

RYEBANK FIELDS COMMUNITY GROUP PRESS RELEASE

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For immediate release
PHOTOS attached

Manchester Metropolitan University and their proposed developer Step Places challenged as they decimate active wildlife corridor at Ryebank Fields

Manchester and Trafford residents fighting to save a city green space from development to provide 120 expensive houses have today challenged and stopped contractors working for Step Places and Southway Housing on behalf of Manchester Metropolitan University (MMU). Without the contracted ecologist from Urban Green being physically present at all times, the contractors, Cornthwaite Tree Care, were using heavy machinery to clear vegetation from an active wildlife corridor, in close proximity to the habitat of protected species and in contravention of specific wildlife legislation. When asked repeatedly to provide proof of their authority, methods statement and risk assessment, Steve Lithgoe, Senior Project Manager from Step Places, repeatedly refused.

Members of the public in attendance witnessed their attempts to bully and intimidate members of the local community who stood their ground for several hours, stopping the destruction and continuing to insist that the contractors offer documentation to explain what they were doing – and why. In 2019, similar intrusive works disturbed hibernating mammals, leaving them disorientated and resulting in the death of a hibernating hedgehog.

MMU have once again failed to act in accordance with their own green credentials, wilfully ignoring them in the pursuit of profit.

Ryebank Fields Community Group (RFCG) chairperson, Dr Rhetta Moran said “It is utterly despicable to see the devastation caused today by would- be housing profiteers who consistently fail to comply with legislation and best practice. We should not be having to police their activities nor continuously expose their complete absence of transparency and accountability. If they aren’t acting outside of procedure they have nothing to hide, so why are they withholding information from us?”

The local community have created their own planning application to retain Ryebank Fields as a community woodland and meadow. The application reference is: **143413/FO/2025**. You can find and support it by visiting the council’s planning portal at: [143413/FO/2025 | Change of use of former university playing fields to community woodland and meadow. | Land Bound By Longford Road, Peveril Crescent, Rye Bank Road And Longford Park \(commonly Referred To As Ryebank Fields\) Manchester M21 9WW](#)

Further details about the campaign to Save Ryebank Fields can be viewed on the RFCG website: <https://ryebankfieldscommunity.co.uk>

ENDS

Photo Credit: Jay Clarke

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT ryebankfieldscommunity@gmail.com; Tom Butler on 07833 358703

Ryebank Fields is public land that was gifted to Manchester Polytechnic (now Manchester Metropolitan University (MMU)) as a sports facility in the mid-1970s. The area was formerly a clay pit for Jackson's Brickworks; it then became an unregistered tip and was remediated in 1972 under the publicly funded 'Operation Eyesore' to make it safe to walk and play on. The University abandoned Ryebank Fields in 1996, since which time this Local Green Space has naturally re-wilded into a richly biodiverse wildlife 11-acre haven tended, over four generations, by local people. Developers acting on behalf of MMU, want to destroy the land for expensive housing. Local residents and their supporters are determined to stop this attempt to cash in on this public land at the expense of wildlife and the community.

OTHER CONTACTS

MMU Press Office: 0161-247-3935/07789140896

Step Places: 0161-200-8590

Cornthwaite Tree Care: 01257-231590

Southway Housing: 0161-448-4200

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