

Media Statement for immediate release:

Leeds Community Project explores untapped potential in LS6

On the 13th February 2015, Leeds Community Project legally occupied the non-residential areas of 6 Grosvenor Mount, LS6 2DX. Leeds Community Projects aims are to open up the space for the local community, and to facilitate discussions around how the unique infrastructures, including the glasshouses and garden, can be used to benefit the communities of Leeds.

The former University of Leeds research site, a unique space of nearly one acre, contains seven glasshouses and many established plants, including rare species. It now holds many future possibilities for sustainable food growing and can be envisioned as a space for education and social events, as well as a space for nature, and wildlife.¹

Since its closure in 2011, North Hyde Park Residents Association tried to designate 6 Grosvenor Mount as a 'community asset' and took this to Leeds City Council in an attempt to halt plans. The designation was not successful because the Council argued that the space was not being utilised by the local community. However, use of the space by the local community has not been possible due to the site being closed off. There have also been attempts by several individuals, including students, to communicate with Leeds University to prevent the sale for private investment and to open the space for community benefit, but the university has not continued discussions.

The University has been granted detailed planning permission to renovate the current residential building and to build seven new houses where the outbuildings, glasshouses and gardens now stand. It is currently in the process of selling the space to a private investor. We believe that Leeds University has committed to values of education and sustainability, and selling the site for private investment does therefore not align with these.

Due to the imminence of the sale, Leeds Community Project has taken action. Since the space has been opened, activities have already begun including food growing, community social events and, in conjunction with The Real Junk Food project, a food initiative is being launched. On 14th February, Leeds Community Project held its first general meeting. Over 60 members of the Leeds community came to support the project, including local residents. This, alongside the positive response to the social media campaign, has shown that there is potential and enthusiasm to discuss a future for 6 Grosvenor Mount beyond housing.

Leeds Community Project's primary goals are to immediately stop the sale of 6 Grosvenor Mount, open it up to the communities of Leeds and facilitate discussions exploring the potential of the unique infrastructure so it better benefits local communities and interest groups.

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¹ Opened in 1946 as an experimental garden and biological research area, the site consists of one residential building, several outbuildings and classrooms, 7 large glasshouses and a variety of large established plants, including some protected species, on a plot of 0.92 acres