of pink blossom, which has given pleasure to many thousands of people for over half a century. Many of the original trees have had to be removed because they had become diseased or had come to the end of their natural life. The replacement trees were planted to ensure this very popular walk remains a pleasure for generations to come.

“We won’t be beaten”, added Councillor Jones. “The council will find the money to replace the damaged trees, which have already been ordered. And in a further very generous gesture, Mr Tweedy and Mr Whiers are going to help finance them. The council will find the extra money needed to replace all 28.”

Anyone with any information should contact Harrogate Police on 0845 6060247 or call **Crimestoppers 0800 555111**.