



**Open Letter from Ryebank Fields Community Group to
Professor Malcolm Press, Vice-Chancellor of Manchester Metropolitan University**

25th September 2026

Dear Professor Press,

Yesterday, Manchester City Council's (MCC) Planning Committee approved the community-led, community-funded planning application to preserve Ryebank Fields as a Community Woodland and Meadow. This is an important moment for Ryebank Fields and for the many people who have worked for years to protect this much-loved green space. Going forward, it presents an opportunity for Manchester Metropolitan University (MMU) to collaborate with us to create something truly exceptional.

We invite Manchester Metropolitan University (MMU) to work with the Ryebank Fields community to develop the land into a world-class community woodland and meadow. Such a partnership provides an opportunity to tangibly demonstrate the University's commitment to sustainability, biodiversity, climate resilience, environmental education and community engagement.

Ryebank Fields is already a remarkable natural asset. Its woodland, meadow, wildlife, open landscape and connections to the surrounding communities have created an extraordinary, rewilded, wildlife haven in an urban setting: this is the strongest foundation on which to build. Now, opening out consideration of how best to harness the active ecological development expertise and biodiversity research resources accessible via the Higher Education infrastructure that is afforded through MMU creates, we believe, a dynamic and most constructive next step.

In July of this year the Manchester Evening News carried an article about Ryebank Fields which described MMU saying that *'selling the land will help fund 'excellent education and research' in the future'*. Not so. It is NOT selling the land that will do that. Imagine Ryebank Fields becoming a living demonstration of what can be achieved when a university and its local community combine in the interests of nature recovery, biodiversity, environmental research, education, volunteering, recreation and community wellbeing. Alongside becoming a powerful expression of MMU's own sustainability ambitions, it would become a place where MMU students and academics learn and undertake research; where local people volunteer, enjoy nature and spend time outdoors; and where innovative approaches to woodland management, meadow creation, climate resilience and biodiversity may be developed and shared.

Together, let's begin a conversation about creating a legacy to be experienced by people and nature for generations. We hope that you will accept this invitation, extended in complete sincerity, and we look forward to hearing from you.

Yours sincerely,

Dr Rhetta Moran
Chair
on behalf of Ryebank Fields Community Group Ltd