

PRESS RELEASE



- **Developer's 'Pre-emptive' Strike Fells 1,000 Trees**
- **New Campaign Starts To Save Liverpool's Garden Festival Site**
- **First Protest/Celebration planned at Site on Sunday 15th April**

Friday, 13 April 2007...Liverpool's landmark Garden Festival Site, the focus of a series of failed development plans over the years, has yet again become the centre of controversy and protest following the unannounced felling of more than 1,000 trees by property developers.

Local residents have been shocked to discover that more than a third of the trees on the site had been cut down in a mass indiscriminate clearance. The trees were originally planted as saplings over 20 years ago to provide a woodland setting for the 1984 Garden Festival.

Liverpool's 1984 Garden Festival Site has been long-neglected by the Council and developers - owing to political turf wars and practical problems presented by the highly-contaminated land beneath the site.

However, by happy accident, over the years the site has turned into something of a wildlife reserve and a much-loved legacy landscape for the Mersey riverfront. More than 35 species of bird currently breed in the woodland on the site which has more than 15 types of trees.

But now property developers, Langtree McLean Limited, have accomplished an extraordinary pre-emptive strike against the Garden's fans by mass-clearing a huge swathe of the existing woodland ahead of their application for planning permission to put more than 1300 houses and apartments on the 88-acre site.

As a result a mass "protest/celebration" has been organized at the site on Sunday 17th April to start a new campaign to save the Garden Festival Site.

Lucy Page, a local resident, who is fronting the new campaign, said: "In response to this wanton destruction we need to remind everybody in Liverpool of the incredible beauty and value of the Garden Festival Site to the City."

"It is sad to see a developer act in such an underhand and destructive way as Langtree McLean have acted – without consulting or communicating with local residents and without waiting on the planning process."

"Our campaign is about standing up to these bully-boy tactics – and we are asking everybody to help us save this unique riverfront landscape."

[For details of the event on Sunday 15th April see the note at end of this release.]

Local residents had attempted to stop the destruction

When the tree-felling started several local residents contacted the developers (Langtree McLean Limited) to protest against the felling and pointing out that the bird nesting season had already commenced in this early spring and that it was illegal to fell trees at this time under the terms of the Wildlife and Countryside Act.

Others residents had contacted the City Council to complain that the developers had failed to notify the local community of their plans to clear the trees – saying they would have objected if given the chance.

However at the campaign's first public meeting held at the start of April it emerged that none of more than 100 people attending had been able to stop the felling or had been given any explanation of why the trees at the Garden Festival Site were suddenly being cut down without warning.

History of failed development proposals

At the meeting one local resident, Eric Moffat, said "Langtree McLean's plans are the latest in a long line of proposed developments over the years – and the record is that the previous plans have come to nothing. The difference here seems to be that Langtree McLean intend to force planning permission by destroying whatever stands in their way. We shouldn't let them get away with it."

"The tree felling seems to have been stopped for the moment – and the nesting season should give us a legal breathing space to put an end to this destruction – but we are all worried about what other tricks Langtree McLean have up their sleeve."

Karen Fletcher, a local resident who has been involved in previous campaigns to defend the Garden Festival Site, said: "Any development has to solve major problems regarding the seriously contaminated nature of the underlying land on the site both during the building and for future residents."

"There are also huge issues regarding traffic and local amenities which have to be addressed. Langtree McLean should prove their case before destroying any more of the woodland which has taken twenty years to grow."

Shock at Developer's "Pre-emptive strike"

At the meeting there was shock that the clearing was taking place before any planning hearings had been held regarding the current proposed development by Langtree McLean Limited.

As a result the people at the meeting agreed to set up a new campaign to try to defend the Garden Festival Site from what was described as 'smash and grab' destruction and a "pre-emptive strike".

For further information journalists can contact:

Lucy Page (Chairwoman) **0151 728 9066** pagelucy@merseymail.com

David Morton (Media Enquiries) **07981 24 46 29** davidmmorton@hotmail.com

Notes to Editors:**1. Details re Protest/Celebration at the Garden Festival Site :**

We are holding a Garden Festival Fayre on Sunday 15th April at 2pm at the front of the Garden Festival Site by the Britannia Inn on the river promenade.

This will be a mix of a protest and a celebration. As well as providing information and photographs of the site and what has been destroyed we'll also be showing what can be saved – especially the riverfront landscape.

The more people who join the campaign the more chance we have of saving the Garden Festival Site. We would especially like families and young people to be involved so we've planned lots of music, face-painting and other fun activities for Sunday to make it a real family day out.

At the moment the campaign is gathering together all material relevant to the planned development of the site – and we are anxious to take information and advice from as many people as possible either at the Fayre or at any time by e-mail to savethegfs@googlemail.com.

- St Michael's is the nearest rail station to the Garden Festival Site – just a 5-minute walk away. On Sunday posters will provide walking directions from the station.
- The Britannia Inn is on the riverside drive and is served by the 4B bus – half-hourly service on Sundays. There is also car parking at the Britannia Inn.

2. Planning Objections Needed By Tuesday 17th April

Letters of objection to the proposed development need to be with the Council's Planning Committee by April 17th. Letters saying what the sender objects to in the proposal should quote the planning reference 060/3442. An example of such a letter will be given out at the Garden Festival Fayre (see below).

Promotional material published by Langtree McLean Limited in November 2006 shows a succession of seven-storey high apartment blocks directly overlooking (and overwhelming) the promenade and cutting to pieces the existing uninterrupted woodland landscape.

People who haven't seen the proposals can go to the developer's own website www.festivalgardens.co.uk where they can see from the map of the site and from artists impressions just how little of today's landscaped woodland will be left.

The address to which the letter should be sent is:

Mr. S Clark
Regeneration, Planning and Building Control
Municipal Buildings
Dale Street
Liverpool
L2 2DH

Notes to Editors:

3. About The Garden Festival Site

The Liverpool Garden Festival Site covers some 88 acres next to the river about 2½ miles south of Liverpool city centre.

The riverside promenade provides uninterrupted pedestrian and cycling access to Garden Festival Site from the Albert Dock.

Up to the Garden Festival Site the promenade is directly fronted by housing or industrial properties. The Garden Festival Site provides the first real “green” break on the promenade – with a wide strip of sloping grass land in front of the beautifully landscaped woodlands which stretch without interruption for over ½ mile along the promenade.

The woodland is within the Festival Site itself – currently behind a wire fence largely hidden by foliage.

The woodland at the Garden Festival Site was planted as saplings in 1984 to provide the backdrop to the display gardens, waterpark and Festival Hall at Liverpool’s International Garden Festival of 1984.

The woodland consists of a more than 15 varieties of native or naturalized trees including: alder, beech, hazel, limes, maples, English oak, holm oak, Turkey oak, and American oak, rowan, Scots pine, poplars, silver birch, whitebeam, and willows.

More than 30 species of birds are presently breeding in the woodland at the Garden Festival Site including: blackbird, blackcap, bullfinch, carrion crow, chaffinch, chiffchaff, collared dove, dunnock, goldcrest, goldfinch, great spotted woodpecker, jay, linnet, magpie, mallard, mistle thrush, moorhen, robin, song thrush, sparrowhawk, stock dove, blue tit, coal tit, great tit, long-tailed tit, whitethroat, willow warbler, woodpigeon and wren.

Three grassland species of birds - bunting, skylark and meadow pipit - also breed in the land to the south east of the Garden Festival Site.

Several species of bird which actually nest outside the area such as Swifts, House Martins and starlings also use the Garden Festival Site during the breeding season.

Species which have bred in recent years include Tawny Owl, Lesser Whitethroat, lapwing, grey partridge and lesser redpoll.

The Garden Festival Site’s success as an attractive landscape and a thriving habitat for wildlife is in strong contrast to what the developers and the council have so far achieved elsewhere along the promenade.

This successful landscape and habitat is now under threat yet again – this time by the proposed development by Langtree McLean Limited.

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4. Letters of Objection

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Dear Mr Clark

Objection to Planning Application ref 060/3442
(former Liverpool Garden Festival Site, Riverside Drive, L17)

I object to the above planning application on the following grounds:

1. Damage to Green Wedge

The proposed development of 1,374 dwellings plus ancillary services is on land designated in the Unitary Development Plan as Green Wedge to be used for recreational and wildlife purposes only. It borders the Mersey estuary which is by far the most important environmental asset in Liverpool, of designated international importance for wildlife. It also builds upon the most attractive area of undeveloped coastline close to the centre of Liverpool. The ugly and badly designed "finger development" damages the views along the Prom. In addition, the management plans for the site will severely damage existing wildlife; in particular, excessive tree felling and damage to the grasslands. Lancashire Wildlife Trust believes the whole site should be regarded as of Site of Nature Conservation Value status for planning purposes.

2. Disturbance of the Landfill and Hazardous Materials

Any large scale development of this site involves extensive disturbance of a former municipal tip containing unknown amounts of toxic and hazardous material. Its disturbance will cause serious danger to the health and safety of the site workers, the people who will eventually live there and everybody who lives near by. The developers' plans to deal with this issue are grossly insufficient. A full scale Health Impact Assessment is required.

3. Traffic Impact

Riverside Drive already suffers severe traffic congestion for long periods of the day. Contrary to the developers' claims many households are bound to want one or more cars. This will lead to a substantial increase in traffic, causing more queues and tailbacks and a serious risk of gridlock, for instance at the Jericho Lane junction. The developers' proposals to tackle this are totally inadequate.

4. Housing

The Garden festival Site is not within a designated Housing Market Renewal area and therefore the level and type of housing development proposed in this area is contrary to planning and development policy.

Yours sincerely

Date