

Why Save Ryebank Fields?



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Background

Ryebank Fields in Chorlton provided clay for Jackson's Brickworks. Once disused it became a dumping ground for all sorts of toxic rubbish. In the 1970s, under "Operation Eyesore", it was reclaimed by the council and **given** to Manchester Metropolitan University (MMU), **under covenant**, to be used as playing fields.

Football hasn't been played there for over 20 years and it's been reclaimed by nature with a huge number of trees and plants. The Friends of Ryebank Fields think this biodiverse green space is worth saving, a rare urban wild green space.

Biodiversity

The fields are home to over 1,400 trees, 194 of which are mature trees. There are foxes, owls, small mammals including bats, and over 60 species of birds. Once it's gone, it's gone forever.

Mancunians breathe some of the most polluted air in Europe, and this can cause heart disease, cancer, dementia, asthma – it is wrong and unnecessary to destroy

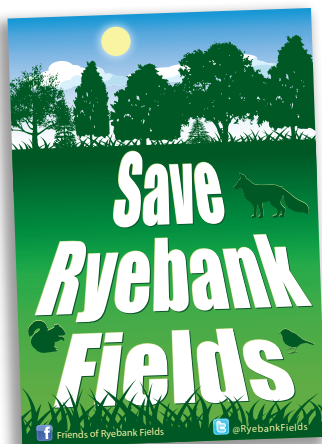
this biodiverse green space. There is a primary school right next door, it's highly likely these young children would be the first to suffer.

Unsuitable Location

The most serious problem with locating housing on Ryebank Fields is increased traffic. Longford and Ryebank Roads are already badly congested, particularly during the 'school run'. Trafford councillors are opposed to allowing traffic to exit on the Trafford side.

The land acts as a natural floodplain during the Winter, so any loss of trees and development would be worrying for nearby residents.

Ryebank Fields was originally known as "The Isles" and had many large ponds. Old maps show both Black Brook to the North and Longford Brook running centrally through Ryebank Fields (they are still somewhere underneath). With toxic waste flytipped there in the past, there is the possibility of leachates and methane gas, it must not be disturbed at any cost.



The 'Nico Ditch'

This is an ancient trench which runs through the fields – originally a boundary marker, dating back to the Anglo-Saxon period and mentioned in the Domesday Book of 1086. The Friends group has applied for Scheduled Ancient Monument status, to ensure its preservation.

Manchester Met: UK's Greenest University?!

In 2017 MMU was awarded first place in the **People & Planet University League**, for 'environmental and ethical performance'. This year it won a 'Green Gown Award' for the quality of its 'sustainability statement' of 2016-17, and it was also a finalist for **Sustainability Institution of the Year**.

Vice-Chancellor Malcolm Press describes MMU as "the greenest university in the UK", at the 'Green Summit' in 2018 he spoke of his pride in "identifying the region's ecological, urban and climate problems and together deliver[ing] solutions." Most experts realise the importance of biodiversity within cities. But when it comes to Ryebank Fields, MMU just wants to cash in. The fields could be used as an ecological resource (student projects, forest schools, etc.)

In 2017, Malcolm Press said, "Manchester Met is in an exceptionally strong position to help drive a more sustainable society and economy. We contribute to this through... our continued progress towards reducing the environmental impact of our business activities."

"Our contribution to preserving and enhancing biodiversity and green spaces, particularly in densely populated urban areas such as Manchester, is vital."

[MMU sustainability statement 2016-17, p.20]

Here's a great opportunity for MMU to reduce their environmental impact by saving Ryebank Fields, instead of destroying them and the wildlife living there.

Housing Boom

This is not about housing. Currently across Manchester there is a housing BOOM taking place with MMU playing a central role. Thousands of new properties are being built in Manchester. Seventy 'executive homes' on Ryebank Fields is fairly irrelevant in terms of achieving housing targets. These fields are **not** a suitable location for development; even 'affordable' or social housing is not an option here.

This is not about housing provision - it's about profit and greed.

Council Favours

A few years ago, Manchester City Council gave Birley Fields to MMU (for £1), so it could vacate the Didsbury Campus. This gift was logged as being worth £5.3m in MMU's accounts. The university then built a huge number of student flats on Birley Fields with another massive and controversial development planned. The Didsbury site has now yielded 94 'executive homes' with no affordable or social housing. MMU is using its wealth to build a property empire. So much for sustainability and biodiversity!

They also stand to profit massively from the £250m Kampus development in Manchester City Centre.

MMU aren't needy or underfunded - they are greedy and hypocritical. Their environmental claims are **greenwash**.

How You Can Help?

Please follow us on Twitter, and click on 'Tweets & replies' in order to retweet our responses: **@RyebankFields** **#saveRyebankFields**

We have a mailing list, so please email us to be added.

We can't win this without the support of the local community:
ryebankfieldsfriends@gmail.com

Sign our petition – go to: **www.saveryebankfields.org**

Send a message that this is wrong, and that MMU's green credentials will be in tatters if they go ahead.

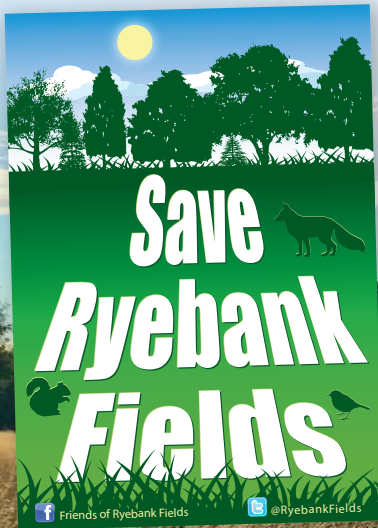
Konstantinos Tzoulas,

Chair of Biodiversity Management Group: **k.tzoulas@mmu.ac.uk**

Malcolm Press (whose academic background is being an expert on biodiversity and climate change - please remind him of this):

Vice-Chancellor@mmu.ac.uk

Sir Richard Leese (leader of M'cr City Council) **r.leese@manchester.gov.uk**



Display our poster. Show your friends and neighbours that you care about green space – make sure everyone knows about the campaign.

(Posters are available from Chorlton Bookshop and Longford Park Café, or get in touch and we can deliver: **ryebankfieldsfriends@gmail.com**)