

Council's court bid to kick out eco volunteers

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Daily Express
20.08.09

A COUNCIL has been accused of bullying green-fingered volunteers after taking them to court for transforming derelict ground into a community allotment.

Glasgow City Council secured a restraining order banning the group from growing vegetables or enjoying barbecues and other events on the land.

Volunteers with the North Kelvin Meadow Campaign have won awards for their work at the disused former football pitches in Glasgow's West End.

But the Labour-controlled local authority has obtained an interdict against the group because it wants to sell off the land to a property developer.

An army of 200 residents cleared used needles, rubbish and weeds to create an orchard, allotments and meadow for families in nearby tenements. The project has reduced crime, vandalism and graffiti and become a haven for families in the built-up area.

But officials have taken legal action after the group refused to move, putting the £20million deal to build 115 flats in jeopardy.

Yesterday residents vowed to fight on and launched an appeal for donations to fund the £10,000 legal battle to have the interdict overturned at a hearing on Friday.

Scottish Green Party co-leader Patrick Harvie said: "The council has seriously misjudged popular feeling about the North Kelvin Meadow, and they will regret this absurd legal action. Local people



Members of the North Kelvin Meadow campaign are determined to overturn the council's interdict, left

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 council has left the 1.4-hectare site in Clouston Street abandoned for the past 25 years. It was once two public football pitches, and is one of the largest open spaces left in Glasgow.

The group began clearing the site last October, filling 60 bin bags, and allowing families to enjoy its mature lime and ash trees, wild flowers and grasses.

Now there is an apple orchard, and raised beds have been built to grow carrots, onions, potatoes, courgettes, garlic and herbs. On Friday the group's chairman,

Douglas Peacock, and treasurer, Karen Chung, will attend Glasgow Sheriff Court for a hearing to review the interdict, which came into force last week.

Mr Peacock, 45, a finance manager for the Clydesdale Bank who has lived near the site for 12 years, said: "We're taken aback by the council's attitude. It seems draconian and heavy-handed. We just want to have a green space that fits the council's own policy exactly, and we'll fight this all the way."

Glasgow City Council yesterday said the land had been earmarked for development. A spokesman added: "We issued an eviction notice on July 15 against those people who are using a piece of land on the former Clouston Street pitches as an allotment. They have no consent to do this. Clearly they did not vacate the site, hence the matter going to court."