

Locavore press release

For Immediate release: 10/7/24

Glasgow City Council threatens future of Locavore, Scotland's celebrated local food pioneers

Glasgow City Council has issued Locavore a 'Notice of Removal' to vacate its urban farm at Bellahouston Nursery by the 31st of July. The site is the hub for the majority of the local food social enterprise's activities and forcing this eviction would result in the closure of Locavore in its entirety with the loss of 80 jobs, its two shops, and an extensive range of social and environmental benefits that the not-for-profit provides in Glasgow and beyond.

Reuben Chesters, Founder of Locavore, said:

"We are deeply disappointed and frustrated by the lack of transparency regarding the decision making process, and the unwillingness of the Council to explore solutions with us in spite of awareness of the existential threat this position poses to our social enterprise. The current position has been reached through a catalogue of delays and errors by various Council departments since October 2023."

Locavore (now operated by the Chard Holding Group CIC) is the successor organisation to Locavore CIC which previously had a lease from the Council which secured Bellahouston Nursery as a sustainable food hub till 2062. The unavoidable administration of Locavore CIC in January 2024 voided the lease but assurances had been given that the new organisation would be able to continue to operate from the site.

Since last October the enterprise had been reassured by one department that they would be able to stay on site and even encouraged to apply for, and [awarded, £49,999](#) in Council funding by another department for projects at the Bellahouston site. They were then unexpectedly served with a 'Notice of Removal' by yet another department and informed that Senior Management were 'not minded' to consider a new lease and the organisation must leave by the 31st of July.

Locavore Bellahouston currently hosts 120 community growing plots and is home to Locavore's veg box service which supports local and organic farms and supplies almost 2000 households with veg boxes across Glasgow and central Scotland. The site is the City's only organic farm with tonnes of tomatoes, cucumbers, beans and kale due to be harvested in the coming months. Other groups call the site their home, including beekeepers, a flower grower, and other community organisations. The organisation has ambitious plans for future projects on site.

After three months of attempting to enter a solutions focussed discussion with the Council, Locavore has decided to go public in an effort to safeguard livelihoods and secure the valuable work it does in Glasgow and beyond. [Locavore have published a report about their work at Bellahouston](#) and their experience of engaging with the Council.

They are now calling on their supporters and the public to help fight the Council's decision by [signing their petition](#) and contacting elected members.

Dorothea Warlich, Director of Locavore, said:

"As citizens of Glasgow, we need action, not warm words on sustainability from the Council. That means supporting organisations that are trying to do good work, rather than shutting them down."

Locavore's work at Bellahouston provides Glasgow with a nationally recognised example of a social enterprise that is at the forefront of building sustainable food networks – through increasing

local food production, green employment, routes to market, provision of growing spaces, and the availability of local, sustainable food in and for Glasgow.

Reuben Chesters concluded:

“We’re exactly the type of organisation that is required to deliver local and national visions for a sustainable food future and we ought to be supported and celebrated by Glasgow City Council. It’s incredibly disappointing that we are not being treated as a valuable partner that can help realise their policies, plans and strategies.”

Ebany Dohle, Urban Agriculture Coordinator at the Glasgow Community Food Network provided support to Locavore’s plea:

“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.”

Laura Pros Carey, a member of the Locavore team since 2016 told us:

“Both me and my husband have worked at Locavore for a number of years. We’re worried about our jobs, which we enjoy, and which we feel are essential to the city of Glasgow. There is so little otherwise happening in the area of organic, local, sustainable growing. What does Glasgow and its Council gain from shutting down such a valued and meaningful project?”

Zoe Zalavary, a plot holder at Locavore Bellahouston said:

“This is heartbreaking. The Council's action goes in entirely the wrong direction than we need to be heading with food in Glasgow. The Council must stop this unbelievable action and support Locavore to carry on its fantastic projects at Bellahouston.”

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For further information please contact Reuben Chesters on 07808 296 045 or by emailing reuben@locavore.scot

Editor’s note:

1. Our report ‘[Bellahouston, we have a problem](#)’ which includes details of our journey to this point, an overview of our work to build sustainable food networks and our impact for the City and beyond is available at: www.locavore.scot

2. Locavore is a social enterprise which exists to help build a more sustainable local food system which is better for our local economy, the environment and our communities. We’re about making the money spent on food do more for the benefit of society and our environment.

The Locavore project has been working with this brief since 2011 to develop ideas and practical solutions which can be used to deliver a better food network. Over this time they have opened a number of shops, developed several organic market gardens, established a veg box scheme, helped farmers find direct routes for market, became suppliers of local and organic food for others – from cafes to local authorities - and got lots of people more engaged in thinking about issues around food, where it comes from, and the fairness and sustainability of mainstream supply chains.

Everyone eats food, and the food we choose to eat has far reaching impacts which shape our landscapes, streetscapes and local economic situations. What we eat impacts our health, but also everything else in the world with issues as wide ranging as deforestation, climate change, animal

welfare, public health, exploitation of the global poor and workers rights. It's fair to say we have a lot more than food on our plates.

The work of Locavore CIC was widely recognised with 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

Our Economic impact - <https://locavore.scot/initiatives/our-impact/economicimpact/>

For more information visit: www.locavore.scot / follow us [@locavorecic](https://twitter.com/locavorecic)