

NORTH KELVIN MEADOW CAMPAIGN

P r e s s R e l e a s e

LOCAL RESIDENTS AND MSPS CONDEMN GCC'S "ABSURD LEGAL ACTION" AGAINST COMMUNITY GARDENING GROUP

Glasgow, 19 August 2009:

GLASGOW MSPS AND LOCAL RESIDENTS IN MARYHILL HAVE REACTED WITH ANGER AND DISBELIEF TO GCC'S DECISION TO TAKE THE NORTH KELVIN MEADOW CAMPAIGN TO COURT FOR CLEANING UP AND IMPROVING DERELICT LAND ON THE SITE OF THE FORMER CLOUSTON STREET PLAYING FIELDS .

Douglas Peacock, chair of the North Kelvin Meadow Campaign, and Karen Chung, treasurer, have been summonsed with the 'North Kelvinside Green Space Initiative' (sic) to appear at Glasgow Sheriff Court on Friday, 21 August at 12 noon. GCC is seeking to prevent the community group caring for the land, which has never had building on it and has been left derelict by GCC for over two decades, in order to facilitate its sale to a property developer.

Commenting on the court action, Patrick Harvie MSP said: "The City Council have seriously misjudged popular feeling about the North Kelvin Meadow, and they will regret this absurd legal action. Local people are being taken to court for improving their public space, for working together and for growing their own fruit and veg, something which Glasgow needs to do much more of. The North Kelvin Meadow Campaign are Glasgow at its finest, and the Council should be listening to them, not prosecuting them."

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The court action appears to contravene directly GCC's own policy towards derelict land. A motion passed last year states: "City Plan 2 encourages the use of vacant and derelict land as temporary greenspace. Council [...] resolves to work with site and property owners to temporarily use vacant land for energy crop production and failing that to landscape vacant sites to create simple, but well maintained grassed areas open to the public."

The local community is particularly angered by the court action because GCC has consistently refused to meet with the community group, which has some 200 active members, despite frequent overtures and attempts by Bob Doris MSP to broker a meeting.

Local resident Gordon Barnes said: "I am shocked to learn that GCC have decided to take members of the North Kelvin Meadow Campaign to court. I am thoroughly appalled at this grossly disproportionate action and I am utterly amazed that our local authority desires to pursue legal action in court in preference to discussing and resolving the matter calmly and rationally. Their heavy-handed actions do nothing constructive to resolve the issue and only serve to demonstrate how out of touch they are with the people they represent."

Some members of the community have also criticised the way negotiations regarding the future of the land were handled in the past. Local resident Ian Black said: "Who breaks a butterfly upon a wheel? This huge overreaction by Glasgow City Council to a handful of their own citizens trying to grow a few vegetables and the odd flower on disused land is beyond senseless. What exactly is it that makes the Council act in this way? Is it that close examination of their dealings will reveal irregularities in their negotiations with previous objectors to their rush to rid us of this green and pleasant place?"

The North Kelvin Meadow Campaign also has the support of Glasgow Region MSPs Robert Brown and Bill Kidd, as well as Canal Ward councillors Billy McAllister and Kieran Wild. A petition protesting at GCC's decision to sell the land has attracted over 500 signatures. A strong turnout of supporters is expected at the Sheriff Court on Friday.

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Notes for editors:

The **NORTH KELVIN MEADOW CAMPAIGN** was launched on 13 October 2008 after Glasgow City Councillor, Jim MacKechnie, rejected out-of-hand the results of a survey conducted in August 2008 by Douglas Peacock, chairman of the **NORTH KELVIN MEADOW CAMPAIGN**. The survey showed local residents overwhelmingly supported the creation of a green space on the former Clouston Street pitches and opposed the Council's plan to sell the land to a property developer for the construction of 115 flats.

Since its launch the **NORTH KELVIN MEADOW CAMPAIGN** has worked to transform the former pitches, which have been disused for over two decades and had become a dumping ground, into a multi-use community green space comprising allotments, an orchard and a wild meadow. Members of the local community have come together to clear the land of rubbish, repair and paint fences, and install composting facilities and raised-bed allotments. A disused shed, which had become a drugs den, has been cleared of used needles and secured with the help of a grant from O2 'It's Your Community'.

A 'Big Lunch' event (part of the nationwide Eden Project) at the North Kelvin Meadow on 21 July attracted support from over 100 local residents. An online and paper petition protesting against GCC's plans to sell the North Kelvin Meadow to a property developer has attracted over 500 signatures.

The online petition can be found at: www.gopetition.com/online/28274.html