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2 June 2023

**LEADERS OF LEEDS COME TOGETHER TO OPEN FIRST EVER CLIMATE ACTION CITY CENTRE HUB**

***Imagine Leeds is a dedicated space for people to work together on overcoming the climate, nature, and social crises.***

Leading figures from across the city will gather next Thursday to launch the first ever climate action hub in the heart of Leeds. The hub, which is called Imagine Leeds and is based at City Exchange on Albion Street, will be officially opened on Thursday 8 June from 4pm-7pm.

Leaders from across the city will be speaking about the importance of collective and community-led action to bring forward big ideas to tackle the climate and nature emergencies in Leeds and beyond.

Speakers include Alex Sobel MP (Leeds North West) and Shadow Minister for the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs; Tom Riordan, Chief Executive of Leeds City Council; Andy Goldring, City Hub Lead at Climate Action Leeds; Professor Nick Plant, Deputy Vice-Chancellor: Research & Innovation at University of Leeds, and Hannah Bailey, Chief Officer at Voluntary Action Leeds.

Andy Goldring, City Hub Lead at Climate Action Leeds and CEO of the Permaculture Association, commented: “We are delighted to celebrate the opening of the first ever dedicated city centre hub for climate action, nature recovery and social justice in Leeds.

“We have museums to showcase the past, but until now we haven’t had a place where we can look to the future, imagining the different directions and possible futures that we both want and need to create. We can now do that - putting people and planet at the heart of building our future Leeds”.

Located on the seventh floor of City Exchange, Imagine Leeds offers 8,470 sq ft. of event, learning and working space, in an open plan layout with panoramic views across Leeds and beyond. It is open to any organisation working on climate, nature, and social justice, with an event capacity of up to 100 people and a dedicated co-working space for 25 people.

As part of the official launch event for Imagine Leeds, there will be a showcase of activity from across the city in areas such as climate action, nature, food, energy, transport, and social justice, with interactive, creative and learning sessions and child-friendly activities also taking place.

Imagine Leeds is now the base for Climate Action Leeds, the citywide, community-led movement working for a zero carbon, nature friendly, socially just Leeds by the 2030s. Climate Action Leeds is a five year collaborative programme involving a large network across the city which started in October 2020 and is funded by the National Lottery’s Climate Action Fund.

Climate Action Leeds is led by six main partners whom all work together on the delivery of the programme - Voluntary Action Leeds, Our Future Leeds, Together for Peace, Leeds TIDAL, CAG Consultants and Leeds Community Foundation.

Hannah Bailey, Chief Officer at Voluntary Action Leeds commented: “Having the right city centre space was essential for the critical work we need to do and it’s thanks to the whole Climate Action Leeds team and the help of many volunteers and organisations from a variety of sectors that we have been able to open Imagine Leeds.

“I’m delighted that Climate Action Leeds has found its first home at City Exchange and has brought the vision for Imagine Leeds into reality. Having this central space will help to inspire creative thinking and motivate collective action to urgently tackle the climate, nature and social crises we all face and encourage many more people and organisations to become involved in this critical work.”

There is an existing network of climate action community hubs across Leeds in Alwoodley, Armley, Beeston, Garforth, Horsforth, Little London, Otley and Seacroft.

Hannah Bailey continued: “The community hubs are the bedrock of Climate Action Leeds doing some great work across the city. They have a real understanding of their communities, and the challenges and opportunities in each area. Imagine Leeds will be an essential central meeting space for these hubs to come together, share ideas and work collectively.”

There are also key organisations, called transition partners, who are working with Climate Action Leeds to help people and organisations across Leeds understand how key sectors - including energy, food, nature, youth and education, work and economy, housing, and climate justice - can create a more sustainable Leeds. The transition partners are Racial Justice Network, People Powered Homes, Hyde Park Source, Foodwise Leeds, Platform and Leeds Development Education Sector, as well as city professionals working in car-free design and community wealth building.

Prior to the official opening on 8 June, Imagine Leeds has been open to a number of groups with more than 50 events including workshops, networking events and training sessions taking place over the last three months.

Andy Goldring concluded: “Imagine Leeds is an exciting and innovative testbed to see what we can achieve in Leeds if we all come together and pull in the same direction towards a sustainable city.

“It was important for us to open the space as soon as possible to ensure we had a base in the city centre for urgent action and we have been overwhelmed by the positive response it’s had. We are now looking for support to find us a more permanent home for this important collaborative work with other city partners to address the historic challenge of the climate and nature emergencies.

“The Imagine Leeds space has been generously given by Landsec, the owners of City Exchange, as the first home for Imagine Leeds and has also been made possible thanks to business rates relief from Leeds City Council. We’re looking forward to planning for our next base in the city and we invite many more to join us and use this space to drive the changes that we so desperately need.”

Free tickets for the launch event are available on the Climate Action Leeds website: <https://www.climateactionleeds.org.uk/event-details/launch-of-imagine-leeds-the-climate-action-hub>

**ENDS**

For further information and images please email hello@climateactionleeds.org.uk