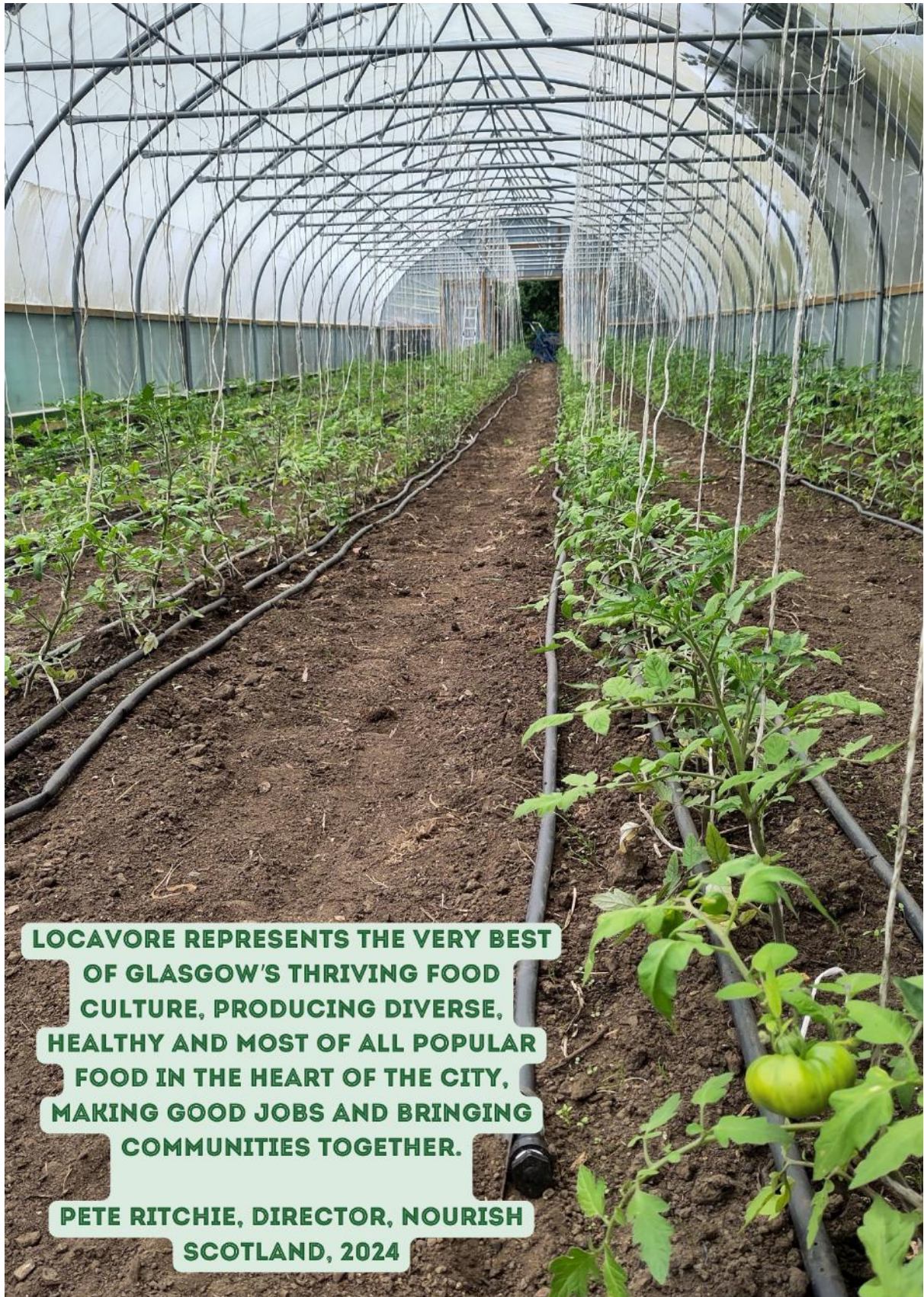




Bellahouston,
we have a problem.



**LOCAVORE REPRESENTS THE VERY BEST
OF GLASGOW'S THRIVING FOOD
CULTURE, PRODUCING DIVERSE,
HEALTHY AND MOST OF ALL POPULAR
FOOD IN THE HEART OF THE CITY,
MAKING GOOD JOBS AND BRINGING
COMMUNITIES TOGETHER.**

**PETE RITCHIE, DIRECTOR, NOURISH
SCOTLAND, 2024**

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In addition to growing food for personal use, there has been increasing interest in developing a local food economy – bringing together local food producers with outlets for their produce, such as cafés, restaurants, local markets, caterers and processors. Growing the local food economy has the potential to deliver a variety of benefits to the city, including: fresher and better quality food for consumers; less pollution and fewer food miles; enhanced economic development and more jobs; a better skilled workforce; and sustainably produced food, with health and wellbeing benefits for growers and the contribution the positive impacts in relation to biodiversity, landscape and animal welfare.

George Gillespie, Executive Director of Neighbourhoods, Regeneration & Sustainability in the *Food Growing Strategy Update June 2024*

The same text had earlier appeared in the *Open Space Strategy, 2020*

We want Glasgow to be a city where tasty, healthy, affordable food is accessible to everyone. Where local food enterprises are supported and celebrated. Where we produce, provide, purchase and consume food that is good for the planet, good for animal welfare, and good for those involved in growing, making and selling it. In doing this, we will work towards an inclusive, sustainable, resilient and fair economy for our whole community.

Glasgow City Food Plan

The Glasgow Food and Climate Declaration embodies many of the issues closest to the City of Glasgow, and that is that climate justice and social justice are indivisible. Our transition to net-zero must be a just transition with people and communities at its heart.

Cllr Susan Aitken, leader of Glasgow City Council

The Chard Holding Group is a key player in the restructuring of Scotland's food system and we recognise the pivotal role they play in the Scottish food economy, and particularly in the organic food sector.

Robert Fraser, Executive Director, The Real Farming Trust, 2024

Locavore is the most successful example of what an alternative food system in Glasgow could look like, offering practical solutions and opportunities for a healthier, local, more environmentally friendly food system. The work of Locavore meets the aims set out in the Glasgow City Food Plan as well as the National Good Food Nation Plan, Glasgow needs to be able to grow and produce its own food, and for this to be integrated into the local economy. We need Locavore."

Ebany Dohle, Urban Agriculture Coordinator,
Food and Climate Action Project, Glasgow Community Food Network, 2024

Introduction

At the time of writing Glasgow City Council is instructing Locavore (operated by The Chard Holding Group CIC) to vacate Bellahouston Nursery by the 31st of July.

An exit by this date is not feasible and enforcing this would likely result in closure of Locavore in its entirety with the loss of 80 livelihoods and an extensive range of social and environmental goods that our social enterprise provides in Glasgow and beyond.

The current position has been reached following a catalogue of delays and errors by various Council departments (see Communications History) going as far back as October 2022 and commencing fully since October 2023.

Within this timeframe we have been reassured we would be able to stay on site and even encouraged to apply for, and [awarded](#), £49,999 of Glasgow City Council funding for projects at the Bellahouston site.

At the same time we have experienced the cold shoulder of the Council; spending large amounts of time sending emails and making phone calls to various Council departments, often without response. In particular the Food Growing Manager, as our appointed Council contact for Bellahouston, and their managers, failed to adequately engage, respond or act in a timely or proportionate fashion. I believe negligence in the Greenspace & Biodiversity department has been a major factor in the situation not being averted earlier.

Attempting to field justification for the situation are a number of Council Officers, from different departments, who I believe broadly support what we do (and have policies and actions plans in their realms that we deliver) but that I expect feel unable to assist us within the constraints of their roles, Council silos, and hierarchy.

The complete lack of transparency regarding the decision making process, and an unwillingness to explore solutions with us makes it appear as though no formal process has been followed. The closest we have got is being told that Senior Management are 'not minded' as well as an unarranged visit from the Head of Property Asset Management who demonstrated an incredibly limited understanding of our work, while appearing to have great disdain for it, see the Communication history section for details on this.

Given the existential threat created by the Council's current position, and the failure of Officers so far to take us up on a solutions focused approach, we have decided to take public action. In this report we aim to raise awareness of the value of the work we are doing and the issues we are currently facing. We hope it will inspire you to support us, and put pressure on the Council to rethink their position and work with us to secure our future.

It's a long document and we hope you can make time to read it. Feel free to stick to the parts that interest you, and please visit our [website](#) to sign our petition and find out more about other actions you can take to help us.

Reuben Chesters - Founder of Locavore CIC and The Chard Holding Group CIC

Background

Locavore CIC was founded in 2011 as a social enterprise on a mission to help build sustainable food systems which are better for people, planet and local economies.

In the years that followed it grew and developed becoming a grower, a retailer and a wholesaler while continuing to deliver projects and raise awareness of food environment issues. Over the years it won numerous awards and was featured in national media for its work (see section on Recognition).

In late 2021 it embarked on an ambitious scale up, opening 3 new locations, purchasing land for growing and opening a central warehouse by early 2022. Timing for the growth was ill-fated with the arrival of the cost of living crisis making sustainable trading an uphill struggle for the organisation.

Through 2022 and 2023 Locavore CIC worked to balance its books and find a route through and out the other side but despite the best efforts of the whole team this was not possible and it went into administration in January 2024.

The same management team raised personal funds and took investment from The Real Farming Trust to purchase elements of Locavore and save as much of the viable social enterprise activities as possible. This included the brand, veg boxes and the two Glasgow shops as well as organic growing activities. This new company, The Chard Holding Group CIC (after our favourite vegetable) is the successor organisation and continues the work of Locavore CIC, still trading as Locavore.

It took a great deal of work to ensure that the transition of activities was as smooth as possible. This included successfully securing the following:

- The leases of two commercial properties (Govanhill and Partick Branches) were assigned to The Chard Holding Group CIC; these requests were made in late November 2023 to two separate landlords and agreed and completed to the timescale agreed.
- A new lease was signed on Left Field Market Garden in East Renfrewshire which had previously been held by Locavore CIC
- The Chard Holding Group CIC agreed a new sub-let agreement with Queens Park Bowling Club for The Croft, another urban growing space.
- The Chard Holding Group CIC novated five finance agreements, reassigning equipment and debt from one social enterprise to the other.
- East Ayrshire Council novated their contract to buy organic ingredients for school meals from Locavore to Chard without any interruption to supply.
- We transferred almost 80 employees to the new organisation with TUPE protection.
- Agreements were made to continue to support and protect suppliers' interests following the transfer of business to ensure continuity of supply and ongoing support of the local food economy.

Above all we expended energy to attempt to ensure the lease of Bellahouston Nursery would be assigned to the successor organisation as it is of critical importance to the new social

enterprise's operations. From prior dealings we did expect the Council to be slow and tried to provide as much room for delay as possible. Despite our best efforts (see Communication History section) to have the lease assigned prior to the administration this was not achieved. This left us occupying Bellahouston without a lease, not for the first time, but with warm words and every indication from our point of contact at the Council that this was in hand and would be resolved.



Happier times with the Council's Convener for Climate, Food Growing Manager and Locavore's Reuben Chesters with other local growers at Locavore Bellahouston.
Publicity photo for the Let's Grow Together Fund 2022, courtesy of GCC

We need you here (at Bellahouston) as much as you need to be here.

Food Growing manager, December 2023

Activities at Bellahouston Nursery

From the end of January 2024 The Chard Holding Group CIC took over much of Locavore's assets and activities, this included all operations hosted at Bellahouston nursery. This section is a summary of these activities over the last four months.

Food Production

We use the site to grow organic vegetables that we sell through our veg box scheme, our shops and through wholesale channels.

Crops change with the seasons. Currently we have the following growing at Bellahouston:

Cucumbers - We're growing 3,000 sq ft of cucumbers in one of the new tunnels erected in 2022. This consists of around 500 plants and will produce up to 10,000 cucumbers between now and October.

Tomatoes - We're growing 4,500 sq ft of tomatoes, both within one of the new tunnels erected in 2022 and within part of the glasshouse which we undertook excavation and backfill of in early 2024. We're growing in excess of 20 varieties of tomatoes this year including trials on cherry tomatoes of different shapes and colours. Since this is a trial it's hard to predict how much we'll produce. Last season we produced over a tonne on a slightly smaller area, in what was a bad year for tomatoes.

Chillies - we are growing several varieties for sale through our veg boxes, shops and for our kitchen to turn into other products such as hot sauce.

Squash - We're growing 6,000 sq ft of squash. All going well this should produce several tonnes of squash by early October. Varieties include Black Futsu, Blue Ballet, Blue Kuri, Green Hokkaido, Patisson Jaune Vert, Rouge Vif Detampes, Sweet Dumpling, and Turks Turban.

Beans - We're growing 6,000 sq ft of beans within one of the damaged original Glasgow City Council tunnels. These are mostly dwarf fresh beans of green, purple and yellow varieties as well as crop trials of other varieties for the Glasgow Community Food Network's Full of Beans project.

Kale - We are growing a small plot of around 600 Sutherland Kale plants this year on a new growing space by the entrance to the site. Sutherland Kale is a rare heirloom variety of kale from the north of Scotland.

Coriander - We currently have half a bed of coriander growing which we expect to produce around 100kg (2000 bunches) from mid July onward. Other crops will follow it.

Basil - We're growing half a bed of basil alongside the coriander and expect it to produce around 100kg (2000 bunches) between now and September. Additionally we are growing other varieties of basil intercropped with tomatoes including Thai basil, cinnamon basil and lemon basil.



Tomato flowers setting in July 2024 in one of the new tunnels installed by Locavore.

The nursery - As well as growing produce to harvest on this site it plays an important role as the nursery for seedlings which are then planted at our Left Field Market Garden. So far this year this has included propagating 10,000 early lettuce, several thousand kale and chard plugs of different varieties, spinach, sweetcorn, celery, fennel and smaller quantities of early salad crops and herbs.

The above represents what is currently growing at Bellahouston. Earlier this year we harvested two polytunnels worth of wintered salads which equated to roughly 4000 bags.

It is important to note that little of the above yields will be harvested if the Council does not revoke its decision to force Locavore off the site on 31st July.

We did have plans to grow even more this year by taking new areas into production using [funding from the Glasgow Food System Development Fund](#). Unfortunately this funding has not been released while we work to resolve our lease. If the funding had been in place we would have brought 7,500 sqft of glasshouse into organic production, re-skinned the 9,000 sq ft polytunnel as well as making improvements to packing and distribution facilities and opening a farm stand.



Chard seedlings getting started in early spring 2024 in the Bellahouston glasshouse.

Veg Boxes

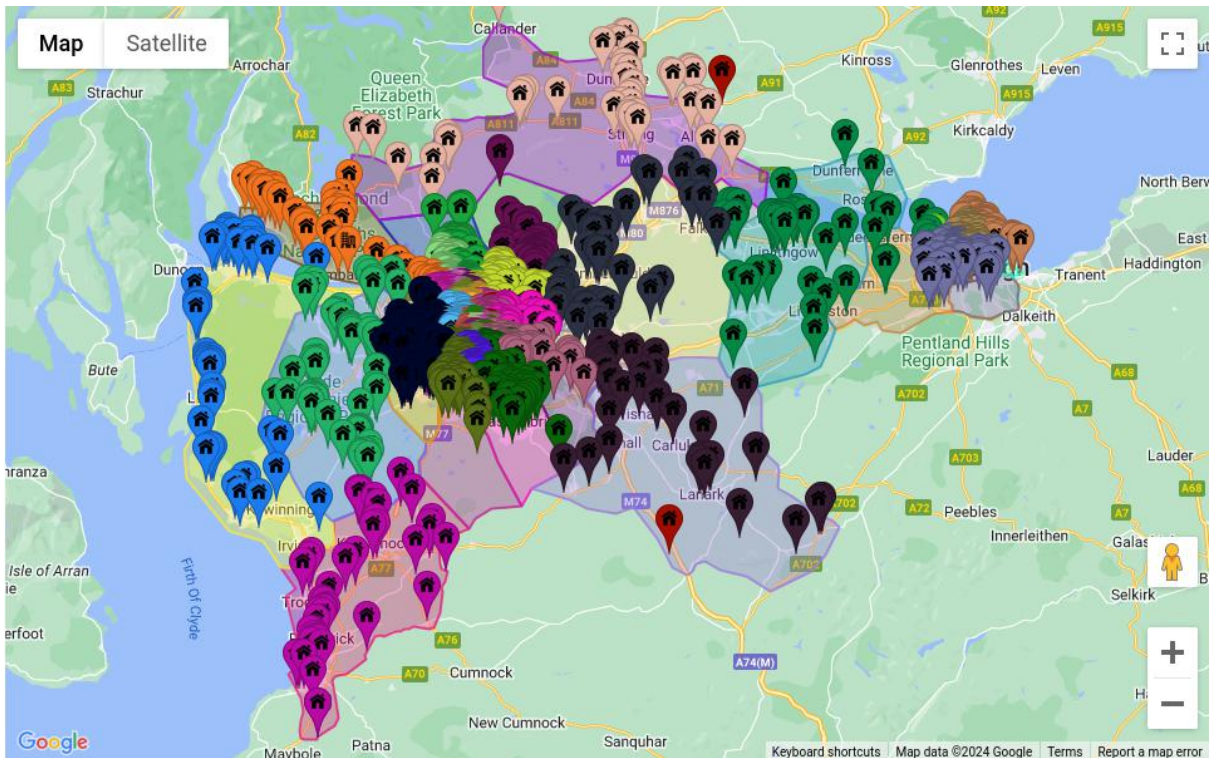
Between January 30th and June 8th, we delivered 20,131 veg boxes from the Bellahouston site, turning over £430,000, and serving around 2000 households across Glasgow and the Central Belt.

In this period we spent £58,000 with Scottish organic farmers including Mossgiel Milk (Ayrshire), Chapel Farm (East Lothian) and Gordon Caldwell (Ayrshire), and grew £21,000 worth of produce ourselves that was sold through the veg boxes. The above figures represent purchasing at a time of year where local sourcing is at its lowest - Summer, Autumn and early Winter figures will be significantly higher.

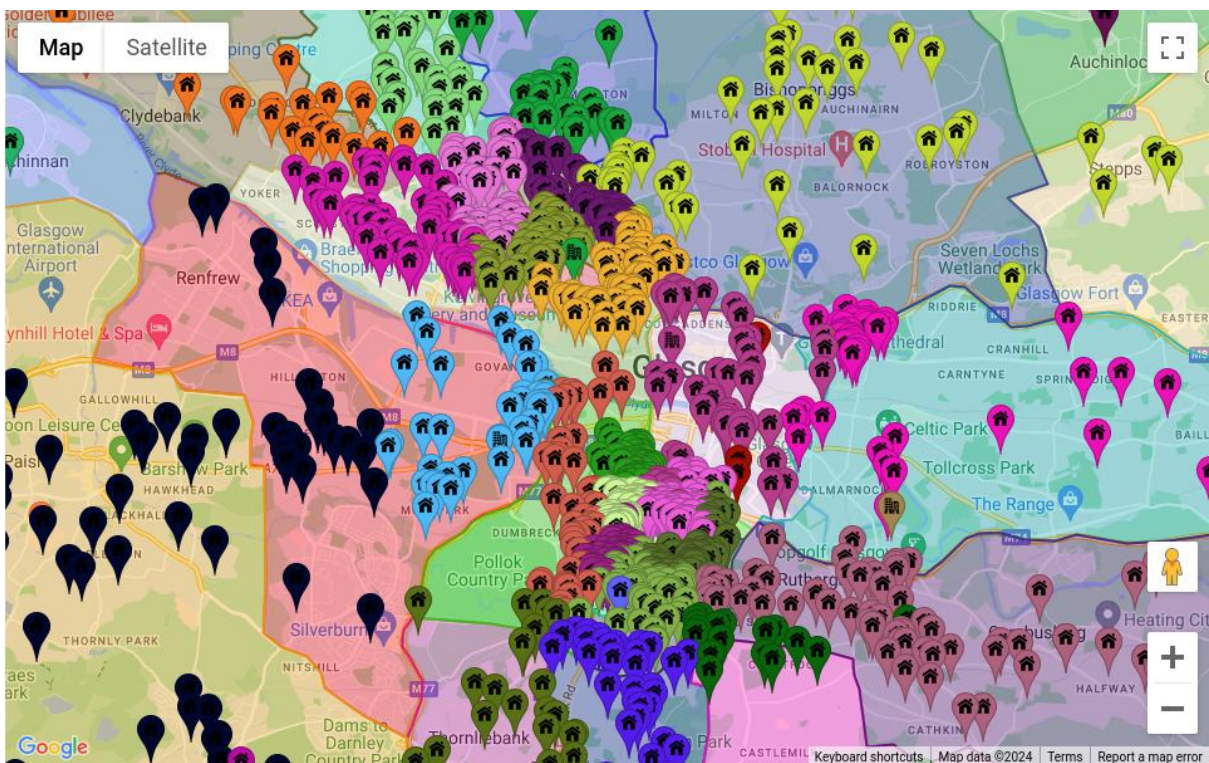
Additionally our veg box department spent over £44,000 with Glasgow based suppliers (Greencity, Dear Green Coffee, Freedom Bakery, Ed's Bees, etc).



Our standard veg box in early spring 2024 with our Bellahouston grown salad.



Veg box customer across our delivery area



Households receiving our veg boxes in and around Glasgow

TAKE ACTION: locavore.scot/act - [SIGN THE PETITION!](#)

Wholesale

We supply local shops, cafes and restaurants such as The Good Choice, Dig In, Millstone, Gavin's Mill and Bakery 287 alongside the Glasgow Uni Food Coop with wholesale produce, providing a further route to market for local and organic produce.

We also recently completed a pilot programme with Nourish Scotland (Yes to Veg) to supply Glasgow City Council nurseries with fresh produce to introduce children to various kinds of vegetables. This covered six nurseries in Cranhill, Drumchapel and Pollok.

Turnover for fresh produce wholesale was approximately £14,000 from the end of January till the end of May.

Procurement Contract

We supply East Ayrshire Council primary schools with ambient organic food staples like pasta, flour, and tinned tomatoes, helping them achieve their Food For Life Gold award.

Between January 30th and May 31st, we supplied East Ayrshire with £25,000 worth of food - over 10.5 tonnes. All of which was dispatched from our Bellahouston site.

Employment on Site

Through the use of Bellahouston Nursery we directly employ 50 people. This is made up of:

- Forty-two Veg Box team members including customer support, administration, packing and delivery team members.
- Four organic growers.
- Four Support Team members who carry out accounts, wholesale and central purchasing functions.

From February until the end of May the employment costs for those directly employed on site was £210,000. We employ a further 30 people who work from our Govanhill and Partick shops and our Govanhill Kitchen as well as a handful of remote staff. Their employment is not based at Bellahouston but it is heavily supported by and tied to our activities at the site.

Although not a formal training provider, volunteering and employment at Locavore has built the capacity of the sector and helped fill skills gaps. Former volunteers and team members have moved onto other roles in the sector including leading other food projects across the country.

Non-Trading Activities

Allotment Plots

We have 120 raised bed allotment plots on site which we make available on a donation basis. Donations have totaled £550 from February- May 2024 which makes a contribution towards staff time to administer the plots and support the plot holders. This makes it a sustainable model which is not reliant on external funding.

We have over 50 people on our waiting list and expect this would be much greater if we actively promoted them - current plot holders and the current wait list are a result of a couple of social media posts. We decided to stop allocating available plots to members of the public due to the uncertainty regarding our tenure of the site. We want to protect keen growers from the disappointment of being removed from their growing space in the middle of the growing season. We would resume allocating the plots as soon as we have comfort that productive and solution-focussed discussion with the Council ensues.

Many of our plotholders were on Council allotment waiting lists when they accepted our plots. Historically this is anecdotal but from the beginning of 2024 we started asking this question at the point of registering interest in a plot. So far around 30% of those who have applied (27 out of 90) have said they are already on another allotment waiting list.

As well as providing space to grow we provide communal tools and host regular drop in sessions where plotholders can meet, ask questions and volunteer with other tasks around the site.

We aspire to double provision within the next two years (to 240 plots) and could sustainably increase it at this rate for a number of years beyond this. This would equate in the creation of more growing spaces than is currently targeted by Glasgow City Council for the next three years (178) in their recent [Food Growing Strategy Update](#).

Volunteering

Bellahouston hosts our market garden volunteers. We currently have 10 volunteers who spend half a day a week volunteering with our growing team, learning the skills of small scale organic horticulture. Volunteers also get a veg box in exchange for their time.

Our volunteer programme has been successful as a springboard to relevant paid employment with some going on to work with us, become growers elsewhere, or start their own food projects. Other organisations, see below, also host volunteering at site.

Composting

On site we have a composting process which we use to turn food waste from veg boxes and site users (as well as crop residue) into compost which is used to build soil health on site.

So far this year we have processed more than 7m³ of food waste, crop residue and arboricultural waste.

Good Food Fund

We collect donations from our customers (predominantly veg box customers) and use these to buy produce for various charities and organisations providing food for people in need. Current regular recipients include GalGael, Central & West Integration Network, Auldhouse Community Church Foodbank, Everlasting Foodbank, Al Farooq, and Queen's Park Govanhill Parish Church Food Bank.

We provide produce at cost price, meaning our customers' donations go further. Since Chard started trading at the end of January till end of May we provided £16,000 worth of food.

Organisations are invited to request produce that is useful to them so we provide a mix of good value local produce (potatoes, carrots), ready to eat items such as apples or bananas and culturally valued produce such as ginger as desired. These figures do not include ad hoc donations of spare produce from the veg boxes which at times can be significant.

The Good Food Fund is not dependent on any external funding and fills a gap in emergency food provision which is usually low in fresh produce.



The Everlasting Food bank is one of the emergency food projects that we support through the Good Food Fund.

Why we can't leave

We believe our tenure of this disused Council plant nursery site brings a multitude of benefits to Glasgow's economy, people and nature. We are committed to continuing to deliver these benefits while simultaneously bringing life back to an underutilised asset. We believe this is something worth striving for, and something the people of Glasgow, and much of the Council, want to see happen.

Given the years of work we have poured into securing the site as a sustainable food hub for Glasgow (and believing we had secured this till 2062) it is not easy to let go just because we've been told by the Council that senior management is 'not minded'. See below - The Locavore Journey for use of Bellahouston.

That is why we have tried our hardest to enter meaningful open discussions with the Council which may allow us to understand their position and with that offer potential solutions, assurances or the safeguards which they may require.

From a purely practical point of view we are not able to leave by the Council deadline of 31st July for the following reasons:

- A site like Bellahouston is not easy to come by: The site is able to accommodate a range of activities from growing to veg box packing and logistics hub and we have invested years of energy and significant amounts of money securing the site and making it suitable for our purposes. Finding a replacement site would take a long time. It took the Council six years to give us a lease, and the progress of the Officer tasked with assisting us to find a new site has so far totaled one phone call in 3 months.
- If we reduced our expectations and sought a warehouse in which to move our veg boxes packing and wholesale it would still take too long. Our previous warehouse took six months from viewing and registering interest till the day we received the keys. Fitting it out took a further two months.
- We run a market garden on site: We rely on the income from crops that we have already planted but won't be able to harvest if we have to leave. Leaving mid-season would be a disaster.
- If we somehow found a site we could move to in time the cost would be prohibitive: As an organisation operating on a tight budget and just a few months after our restructure, we do not have the tens of thousands of pounds required to move all our infrastructure: polytunnels, office containers, equipment, electric vehicle charge points, walk in chillers, forklift chargepoint and of course all our tools and stock.

With it being impossible to relocate by the 31st of July, the other alternative would be to attempt to shut down the parts of the enterprise to which Bellahouston is essential. In practice this would mean closure of our veg box service, our wholesale business and scale down of our growing activities and support team. This would mean redundancy of around 50 members of our team.

The remaining business would lose all the benefits of being part of a larger enterprise which give it the economies of scale to be viable including the logistics and direct buying which are essential to provide our shops with the the stock and margin that they require.

It is unlikely that the remaining business would survive as it would have to carry the cost of making 50 team members redundant while having its income significantly reduced, it's margin shaved and all the same debts to return to creditors. It would not work.

The final option would be administration which would see all 80 staff lose their jobs with suppliers, investors and other creditors losing hundreds of thousands of pounds which would have knock-on impacts on the wider local economy.

Disappointingly, the Council is not minded to engage with us in these conversations and is unwilling to understand and take ownership of the impossible position in which they have put us.

We think the real question is, why can't we stay?

Other Site Users

We host a number of other organisations on site who pay a small fee in exchange for some space and access to shared kitchen and welfare facilities. Agreements are flexible and arranged quickly to meet the needs of users. Between all users, the total charges amount to around £300 a month.

We Are Wonder

Wild Green Space CIC (trading as [We Are Wonder](#)) is a social enterprise dedicated to providing outdoor learning and play opportunities to children and young people in Glasgow.

They have recently been awarded funding from Scottish Enterprise via the Build It Award to develop their outdoor learning programme which is based in Bellahouston Park. Since May 2022 they have been storing their equipment within the glasshouse and using our shared meeting areas for planning.

They have been discussing with us the use of part of the site for the delivery of sessions, especially covered areas. They had been guided by the Council to People Make Glasgow Communities to find their own site but found the process less than straightforward.

Without the use of the current site delivery of their programme would be in jeopardy.

Zam'munda

[Zam'munda](#) is a women led collective that is developing into a social enterprise which aims to grow culturally valued food which is not otherwise available for those with African heritage. The project came out of activities with both Glasgow Community Food Network and Central and Western Integration Network.

Zam'munda have an office on site and a section dedicated to their growing number of plots. Like We Are Wonder (and us) they have struggled working with the Council to access land for their future projects and see Bellahouston as a good home to establish their social enterprise from.

The Orchard Project

[The Orchard Project](#) is the only national charity dedicated solely to creating, maintaining and celebrating community orchards.

Their aim is that everyone in cities across the UK is within walking distance of a productive, well-cared-for, community-run orchard. They believe that orchards have the potential to build stronger communities by providing cherished, nature-rich community food spaces and empowering people to make positive change where they live.

They have undertaken a number of projects within Glasgow, most recently the creation of a new orchard in partnership with the GCC Food Growing team on Kelso Street in Yoker; here we assisted them with land preparation using our compact tractor.

At Bellahouston the Orchard Project stores all equipment for their Clyde Valley Projects which are led by Fergus Walker. They also have outdoor space where fruit trees can be stored in the ground until they need to be planted and find it valuable to have an address where deliveries can be made without the single employee needing to wait around all day.

Held Flowers

Meg Held previously worked for Locavore as a flower grower before starting her own business in late 2023. She grows organic flowers and foliage for sale as bunches and florist buckets as well as offering floristry services for weddings and other events.

She hosts weekly volunteers who get a bunch of flowers in exchange for assisting with plant care and harvesting.

She uses 6500 sq ft of outdoor space as well as having propagation benches within the glasshouse. She benefits from our organic certification (which covers her) as well as access to tools. Most flower deliveries are made by bike but as [Held Flowers](#) supplies to the Locavore shops and Veg Boxes she works with the team on site to share delivery, saving time and reducing CO2.



Local organic flowers grown at Bellahouston, helping pollinating insects and offsetting demand for air freighted cut flowers.

Community arts

A Glasgow-based storyteller and community artist uses a container on site for storage.

Bee Keepers

A group of Glasgow beekeepers keep three hives in one of the dilapidated polytunnels on the site. Located surrounded by flowering vegetables and wildflowers within the park it is a perfect location for the 120,000 or so bees.

Excess honey will be sold through Locavore shops and veg boxes.



Glasgow-grown pumpkins curing in the Bellahouston Greenhouse, Oct 2023

Policy Context

Both Glasgow City Council and the Scottish Government have produced an abundance of paperwork affirming their support for local and sustainable food growing. It has been encouraging to see significant pieces of legislation passed. Glasgow City Council's establishment of a Food Growing team also demonstrates that there is a will and resources to support the sector.

The following section aims to give an overview of a selection of the current policy frameworks as they relate to our work at Bellahouston.

Scottish Government legislation, policies and strategies

The Scottish Parliament introduced several pieces of legislation that strengthen the commitment to sustainable, local food:

Community Empowerment Act (Scotland) 2015

The Community Empowerment Act (Scotland) 2015 was designed to **empower community organisations through the ownership or control of land and buildings**. There are 11 topics covered by the Act including food growing. Part 9 Allotments of the Act includes a **requirement for local authorities to develop a food growing strategy for their area**, including identifying land that may be used as allotment sites and identifying other areas of land that could be used by a community for the cultivation of vegetables, fruit, herbs or flowers. Details about Glasgow's Food Growing Strategy are included further down this document.

Good Food Nation (Scotland) Act 2022

The Good Food Nation (Scotland) Act 2022 further strengthens Scotland's commitment to local and sustainable food. It requires **Good Food Nation plans** for the national level as well as local authority level. The [national plan](#) lists six desired outcomes, including ensuring access to food that is, amongst other things, nutritious and sustainable, **“creating a sustainable food system that supports Scotland's net zero ambitions”**, “a thriving food culture with a population who are interested in and educated about good and sustainable food”, and that “decisions we make in Scotland contribute positively to local and global food systems transformation”.

The corresponding **Good Food Nation Strategy for Glasgow** will need to be developed by Glasgow City Council in due course.

Sustainable and regenerative farming

In the [Sustainable and regenerative farming - next steps](#) statement Scottish Government pledge to “transform how we support farming and food production in **Scotland to become a global leader in sustainable and regenerative agriculture**.” Locavore is widely recognised as a leader in sustainable food in the UK and Scotland (see section on recognition and the quotes throughout this document).

The statement identifies a need to **build more localised food chains**, to cut food miles and enhance producer values. Our work delivers this and also ties in with the aspiration to **encourage more organic food production**. We build a market for organic food, and growers like Gordon Caldwell have converted substantial areas (25 acres) of their farm to organic as we guaranteed a market for him. **Our production sites are the only organically certified land in Glasgow**. Our market supports the Scottish Government's target of doubling organic certified land in Scotland by the end of the current parliament.

The statement further expresses a wish to support “**more local employment on the land**, more women to enter farming and more new and young entrants into farming” - we have created agricultural employment, which has seen a succession of growers work on our land and then move on to other projects across Scotland. These were predominantly young growers (young farmers are defined as under 40 years of age) and predominantly women. Our work also ties in with the wish to “identify and **develop the skills needed for regenerative and sustainable farming**, changes of land use and adaptation to the changing climate” as this is obviously part of our vision and mission.

Local Food for Everyone

In the recent [update on the development of a Local Food Strategy](#) (Local Food for Everyone) **increasing “the consumption, production, and provision of local food”** is identified as a key aim by the Scottish Government. It's a good summary of all our work so far.

It is notable how well Locavore's work ties in with all three pillars:

1. **Connecting people to local food:** We offer plots for growing food locally and also create jobs to grow food for a living. We source and grow local food and make it available through our shops, cafe, wholesale department, veg boxes, and charitable activities, reaching people on a lower income. We invest in our local economy by always sourcing as locally as possible and supporting local producers.
2. **Connecting Scottish producers with buyers:** We shorten supply chains, increase the amount of local food available across supply chains and build new connections and selling opportunities for local suppliers and the public - through our shops, wholesale and veg boxes which reach people who don't have any local outlets.
3. **Harnessing public sector procurement:** We currently supply East Ayrshire Council with organic food and are keen to expand our offer and win more public procurement contracts in the future as public sector ambitions for organic sourcing grow.

As the update rightly states “increasing the proportion of food that is grown, processed and consumed locally will keep value within local, regional and national economies, supporting jobs across agriculture, retail, tourism, manufacture and hospitality.”

The report even explicitly notes the **positive economic impact of veg box schemes** like ours:

“A UK case study from 2002 indicated that £10 spent on a locally sourced organic produce box scheme generated £25 for the local economy (24km from the farm), compared with £14 generated for the local economy if that £10 had been spent in the supermarket.”

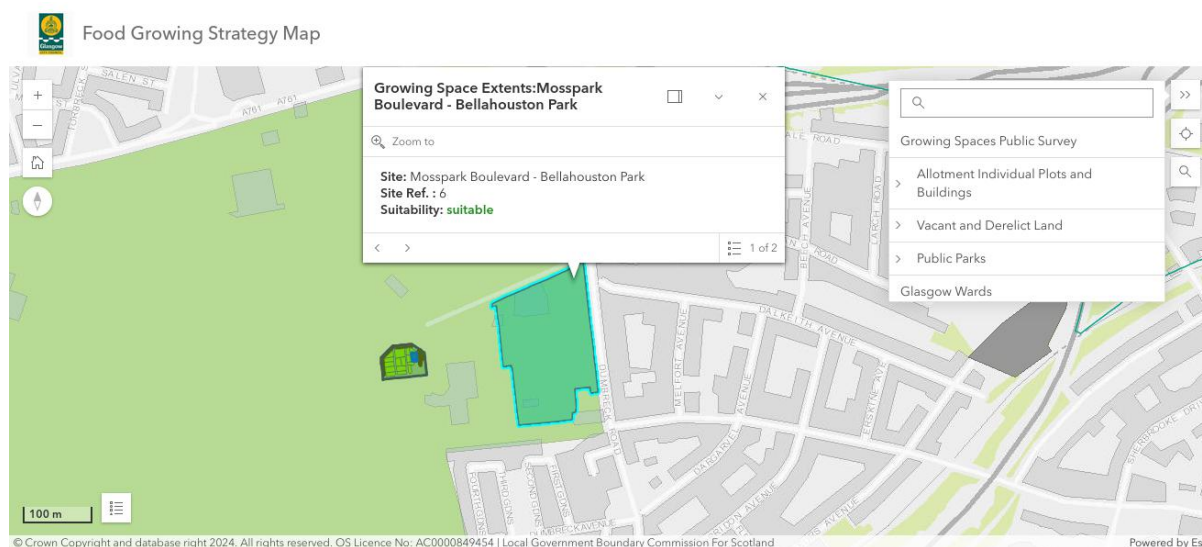
Glasgow City Council

Food Growing Strategy

[Let's Grow Together - Glasgow's Food Growing Strategy 2020-25](#) is Glasgow's implementation of the Community Empowerment Act (Scotland) 2015 requirement to develop a Food Growing Strategy. It is geared towards allowing citizens to grow fruit and vegetables.

- It identifies several routes to **increasing food growing opportunities** across the City including social enterprises leading on the development of projects.
- It refers to “**an easy system for permission to use land owned by the council**” as a key measure requested in their [consultation meetings](#).
- It acknowledges the need to work across Council departments to create an enabling environment for food growing initiatives:
“**We will encourage cross-service joint actions on food growing** by introducing a GCC internal Food Growing Officer Working Group” (Action 12)

Yet our experience has illustrated that the Council has made little or no meaningful progress towards achieving the aims of the Food Growing Strategy in spite of identifying mechanisms for improving the conditions for food growing organisations. Unfortunately, we are not the only organisation that has fallen through the huge gap between policy statements and actions by the Council.



Bellahouston Nursery promoted by the Council as [a site suitable for food production](#), map accessed in July 2024

Strategic Development Plan 2022-27

Further to these national level policies and legislation, [Glasgow City Council's Strategic Development Plan 2022-27](#) acknowledges the climate and ecological emergency as one of the biggest challenges facing the planet and pledges to be ambitious in their plans to respond to it (p. 7). Amongst the various actions identified to accomplish this goal are to **support the growth of an innovative, resilient and net zero carbon economy** and supporting **Zero Waste Shops**. Locavore's two branches in Glasgow are the largest such

shops in Scotland and amongst the few zero waste shops remaining in the City following a boom and then bust of the sector through the pandemic and cost of living crisis.

The Council has committed to “**supporting a fair and sustainable city where everyone gets to contribute** and all can benefit from a flourishing Glasgow.”

It is unclear how shutting down a social enterprise dedicated to sustainable food without meaningful explanation demonstrates fairness or a commitment to sustainability. It certainly won't allow us to contribute to a flourishing Glasgow.

We also note the stated “**need to encourage a culture of openness, transparency and curiosity in the council and in our broader relationships**” (p. 8). Based on our recent experience we recommend concentrated effort is made by the Council to live up to this ambition.

The Strategic Plan 2022-27 is aligned with the Food Growing Strategy and makes direct reference to it.

Glasgow's Climate Plan

[The Council states that they will support:](#)

- “the actions under the ‘Food Growing Strategy’ and the vision set out by ‘Glasgow City Food Plan’ by helping to **increase opportunities for local growing, building our understanding of local food systems and encouraging the transition to healthier, more sustainable and climate-smart food system in the city**”
- “Glasgow’s local food economy by exploring ways for procurement to support local businesses, ethically sourced, sustainable and healthy food”

In addition, the Ecological Working Group draft recommendations state:

“There is great potential for allotments, community gardens and other **food growing initiatives to contribute to creating, protecting and enhancing biodiversity especially where food is grown organically without herbicide usage, and this should be supported.**”

Our experience over the years and in more recent times shows that the Council has a long way to go to come anywhere near these aspirations and there is little recognition of the contributions by organisations like ours to these goals.

Glasgow Food and Climate Declaration

[The Glasgow Food and Climate Declaration](#) launched at COP26 and has been signed by many local and regional authorities around the world, including of course Glasgow. It “brings together local and regional authorities from across the world to speak with a unified voice in committing to putting into practice **integrated food policies to tackle the climate emergency.**”

It recognises that “unsustainable dynamics are locked in along the whole food chain, primarily stemming from industrial food and farming systems” and affirms cities’ potential to lead the way in **driving positive food system change**. By signing the declaration, Glasgow

commits to “developing and implementing integrated food policies and strategies as key tools in the fight against climate change.”

Glasgow Climate Adaptation Plan 2022-2030

The [Glasgow Climate Adaptation Plan 2022-2030](#) yet again affirms the importance of local food production:

“It is essential that the City Development Plan also takes account of the impacts of Global Climate Change on our supply chains and allows for **land to be allocated to local food growing and production** as proposed by the City Food Plan and Glasgow’s Food Growing Strategy.”

It discusses how the City should support food growing:

“Parks and Open spaces also have a crucial role in helping the city adapt to the impacts of climate change, they have a role in: [..]

- Local food growing and production provision for example, **providing space for local, sustainable food growing**, supporting biodiversity connectivity and **resilience to global climate impacts on our food supply chains**”

Food growing in Parks and Open spaces, like Bellahouston Nursery, is a great example of transforming underused Council assets into sites significant for the food resilience of the City.

Open Space Strategy

Glasgow’s [Open Space Strategy](#) also makes multiple references to the city’s support for food growing. In the section “A Healthy Glasgow” - 5.24 (emphasis ours):

“Awareness is increasing of the benefits of local food production, including reducing food miles, packaging and the cost of fresh food, promoting healthy-eating, improving physical activity, mental health and improving the environment, including promoting biodiversity.

The Council is keen to promote more food growing in the City (including in schools) **and it is important that existing provision is protected** and that new opportunities for growing can be created.”

It also explains the benefits of doing so (section 5.29):

“In addition to growing food for personal use, **there has been increasing interest in developing a local food economy** – bringing together local food producers with outlets for their produce, such as cafés, restaurants, local markets, caterers and processors. **Growing the local food economy has the potential to deliver a variety of benefits to the City**, including:

fresher and better quality food for consumers; less pollution and fewer food miles; enhanced economic development and more jobs; a better skilled workforce; and sustainably produced food, with benefits for biodiversity, landscape and animal welfare.”

Action 18 of the Open Space Strategy is: **“We will support the growth of the local food economy and will work with local growers to do so.”**

By enforcing the removal of Locavore from Bellahouston Nursery the Council is acting against the Open Space Strategy policies outlined above.

Circular Economy Route Map for Glasgow 2020-2030

[The Circular Economy Route Map for Glasgow 2020-2030](#) is a further document affirming Glasgow’s commitment to build a vibrant green economy. It identifies the issues with current conventional food production:

“Currently, the agrifood industry is responsible for almost a quarter of greenhouse gas emissions globally and has degraded the natural resources on which it depends, polluting air, water, and soil.”

It also proposes a possible solution, which is supporting local food growing. It is our strong belief that organic vegetable production can accomplish the goals set out in the document.

City Food Plan 2021-2031

Glasgow’s [City Food Plan](#) is a framework to achieve “a food system in Glasgow that is fair, resilient and environmentally sustainable and enables everyone in Glasgow to eat healthy, affordable, culturally appropriate Good Food irrespective of where they live, their income or personal circumstances.” Many stakeholders, including Locavore and Glasgow City Council have been involved in working groups to find ways to progress towards this long-term aspiration. While not being a document published by the council, it is often referred to by council policy. Our work contributes to increasing production of sustainable local food and developing the local food economy which are key themes in the Plan.

Forcing Locavore off our Bellahouston site and shutting down our whole social enterprise would have a negative impact on the delivery of Glasgow’s City Food Plan as we are the only organisation working in a holistic way across local food production and building a market for it alongside delivering many environmental and social benefits.

Summary

The above national and local level policies and strategies demonstrate a clear commitment to local food growing and to supporting organisations such as ours in theory. It is incomprehensible and shocking that this commitment does not lead to any meaningful and joined-up action, by any of the relevant departments in the Council.

Failure to recognise our social enterprise’s strategic relevance for the City and lack of progress by Glasgow City Council have been the defining features of our experience over the past years both directly at Bellahouston and more generally across the food growing sector in Glasgow.

The Locavore Journey for use of Bellahouston Nursery

If you are interested in renting an allotment in Glasgow you can join the waiting list for a plot. [...]

Community growing spaces in your neighbourhood may be the perfect place to start if you would like to get growing as soon as possible.

[Let's Grow Together, Glasgow's Food Growing Strategy storymap](#)

Bellahouston Nursery was previously used as a facility by Glasgow City Council to grow plants for their parks.

In 2016 Locavore was approached by Glasgow City Council's Sustainability Assistant Manager and another officer (currently Food Growing Manager) to see if we would be interested in the opportunity of taking on Bellahouston Nursery. We had a meeting where they presented the opportunity and this was followed by various further meetings including a site visit to look at the facility.

Locavore expressed interest in the opportunity and then not very much happened for quite a long time. In 2017/8 things progressed a little and a meeting was arranged at the Nursery as part of a required Council marketing exercise to find an organisation to take the site over. Locavore was invited to attend this alongside Tenement Veg, the newly formed Glasgow Community Food Network and other aspiring growers.

Following the marketing activity event Locavore put together a proposal as a lead tenant which included some other organisations as potential site users. More time passed and after exchange of emails and further meetings we were selected as the successful organisation to take on the site.

It wasn't till May 2019 that things progressed further and we got permission to be on site. We were issued a Permission To Use (PTU) document for a 12 month period which allowed us to access and use around half of the site. A PTU is a weak document with dubious legal standing that sets out rules to abide by and is signed by the receiving organisation. The PTU provided no space for the agreement to be signed on behalf of the Council and it was issued with the wrong date meaning we were on site for a month before it went live.

We made it clear a one year PTU would not give us the security to plan and commence projects for the long term but we gratefully signed the document as an interim solution. This was understood and alongside this we were directed to do an application for a Community Asset Transfer (CAT) for a long term lease.

Within months of our PTU going live we were informed the area of the PTU was to be reduced further and that we were only to apply for a smaller area of land through our Community Asset Transfer Application. There was no allowance for this circumstance within the PTU agreement and Locavore queried the legitimacy of this action both in relation to the

PTU and the Community Empowerment Act. This resulted in an unusual meeting with the *current* Head of Property Asset Management (then City Parks and Open Spaces Manager at GCC) where we were told this is what they decided, without any substantive justification. We relayed this to elected members, The Community Asset Transfer Support Service and took advice from Senscot (Social Enterprise Network Scotland) Legal who told us they did not think the Council had acted in line with their own agreement. We decided not to pursue this further and accept the Council's dubious removal of land from our PTU as we felt taking this further would be held against us as we sought the Community Asset Transfer. Given recent interactions with the Head of Property Asset Management (see Communication History) we believe this has returned to meet us again.

Through Summer 2019 Locavore focused a lot of time on developing the Community Asset Transfer Application, with the diminished area of ground. This included attending Community Council Meetings, conducting a consultation and raising support for our proposal. The lengthy application was completed and submitted in autumn 2019 and validated in October.

Through 2019 we hosted two early stage market garden projects on site who did some vegetable growing in containers within one of the polytunnels while another new entrant food producer cultivated gourmet mushrooms which he sold through the Locavore shop. We cleared out the Romney shed and used it to pack and distribute veg boxes from. None of the parties involved were willing to risk investing too much in the site when it had already been demonstrated how little security the PTU provided.

In February 2020 Locavore was asked to attend a meeting with Council Officers, including the Assistant Group Manager, Greenspace and Biodiversity. In this meeting it transpired that it had been decided that Locavore was not actually eligible to apply for CAT and so this route had been exhausted. We'd been led down the wrong route and expended a great deal of wasted time and energy as a result. We asked if we could just get a lease, they said they would look into it. More emails and delays followed. The pandemic began.

In May 2020 our PTU lapsed and we were on site without any formal permission or agreement. Communication dropped off during 2020 but it was agreed in principle to provide us with a concessionary lease. Locavore worked with its solicitors through 2020 and 2021 to get a sensible lease with fair clauses. Council drafts were highly geared against the tenant with clauses such as a requirement to wash all windows on both sides weekly (think about a 1 acre glasshouse) and slow negotiations were had over how many chickens would theoretically be allowed on site and how often we had to repaint inside and out with how many coats of what grade of paint. Our solicitor had clauses amended or added including one which should have allowed us to assign the lease to another party in the future subject to the Council's permission, which "should not unreasonably withheld or delayed".

Our legal costs spiralled as years passed and in the end we still signed something we weren't entirely happy with and it left us vulnerable. It was the slowest and most expensive lease we had ever agreed and our solicitor found the process of chasing the Council's legal team frustrating and requests, plans and attachments incoherent and confused.

After being on site for almost two years without any written permission, missives on the lease were finally concluded with an 'entry date' in March 2022. We signed and returned the

lease but in June 2022 were fined by Revenue Scotland for having a late Land and Buildings Transaction Tax return “simply because the Council are / were so slow at issuing the lease and dealing with the signing etc - Unavoidable in the circumstances, unfortunately. Council to blame...” as our solicitor put it.

With it we had a lease on the site for 20 years, with the right to renew for a further 20. This should have secured the site as a sustainable food hub till 2062.

The start line was reached, 5-6 years after we had first been invited to consider managing the site.

In the intervening years much had changed. The two early stage market gardens who used the site in 2019 were searching for their own independent site. In the interim we provided them with our Queens Park Croft site in 2020 while they waited on confirmation of a site from the Council. We extended this to 2021, and then 2022, before they gave up their aspiration to become market gardeners after being funnelled by the Council through the People Make Glasgow Communities process which wasn't fit for their purpose.

Things had changed at Locavore too. As described in the background section of this document, 2022 and 2023 were the most difficult in Locavore CIC history following an ambitious and ill timed scale up arriving at the beginning of the cost of living crisis. Although a lot of work was taken forward at Bellahouston by Locavore in 2022 and 2023 (see below section on Repairs, Renewals & Developments) the struggling organisation was unable to do as much as it would have otherwise.

In late 2022 Locavore first discussed lease assignation of Bellahouston with the Food Growing manager at the Council who said they would look into this further. We never heard from them about this again till we followed up with greater urgency in October 2023. Events beyond this date till the present date are listed in the Communication History section below.

The development of new allotment sites takes time and depends on the availability of suitable sites and resources. On the other hand, the creation of new growing sites should be possible in much shorter timescales such as where only a "licence to occupy" or "lease agreement" is required for a group to get a project off the ground.

[Let's Grow Together, Glasgow's Food Growing Strategy storymap](#)

Repairs, Renewals & Development at Bellahouston

Bellahouston Nursery is a fairly complex and varied site with a mix of structures, temporary structures and outdoor spaces. From our perspective it appeared to have lacked the required maintenance for several years while the Council's use diminished and finally ceased in 2019.

As such, a lot of the work undertaken by Locavore (CIC & Chard) can appear invisible to those who were not aware of how the site was prior.

The below bullet points outline the repairs, renewals and development that we recall undertaking since we first started operating here.

- Undertook work to make one 9,000sq ft tunnel suitable for growing
 - Excavation and removal of hard standing from this tunnel - three plant operators for a week.
 - Infilled with in 30m³ of compost to build up soil quality and fertility
 - Installed a drip irrigation system.
 - Made repairs to storm damage
 - Cost in excess of £10,000
- Installation of new two polytunnels
 - We installed two new polytunnels at 3,000 sq ft each on one of the few areas of the site with surface soil.
 - Concrete was poured for the tunnel posts
 - Contractors installed over a two week period
 - Cost in excess of £30,000
 - Water was run to tunnels and drip irrigation installed by our team.
- Romney Shed
 - When we came on site the romney shed was full of miscellaneous Council items that had accumulated over decades. This needed to be cleared out by us and was then slowly removed by the Council or disposed of by us.
 - We brought electricity to the shed, installed sockets, lighting and a walk in chiller and chilled container.
 - Floor was sealed and painted.
 - Cost in excess of £20,000
- Install of new portacabin office
 - Electricity installed in the cabin next to Romney shed
 - Cost in excess of £9,000
- Installation of electric vehicle charge points
 - Cost in excess of £10,000
- Removal of Council waste from site
 - This has been a long ongoing project despite initially being told the site would be emptied prior to the PTU, and then the lease.
 - As late as spring 2024 we filled 2 x 40 yard skips (largest skip available) with rubbish which had been left on site. This included degraded plant pots, rubbish bins, hanging baskets and other general waste which had been thrown down embankments and hidden in corners.
 - We disposed of at least 8 skips of scrap metal including a van load of metal bins which had been fly-tipped by a council team.

- Began work to make a section of glasshouse suitable for organic growing.
 - Removal of several tonnes of metal propagation benches with assistance from Community Payback.
 - Excavation of 200m³ of concrete and aggregate
 - Brought in 30m³ of compost
 - Cost in excess of £8,000
- Repairs
 - We've undertaken plumbing and contracted plumbers on several occasions to repair and improve site plumbing.
 - Install of a new toilet, pipes, lagging and source heaters after cold weather burst pipes and a toilet.
 - We've contracted electricians to undertake a number of repairs including:
 - Repairs to faulty circuits which caused circuits to trip.
 - Repairs to faulty equipment including heated propagation mats and faulty vents within the glasshouse.
 - Replacement of broken glass within the glasshouse
 - Repair of roads on two occasions
 - Repair of collapsed drain and section and road around this
 - Repair of potholes in carpark and on roadway
 - Repairs to faulty doors and locks including replacement of fire door.
 - Repairs to the Palm House
 - Repair to roof and removal of vegetation from gutters
 - Repair and replacement of missing and damaged wall
 - Extension to phone lines
 - Vegetation management
 - Contracted tree surgeons to do work on potentially dangerous trees.
 - Performed own vegetation and tree management on an ongoing basis.
 - Sourced reclaimed materials, constructed and filled 120 raised bed plots for allotments. Materials cost in excess of £10,000.
 - Removed waste from two large outdoor areas and built up soil with addition of around 150m³ of organic material to make it suitable for cultivation.
 - Installation of new shed which is used for plot holder tools and shelter. Materials cost ~£2,000
 - Install of picnic benches at ~£1500

The above represents our recollection of work undertaken and is in no way an exhaustive list.

The amount of money invested into the site just based on this list is in excess of £100,000. This does not include any of the labour cost to carry out those works which we did ourselves, or project managing those repairs and improvements. We have also invested in machinery to help us maintain the site, such as a tractor, scaffolding, and we have the skills within our team to carry out a wide range of works required to manage and maintain the site.



09/2016 - the site we saw when first offered Bellhouse in 2016/7, neat but underused

All pictures taken from Google Earth



03/2019 - significant dilapidation of tunnels and large area of 'storage' created in top right and middle right and bottom centre



06/2020 - further ongoing dilapidation of tunnels (under Locavore PTU as we await long term security) with more Council 'storage' created in bottom centre and middle right.

Our eventual lease had the entry date of March 2022.



05/2023 - showing the progress made by Locavore 14 months from the lease missives concluding - including stage 1 (middle left) and 2 (middle right) community plots, 2 new polytunnels and remediation of outdoor space for growing (centre) and community picnic area and shed (middle left). A more recent image is not available but would show completion of stage 2 community plots and additional outdoor areas for food growing use.

Sector Development & Support

Over the years we have hosted numerous study visits to Bellahouston. We usually charge a minimum fee of £150 for this but waive the fee when organisations are not in a position to afford this but we would still like to assist them.

Glasgow Community Food Network

This year we have so far hosted two free events on site in partnership with the Glasgow Community Food Network. These both relate to their Full of Beans Project and include a workshop where participants learned about and planted several varieties of heirloom beans and a willow weaving workshop where bean support pyramids were made. Both workshops were free and attended by a mix of ploholders from on site and other members of the local community.

As part of the above we are also conducting a bean variety trial with Glasgow Community Food Network.



Planting beans for the Glasgow Community Food Network bean trial in 2024

St Paul's Youth Forum

In March 2024 we hosted an unpaid visit and advisory meeting from St Paul's Youth Forum who are just about to start their market gardening project in Blackhill, Blackhill Community Farm.

This was a catchup following paid consultancy work we did with them several years ago which included support with business planning and site visits to our growing site with their community members. Unfortunately their market garden launch was set back by several years due to a delay in the release of Vacant and Derelict Land Fund funding to grantholders by Glasgow City Council.

Now that Blackhill Community Farm is getting started and St Paul's Youth Forum have been working on developing routes to market, we have been assisting them by purchasing their first kale harvest of the season which has gone into our veg boxes as additional seasonal greens.

Market gardening and urban agriculture in Glasgow evidence gathering

In May 2024 we participated in the event arranged by Glasgow Community Food Network and the Council's Food Growing Team which was aimed at enabling Council officers to learn more about the barriers facing market gardening, and prospective market gardening enterprises in Glasgow. We were invited to contribute as an established and successful example which had gone through Council processes...

We put four hours of preparation into presenting at the event which itself occupied half a day. Unfortunately only four council officers attended including the Food Growing Manager, who made his apologies and left the event within the first 30 minutes just as we were starting our presentation. All growers in the room were extremely disappointed by the poor attendance from officers and especially by the departure from the meeting of the key officer overseeing food growing work in the City. A report from the event is available to elected members.

Consultation Responses

We engage with relevant policy proposals and provide our extensive relevant experience in consultations.

- 2017 response to the then in-development Glasgow Food Growing Strategy:
<https://locavore.scot/2017/07/24/glasgow-food-growing-strategy/>
- 2020 response to the Glasgow City Food Plan Consultation (co-signed by over 200 members of the public)
<https://locavore.scot/2020/12/17/glasgow-city-food-plan-response/>

We are also a member of the Scottish Food Coalition and the Scottish Organic Stakeholder Group and have participated in the Scottish Retail Industry Leadership Group.

Other events over the last few years

- Falkirk Food Futures - Forth Environment Link arranged tour of Locavore Bellahouston: <https://climatefringe.org/events/learning-visit-to-locavore-urban-farm/>
- Slow Food Scotland hosted their 2023 AGM at Bellahouston.
- Open Days, site tours and tomato planting events have been held.

Council Officer Study Visits

In September 2023 we hosted a free study visit which was organised by The City Food Plan team and aimed at both Elected Members and Council Officers. Unfortunately no Council Officers attended this event despite the best efforts of the City Food Plan Team to encourage this.

Since the current situation has developed we have hosted more pro-bono visits from numerous Council Officers than ever before. Very few of these were arranged with most just arriving and requiring our immediate attention. Visitors have included:

- Head of Property Asset Management
- Group Manager, Property Asset Management
- Group Manager, Greenspace and Biodiversity
- Assistant Group Manager, Greenspace and Biodiversity
- Food Growing Manager, Greenspace and Biodiversity
- Business Engagement Adviser, Chief Executive's Department
- Dilapidations Officers / City Buildings Water Temperature Officers / Arboriculture Officers / Parks Operations Team Members

These visits have given us the opportunity to raise awareness of sustainable local produce and our wider work to Council officers who often otherwise have had little or no exposure to it. Unfortunately for most their visit came after they had been instructed of the position to be upheld.

"This place was such a mess when the Council had it, you are doing great."

"I didn't realise the scale of it, you're growing a lot here."

"It's a bigger site than I thought, I must admit food growing is a new area to me and it's impressive to see what you do. You must understand decisions are outside my remit."

Responses from Officers when asked what they were doing to assist us and how they felt about the current situation at Bellahouston included:

"We're not getting involved, it's between you and Property." (Greenspace and Biodiversity Group Manager)

"The future of the site is with the Greenspace and Biodiversity team" (Property Group Manager)

Feedback provided to Reuben during an unannounced visit to the site by the Head of Property and Asset Management along the lines of:

You're not getting Bellahouston, Locavore's failed, it's not special, I've seen raised beds in north Glasgow and other places. Other projects could do veg boxes or have shops if Locavore doesn't. Other businessmen that fail go and get new jobs...



Rubbish bins fly tipped by the Council at Bellahouston 2021. The Council dumping or removing things without communication has been an ongoing feature since we started occupying the site.



Chisel ploughing the soil at Bellahouston to break up compaction in early spring 2024, this area was under 30cm of aggregate before we removed it and brought in tonnes of compost.

Future Plans for Bellahouston

All our future plans for Bellahouston are reliant on a new lease being provided by Glasgow City Council. Without this the future of Locavore projects and The Chard Holding Group CIC are in jeopardy.

Assuming this can be resolved our future proposed development includes:



Above image from our [interactive map of existing and proposed future facilities and developments](#).

- Further removal of Council rubbish is required in a number of areas. This includes removal of planters, at the south west of the site and a large area littered with rotten pallets of plastic paving.

- Completion of first stage glasshouse growing space. Excavation has already taken place here. Soil will be backfilled by taking surplus soil from The Prince and Princess of Wales Hospice. This will be completed in Summer 2024.
- The activities that we proposed within our recent successful (but withheld) grant through Glasgow City Council's Sustainable Food System Development Fund:
 - Repair and re-skinning of a 9,000sq ft polytunnel
 - Developing 7,500 sqft of glasshouse into organic production through excavation of gravel and concrete and backfill with soil and compost. This would also include making repairs vents, screens and installing irrigation.
 - Improvement to packing and distribution facilities
 - Opening a farm stand
- Beyond the above we proposed a further stage of works (for additional £50,000) in a second application to the Food System Development Fund which included:
 - Repairing and re-skinning a further 9,000sq ft polytunnel, bringing in substrate and compost to make ready for organic food production.
 - Further excavation, repairs and preparation within the glasshouse to make a further 10,000 sq ft of organic growing space. This would bring all of the glasshouse into organic production apart from that allocated to other uses such as plant nursery and events.
- Developing a next stage of additional allotment plots to increase the number by 120 to a total for 240. This would take place either side of the current eastern allotment plots. There is space for further allotment plot provision beyond this.
- Installation of a bike parking shed with tools available to make repairs and service bicycles.
- Set up of a community kitchen where cookery sessions can be held and locally grown and surplus food can be processed. There is funding pending for this.
- Setting out of wildlife walk which loops around the site and contains interpretation on different habitats and wildlife present on site.
- Solar Pasture - Solar energy production with potential for grazing.
- Community orchard and soft fruit production.

Recognition

Awards

Locavore, under Locavore CIC won numerous awards including:

Jobs & Business Glasgow: Social Entrepreneur of The Year, 2013

Glasgow City Council: Green Business Award, 2019

Soil Association Boom Award: Best UK Organic Retailer, 2019

Social Enterprise Scotland: Scottish Social Enterprise of the Year, 2021-22

Social Enterprise UK: UK Social Enterprise of the Year, 2021-22

BBC Food & Farming Awards: Best Shop, 2022

Media Features

Locavore was featured on:

- Countryfile - <https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/m001pp6b>
- BBC Radio 4 Food Programme - <https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/m0014wyw>
- BBC Farming Today - <https://www.bbc.co.uk/sounds/play/m001fcgj>
- Green Britain TV - https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_5stQsx6GgE



BBC's John Craven filming Countryfile with Locavore growers in July 2023

The Council's Rationale?

We've not been provided with a clear rationale for why the Council is currently taking the position it has despite us clearly asking for this. We have further tried to draw this out of Officers in conversation and the following points have been mentioned.

"Senior management is not minded"

This is the main *reason* we have been given. The narrative is that the Council has made a decision and that it is not required to provide any explanation for it.

Locavore CIC had outstanding bills for Bellahouston

It was raised that Locavore CIC did not pay for rent or electricity for the Bellahouston site to Glasgow City Council during the period of the lease from March 2022 to January 2024.

This is true, but it's not the full story.

Rent of the site was a nominal concessionary annual fee of £750 per annum and electricity use minimal. We neither received an invoice or bank details and as a result our accounts team were just not aware that rent was due. We're talking about 2 annual invoices being missing amongst the thousands that we receive.

Clearly it was an oversight by our then accounts team, but equally it was an oversight by the Council who neither invoiced us or got in touch to remind us. We were also told the Council only became aware that rent had not been paid in November 2023, at which point they did not get in touch to request payment. Why?

When we were made aware of the situation with rent in spring 2024 we immediately offered to honour this and requested bank details so that we could do this. This request was ignored.

Locavore CIC had outstanding Non-Domestic Rates with Glasgow City Council

Locavore CIC went into administration with substantial levels of liabilities due to Glasgow City Council for non-domestic rates. These were due for two shops and a warehouse in Glasgow and don't relate to Bellahouston.

As a social enterprise Locavore CIC had applied for discretionary rates relief which is available to social enterprises at the discretion of each Council's non-domestic rates department. We outlined our work as a social enterprise, how we felt it fitted the discretionary relief policy, and made comparisons with other social enterprises who had received relief. Our application was rejected.

As an enterprise facing severe financial difficulties Locavore CIC also applied for Hardship Relief. This relief is for enterprises facing financial difficulties where relief would benefit the organisation and be in the best interest of local people. We felt that we fit that criteria but our

application was rejected. We were told on the phone that the Council wasn't giving hardship relief at that time.

Locavore CIC appealed both decisions and in our discretionary appeal we provided details of the application for our Edinburgh location which was granted 80% rates relief by Edinburgh City Council. We asked Glasgow to reconsider and offer the same support but were rejected again.

Locavore CIC didn't fail to pay rates in bad faith and it sought to claim relief it felt it should be eligible to receive. It was a business in distress and it was through severe financial difficulties that Locavore CIC was unable to pay its non-domestic rates; and this ultimately contributed to the eventual administration.

It's regrettable that Glasgow City Council did not receive rates from Locavore CIC but using this as a reason to not provide a lease to the successor organisation requires the decision maker to take a very narrow, short-sighted view focussed on punitive action.

Providing us with a lease now will allow Locavore to go forward and be a successful organisation which will drive local economic growth, employ a significant amount of people and pay non-domestic rates on its properties. Without the lease, as outlined in this document; we will not be able to do any of that - Glasgow City Council, and its people, will lose twice.

At the time of writing Locavore (under The Chard Holding Group) is up to date with all non-domestic rates charged to it.

Lack of trading history

Lack of trading history has been given on a number of occasions as a reason both why the Locavore CIC lease could not be assigned to The Chard Holding Group CIC, and why the Council will now not provide a new lease to The Chard Holding Group CIC.

We again feel like this has been used as an excuse, rather than a reason, and there has been no attempt at any stage to review this properly, ask the right questions or take up our offers to provide further information. In the past we could have been asked for our business plan, or our projections, which were based on a decade of real trading history, but offers to provide this have been ignored. At this point in time we have 5 months of positive trading history of a social enterprise which is 10 fold the size of that which was first approached by the Council to take on Bellahouston Nursery back in 2016 or 17.

Beyond this it should be noted that lack of trading history is not unanimously seen as a barrier by the Council. The Food Growing Manager told us the Council needs us at Bellahouston as much as we need to be here, and the panel making decisions on the Glasgow Food System Development Fund decided we should be awarded the highest level of award available to carry forward the work of Locavore at Bellahouston.

We would have welcomed the Council taking a proactive approach here and tried to encourage this - for example; could we be issued a Permission To Use for 12 months while trading history grows and our progress is monitored and evaluated?

In Scotland, most urban area farming is non-commercial allotments and community gardens. They provide valuable social, community and environmental benefits, but increasing food production and tackling food insecurity are not always main goals.

There are some great examples of Scottish urban agriculture making a greater impact, notably the Locavore market garden and veg box scheme in the middle of Glasgow.

Can we do more? Yes, but it would involve incorporating food growing into urban planning policies, creating and supporting markets and value chains and providing processing and storage facilities.

Ishaan Patil, Co-author of James Hutton Institute report prepared for the Scottish Government: Rapid Evidence Review: Urban and Peri-Urban Agriculture in Scotland 2024, [writing in The Herald](#), May 2024

Communication History

The below communication history is primarily between our Director Reuben Chesters and Council officers or elected members (whose names have been withheld) in relation to securing Bellahouston for Locavore (under the Chard Holding Group CIC).

2022

We first approached the Food Growing Manager about potential lease assignation (transfer of the lease) in late 2022 when Locavore CIC was facing difficulties and investigating restructure. We were told that this would be looked into and did not follow up further at that point as it was not an imminent issue and we were exploring this as one of several options.

October 2023

On the 27th of October 2023 we wrote to our designated Council contact, Food Growing Manager, to request that we start the process of assigning the lease from Locavore CIC to The Chard Holding Group CIC. Our solicitors, Raeside Chisholm, agreed that it should be a fairly straightforward process.

On 30th October we received an email from a Consultant Surveyor, Neighbourhoods, Regeneration and Sustainability who said they had been allocated this work. They said they needed to 'Establish the worth' of The Chard Holding Group CIC.

On the 30th of October we wrote back to the Consultant Surveyor, Neighbourhoods, Regeneration and Sustainability with details on the enterprise and stressing this assignation is to ensure a safety net for the work of Locavore CIC at Bellahouston.

November 2023

On the 1st of November we got a final email from the Consultant Surveyor, Neighbourhoods, Regeneration and Sustainability which was very short and asked for no further details. It stated they believed Chard did not have sufficient track record.

On the 3rd of November we wrote to the Assistant Group Manager, Greenspace and Biodiversity and Food Growing Manager. This was a long email outlining further the rationale behind the proposed assignation and why we believed it should go ahead. We asked them to liaise with Consultant Surveyor, Neighbourhoods, Regeneration and Sustainability to help us make a case. We received no reply to the email.

On the 15th of November we again emailed the Assistant Group Manager, Greenspace and Biodiversity and Food Growing Manager.

On the 24th of November we again wrote to these two officers.

On the 24th we got a short reply from the Food Growing Manager with a few rudimentary questions.

On the 24th of November we replied to the above email with brief answers, stating there would be major implications if the lease could not be assigned and requested a meeting.

December 2023

On Tuesday the 5th of December we met with the Food Growing Manager and a Business Engagement Advisor from the Chief Executive's Department at Bellahouston Nursery. We spoke to them in open terms about the emerging situation at Locavore CIC and the need for assignation of the lease to The Chard Holding Group CIC if they wished to see the activities on site continue. Both expressed support of the activities undertaken by Locavore (and now Chard) and wished to see them continue into the future and support us to do that. We talked about options for an interim Permission to Use Agreement if assignation was delayed until Chard had a trading history. We were made aware of the Glasgow Food System Development Fund and that Chard could apply for this for activities at Bellahouston; we did this. Food Growing Manager asked if we would be interested in more land in Bellahouston Park for regenerative grazing - we said we'd just like the assignation sorted first. We left this meeting with the understanding that a solution would be found.

January 2024

On the 30th of January Locavore CIC went into administration and The Chard Holding Group CIC bought the Glasgow-based elements of the social enterprise and since then has carried forward the vast majority of its work.

February 2024

We spoke with the Food Growing Manager on the phone within a few days of the administration of Locavore and launch of Chard and made it clear we were still at Bellahouston, we were aware we had no permission to be here (not for the first time) and that we had tried to do everything we could to get that permission. They told us they felt the Council needed us there (to achieve policy targets relating to The City Food Plan, Food Growing Strategy, and more) as much as we need to be there, and said now that things were clear and we are trading we should be able to progress an assignation, new lease or Permission To Use (PTU). We left this with them to work on and come back to us.

On the 14th of February we received an email from the Business Engagement Adviser to confirm that the Chard Holding Group CIC's application to carry forward a new phase of the Glasgow Sustainable Food Hub at Bellahouston (started by Locavore) had been awarded funding of £49,999 through the Glasgow Food System Development Fund. This was subject to 'lease negotiations with Glasgow City Council'. This was promoted in a Council Press Release:

[https://www.glasgowtimes.co.uk/news/scottish-news/24138503.funding-boost-17-different-fo
od-growing-projects-city/](https://www.glasgowtimes.co.uk/news/scottish-news/24138503.funding-boost-17-different-food-growing-projects-city/)

March 2024

On the 19th of March we received an email from the Food Growing Manager which forwarded on their email from the 24th of November to see what updates there were in terms of our trading position and sought to arrange a call.

On the 19th of March we replied to this email detailing that clearly Chard now has a trading history and the transition between the two organisations was otherwise going well.

On the 27th of March the Food Growing Manager arranged a call with us and in the call requested that we provide further information on Chard in an email, with particular focus on social impact to aid the case for assignation of the lease.

On the 27th of March we wrote an email providing the details requested and stated we were happy to provide any further details. We got confirmation of receipt almost right away.

On the 28th of March we had a call with the Business Engagement Adviser regarding the release and Glasgow Food System Development Fund, on the 29th they provided us with the grant agreement which we signed and returned.

April 2024

On the 8th of April we emailed both the Business Engagement Adviser and the Food Growing Manager to seek an update on the assignation. No replies were received.

On the 12th of April we took receipt of a Council skip at Bellahouston, arranged by the Food Growing Team to help us clean up further waste left behind by the Council.

On the Friday the 12th of April we received our first correspondence from an Asset Manager, Property & Consultancy Services stating Chard is unlawfully occupying, the assignation was rejected and that GCC would serve a Notice of Removal the next working day. After we received this we phoned the Food Growing Manager who was unaware of the situation and swore down the phone in shock. Later that day we were forwarded an email chain between the Asset Manager and the administrators of Locavore CIC, Interpath, in which the Officer had said they would communicate things with us - they never did - and stated it was likely we would be given a week to vacate.

We emailed the Food Growing Manager and Business Engagement Adviser to see how they could assist or what recourse they had, stressing the consequences and our desire to resolve this and not need to escalate it to the public domain.

On the 15th of April we wrote back to the Asset Manager outlining the above communication history, stating our ability to assign and transfer other leases and legal agreements and outlining the potential consequences to us should the decision not be reviewed.

We received replies from the Business Engagement Adviser who stated they had no recourse but suggested meeting to develop a Plan B. We wrote back to them and the Food Growing Manager and suggested that Plan B should be a Permission To Use agreement (PTU) for the site. We asked the Food Growing manager if their manager, Assistant Group

Manager, Greenspace and Biodiversity, could sign off a PTU as they had provided the initial PTU in 2019.

The Food Growing manager replied that they had no recourse but welcomed a Plan B discussion. We replied asking for a meeting that day or the following. He offered Friday the 5th. We replied this was only 5 days before the likely removal date and again asked if the Assistant Group Manager, Greenspace and Biodiversity could provide a PTU. They replied that they had no recourse and would do what they could with the time and resources available. We replied again asking if the Assistant Group Manager, Greenspace and Biodiversity could provide a PTU, and asked if they couldn't authorise it who could, so we could reach out to them. They replied, didn't answer the question and said at this point they could only direct us to the Asset Manager (who had issued the Notice of Removal) with any queries.

At around 4.30pm we tried to call the Asset Manager, Property & Consultancy Services but they did not answer, we followed up with an email looking for an update.

On the 16th of April we contacted several Councillors including the City Convener for Neighbourhood Services and Assets and the Chair of the Environment and Liveable Neighbourhoods City Policy Committee and City Food Plan Lead.

We emailed the Business Engagement Adviser, Chief Executive's Department and asked to arrange a time to talk about the 'Plan B' they had suggested.

On the 17th of April:

The Councillor and Chair of the Environment and Liveable Neighbourhoods City Policy Committee and City Food Plan Lead emailed to say they would speak with officers and get back to us shortly.

The Councillor and City Convener for Neighbourhood Services and Assets responded to our email and said they would look into the issue and get back to us. We've contacted them since but have had no further correspondence from them.

The Asset Manager Property & Consultancy Services, replied to our email emphasising Chard had no track record, that we had been told that, and that we'd failed to get a Permission To Use in time prior to the administration of Locavore CIC. As such the lease was void and would not be assigned. They said we would be served by Sheriff Officers the following day.

19th April:

The Councillor and Chair Environment and Liveable Neighbourhoods City Policy Committee and City Food Plan Lead emailed. The response was very similar to the Asset Manager Property & Consultancy Services email from the 17th of April and also stated they had spoken with the Business Engagement Adviser, Chief Executive's Department and were sure that they *"will support you to find an alternative site to ensure that you can help the new group flourish."*

24th April:

At 2pm we had a meeting with Assistant Group Manager, Greenspace and Biodiversity, Group Manager, Property Asset Management and Asset Manager, Property & Consultancy Services.

There was no agenda provided for the meeting. Through the meeting it became apparent that this meeting was not with the decision makers and it was framed that this meeting would enable them to put together a report which would go to the decision makers.

We asked the Assistant Group Manager, Greenspace and Biodiversity if they would be in a position to provide us with a PTU and if it was in their remit. They said we should ask the Group Manager, Property Asset Management. We asked the Group Manager, Property Asset Management and they said they now try to avoid using PTU's and they are not good legal documents, or words to that effect. We however have good reason to believe PTU's do remain in regular use.

We took the opportunity to explain the situation and effectively make a pitch - covering ground which had been covered as far back as the previous October and more recently written in emails. We were told a report would be sent to the Head of Property Asset Management, and their seniors, for consideration.

Shortly after returning to Bellahouston following this meeting we encountered the Head of Property Asset Management who had arrived unannounced. We approached them and offered them a tour around the site. They seemed taken off guard, hostile and demonstrated an incredibly limited understanding of our history on the site and our work; while appearing to have great disdain for it. Some comments and exchanges with them included:

- *You've been here 10 years, is this all you have done?* We tried to correct them on this but they repeated it several times. You can see the Locavore Journey section of this document for the true timeline..
- *Where are these 80 people that work for you?* They arrived at a time where very few people were on site and didn't seem to believe our team numbers around 80 and thought our *Govanhill shop could not have 20 employees* despite not having visited. They seemed to insinuate we were lying about our scale as an employer.
- *They raised the issue of unpaid rent by Locavore CIC and asked how we would feel if it was the other way around.* We told them the Council hadn't invoiced us or provided bank details. In our experience both as suppliers and customers, an unpaid invoice usually triggers a reminder in the first instance, rather than legal action.
- *You won't get Bellahouston. Your business failed, we wouldn't get a lease through procurement. The site's too big for you anyway, maybe you could keep a small bit of the site.* We asked what difference the size of the site made to procurement. They appeared confused for a while before saying that they could actually make this decision, or something similar.
- *You have failed, Locavore has failed, other business people whose businesses fail go and get a new job.* When we asked what they thought the consequences of their suggestion, that we close the social enterprise and go and get a real job, would be for the 80 employees and our social, environmental and economic impact he

suggested that: *you do nothing special, I've seen these raised beds in north Glasgow, other places could do food boxes or have shops instead.*

This visit from the Head of Property Asset Management was an unpleasant and belittling experience. Never before have we experienced a Council officer act in a manner which is so unprofessional and out of line with the Council's own [code of conduct](#). This unarranged visit did however provide us some insight into how decisions might actually be getting made.

25th April:

We were invited to present at the Urban Agriculture in Glasgow evidence gathering session co-organised by Glasgow Community Food Network and the Food Growing team at Glasgow City Council.

The aim of the event was to make Council officers aware of the experiences of organisations looking to grow food in Glasgow at a market scale as opposed to community gardens or allotments. Projects at different stages of maturity were to present as case studies - from early stage/aspiring to established.

We were to fill the slot in the programme to represent a success story of Council strategies working in practice..

27th of April:

We had an unannounced visit from the Assistant Group Manager, Neighbourhoods, Regeneration & Sustainability and a more junior officer. They had been informed the site was vacant/derelict and they were checking on the site.

We showed them round and they seemed content that we were managing the site and were interested in learning more about our work.

They followed up with an email putting us in touch with their team members who provided contact details of contractors who may be able to assist with repairs to polytunnels.

30th of April:

We received an email from the Group Manager, Property Asset Management stating that:

"GCC Senior Management have reviewed matters and are not minded to consider Chard for a long term lease."

We returned an email asking for a copy of the report which they had produced following our meeting on the 24th of April which we were told was to be the basis for the Senior Management's decision. We did not get sight of the report or a reply to the request for this.

May 2024

3rd of May:

We received unscheduled visits from the Group Manager, Greenspace and Biodiversity and separately from Group Manager, Property Asset Management. Both suggested it was the other in control of the situation and we ought to speak with them about the decision and our future at the site.

We felt both appeared supportive of our work and uncomfortable with the situation.

We had an honest chat with the Group Manager, Property Asset Management about the consequences of various timelines of removal and gave February 2025 as a realistic workable date which we could leave by, if required. We made it clear this would still have long term lasting damage to the organisation but would be survivable.

We had a 10 minute phone call with the Business Engagement Adviser, Chief Executive's Department in which we discussed relocation plans as they had been tasked to lead on this by an Elected Member who leads the City Food Plan. Neither of us understood why another site would be acceptable when Bellahouston is not but they agreed to make enquiries about Daldowie, which they suggested, and other potential sites. Unfortunately we have not been able to reach them by phone or emails since this call, despite numerous attempts.

4th of May:

Following visits the previous day we again emailed the Group Manager, Property Asset Management and Group Manager, Greenspace and Biodiversity and four other related officers to attempt to enter dialogue to find a solution that allows us to remain on site.

We felt 'not minded' was not a sufficient reason and asked for feedback and suggested the following:

Following your visit yesterday, the visit from [name redacted], and a call with [name redacted] I believe there is a willingness in the Council to find solutions and we should dedicate more time to find them.

We need some feedback to understand what is needed to meet the criteria to participate in the processes you referred to. The more we know about the barriers in place the more we will be able to offer potential solutions to find a route through them.

For example;

- *If it's about the limited trading experience of the social enterprises I could provide financial reports showing we've turned over £1m since February and done so with a surplus. We can go back years to show the performance of these business strands before Chard took them over. We can share our most up to date business plan (the plan made before the administration) and with that projections we made for the year ahead.*
- *If it's about the Board then we will tell you more about our plans for expanding this with support from the Real Farming Trust.*
- *If it's about our plans for developing the site to its full potential, we could tell you about that and the timescales we think we would need to achieve these aspirations*

- *If it's about council financial risk exposure then we could talk about mitigations to this - deposits, rent paid upfront etc.*
- *If it's about social impact then we could share reports that have been done in the past and gather statements from support and campaign organisations in our field.*
- *If it's about gauging community support then we can share data on this.*

As we have been asked to give no details, and we've not seen your briefing paper, I don't know what information decision makers are working with and what assumptions they may be making without being briefed on the full picture. Likewise, we are being told 'no' because of policy, but we've not been given feedback or shown what that policy actually is.

Are you able to provide any of this so we have an opportunity to make a case and find solutions?

9th of May:

We received a second 'Notice of Removal' letter from the Council's legal team, this time telling us we must leave the site by 5pm on the 31st of July.

22nd of May:

We sent a follow up email to encourage a reply to the one we sent on the 4th of May (included above) to which receipt had not been acknowledged.

23rd of May:

We received a reply from Group Manager, Property Asset Management which said:

"You have been issued with a formal notice to vacate the site on 31st July. Please ensure you are making necessary arrangements to vacate at this date.

We are under no obligation at this stage to provide you with information relating to GCC's future plans for the site at this stage I am afraid. When and if appropriate, we will be in touch to share further information."

29th of May:

We presented at the The Urban Agriculture in Glasgow evidence gathering session in the Councils George Street offices. We were initially asked to present as the established organisation who had gone through Council processes but the situation had clearly changed by the day of the event.

We thought this would be an opportunity to give feedback and make our case face to face but relevant officers who we were told were on the invite list did not attend and the event took place to an audience of only four Council Officers. To our great frustration the Food Growing Manager left the event just as our presentation was about to begin.

Adding to the ludicrousness we were asked if we would provide hot drinks for the event the evening before, and when we arrived the room had been double booked and we needed to relocate further down the street.

June 2024

4th of June:

We hosted a visit from elected members which had been due to take place on the 17th of May but was rescheduled at their request. We showed them around the site and filled them in with some of the details regarding officer correspondence.

Elected members appeared to agree that the 31st of July was not a viable exit date and would need to change.

They said they would attempt to arrange a meeting with the Head of Property Asset Management and asked us to put together a report, which grew into the document you are currently reading.

12th of June:

We had an unscheduled visit from Group Manager, Greenspace and Biodiversity, Assistant Group Manager, Greenspace and Biodiversity, Food Growing Manager, Greenspace and Biodiversity and another Council Officer whose role we did not know. We told again the exit date was not viable and we would not be able to leave by this date.

We asked what they thought about the situation and if they could help. The Group Manager Greenspace and Biodiversity told us they were not involved and we needed to talk to the Group Manager, Property Asset Management. They also told us that they planned to take over our community growing plots and allow other site users to remain on site. We asked how they planned to provide raised beds to growers when they don't own the raised beds, they seemed confused and asked if they were our property. We confirmed they were.

19th of June:

We had an unscheduled visit from the Group Manager, Property Asset Management. They said they planned to secure the site on the 31st of July and we would need to have left. We reiterated that the exit date was not viable and we will not be able to leave by this date.

We suggested they would be in no position to take over the site as they had made no attempt to engage us in the necessary dialogue for a handover to take place.

We put forward that on one hand Greenspace and Biodiversity want to allow other site users to stay on site and provide them with growing plots (we won't worry about the fact they don't own these) while Property Asset Management is making plans to secure the site

We updated them regarding discussions with elected members.

Later that day Group Manager, Property Asset Management emailed us copying in the Assistant Group Manager, Property Asset Management asking them to arrange a handover

with us. The Assistant Group Manager, Property Asset Management sent a calendar reminder for late July without asking our availability.

21st of June:

We provided Councillors who visited us on the 4th with the draft report and requested an update. We are currently awaiting a reply.

28th of June:

We emailed the Group Manager, Property Asset Management following up from their visit and email on the 19th of June. We reiterated again that we had reiterated that we would not be able to leave by the 31st of July.

We reminded them that a Councillor and Chair of the Environment and Liveable Neighbourhoods City Policy Committee and City Food Plan Lead had tasked Business Engagement Advisor, Chief Executive's Department with our relocation. We asked for his assistance in following up with the Business Engagement Advisor, Chief Executive's Department who had not returned our calls or emails.

We stated that although it is our preference to remain on site we at the very least need a relocation and removal date that are compatible with one another.

We received a prompt reply back from the Group Manager, Property Asset Management:

"Thank you for your email. I will pass this matter on to senior management for consideration.

31st July remains the date for vacating the site at the moment I am afraid. We are in the process of making arrangements for the future of Bellahouston and are likely to be seeking authority for our proposals very shortly.

I will speak with (Business Engagement Advisor, Chief Executive's Department) asap.

I will be in touch again once I have spoken with (Business Engagement Advisor, Chief Executive's Department) and have more feedback.

July 2024

1st of July:

We emailed the Group Manager, Property Asset Management following up from the above email asking:

"What does the process of seeking authority look like? For example; will this go to committee or is it just a nod from (Head of Property Asset Management)?"

They replied quickly with the following response:

"All transactions require appropriate authority to be sought, and this will either be from Committee or by the delegated authority of the Executive Director (in qualifying circumstances).

Many transactions are below the threshold for committee (e.g leases up to 3 three years in term, and less than £100K per annum rent)."

At the time of writing (7th July) we have not had further correspondence from Group Manager, Property Asset Management regarding the request they made on our behalf to Senior Management to delay our removal day and align it with the proposed relocation date.

We are awaiting their reply.

In summary, the pattern of communication has been one in which much more effort has been put into removing us from site than ever went into engaging with us while we were on site or supporting us while working to secure the site to begin with. Notably only those who state they have no decision making power have come into contact to formally speak or correspond about the situation.



Fresh garlic from our Left Field market garden.

Closing Statement

Our work at Bellahouston shows the potential of urban agriculture to create and sustain a local food economy. Through the tireless work of the Locavore team (both Locavore CIC and Locavore as run by The Chard Holding Group CIC) we have made significant progress in increasing local food production, green employment, routes to market, growing space, and the availability of local, sustainable food in and for Glasgow.

Our wide ranging activities at Bellahouston - from food growing to veg box delivery and wholesale, to community engagement and sector development - show that we take a holistic, systems based approach to local food that goes far beyond simply building a few raised beds.

We provide Glasgow with a leading example within the whole of the UK of a Social Enterprise that is at the forefront of work in this field and we are doing this with almost no support or funding. We're exactly the sort of organisation that is required to deliver local and national visions and we deserve to be supported and celebrated by Glasgow City Council and treated as a valuable partner that can help realise their policies, plans and strategies.

We hope this report is a wake up call to Glasgow City Council that they are not performing well across the board when it comes to delivering their policies relating to food and food growing. They need to rethink their approach and work to become an enabler by reducing barriers, increasing support, increasing transparency, and sometimes just getting out of the way.

We have witnessed inconsistent levels of buy-in and an inability of officers to work across the relevant departments that need to be joined up to deliver sustainable food projects. This includes Food Growing Asset Management, Procurement and Economic Development. Overall there is a lack of understanding and expertise relating to sustainable food systems. We are not uniquely impacted by the Council's failures as we know our experience echoes that of other organisations in Glasgow who have attempted to deliver food growing projects at scale.

We are committed to continuing to provide a positive model for building a sustainable food system. Our journey so far shows how a small, local organisation of dedicated people can grow into a significant social enterprise of national recognition that achieves the broader environmental and social goals that we share with the Scottish Government and Glasgow City Council.

All we require from the Council is a new concessionary lease which will allow us to secure all the work we have highlighted in this document, including securing 80 green jobs, and allow us to go forward into the future to focus on further improving and developing ambitions to create and grow sustainable food solutions.

However, without willingness from the Council to support a long-term solution for Locavore's activities at the Bellahouston site all our hard work over the past decade will come to a halt.

Call for Glasgow City Council to do the right thing: www.locavore.scot/act

"We will support the actions under the 'Food Growing Strategy' and the vision set out by 'Glasgow City Food Plan' by helping to increase opportunities for local growing, building our understanding of local food systems and encouraging the transition to healthier, more sustainable and climate-smart food system in the city [action 32]. This will include [...] support for more local food growing opportunities and shorter food supply chains [action 31]. We will work with the Scottish Government, Glasgow Food Policy Partnership, Glasgow Community Food Network, Glasgow City Council, Sustainable Glasgow Partnership and other key organisations in the city to facilitate access to locally sourced, seasonal food [action 30]. This will support the development of a food system that protects nature, reduces food miles and minimises waste, while also promoting healthy, seasonal and ethically sourced food available to all."

[Glasgow Climate Action Plan](#)

Locavore is "the antidote to the anonymous plastic wrapped food in the multiple retailer that's travelled too far and is tired by the time you get to it. Locavore is the opposite of that and this is what we need for the future."

Hugh Fearnley-Whittingstall, Writer & Broadcaster, The Food Programme, Radio 4, 2022

"Locavore is the future. We can't afford NOT to shop and eat there."
Joanna Blythman, Author & Journalist, writing in The Herald

