

Gardeners' turf war

Clean-up lands
green group
duo in the dock

By Alison Mann

WHEN a green-fingered group tried to tidy up an urban wasteland, they might have expected to get the backing of their local council.

Instead, they will find themselves in the dock tomorrow - facing a court action that could cost thousands of pounds.

Local authority chiefs have earmarked the derelict site for housing and have vowed to use the full force of the law to evict them.

Last night, as members prepared to face Scottish justice for planting a few vegetables, they condemned the council for using 'bully-boy tactics'.

The row erupted after the North Kelvin Meadow Campaign cleared and transformed former football pitches which have been derelict for more than two decades. The area had turned into a drug den and the group used a grant from mobile phone firm O2 to create allotments, an orchard and a meadow.

But Glasgow City Council claimed they had no permission to be there and ordered them to leave.

Douglas Peacock, chair of the 200-strong group, will appear at the city's sheriff court tomorrow along



Good growing: The waste ground was transformed thanks to a grant from mobile phone firm O2

with his treasurer, Karen Chung. Mr Peacock said: 'It's a frightening prospect defending yourself for planting a few vegetables. We have cleaned up the land and it is now a beautiful, wild flowering meadow that will benefit the community.'

'Until the council scheme gets under way we could plant a few bulbs and flower beds. Most people in the community only have window boxes and don't have the money to buy raised beds.'

Local resident, Gordon Barnes said: 'I am shocked at the council's grossly disproportionate action and

apprehend they are taking it to court rather than discussing and resolving the matter calmly and rationally.'

Green MSP Patrick Harvie said the council had seriously misjudged local feeling and said it would regret the 'absurd' legal action.

He added: '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.'

In 2008 the council passed a scheme to allow temporary green space to be maintained on land where develop-

ments have been put on hold due to the economic downturn. But that does not apply here because the ground is former football pitches and will be used for development.

A council spokesman said last night: 'This is not community green space. Under the proposed development a park will be created covering one fifth of the total area. There will also be family homes and a games space.'

'We served the group with an eviction order last month and we feel we have acted in the community's best interests.'



Battle: Douglas Peacock