

Media information: for immediate release

With photos

Please note Richard Tims and Isobel Bowler are available for interview between 11.30am and 12.30pm on Friday July 24 at Olive Grove.

Sheffield FC – coming home to where it all began

Football is coming home to Sheffield.

Sheffield FC, the world's first football club, is returning to the city at the Olive Grove Sports ground where the founders of Club developed the first set of rules and played their first games of football on the fields back in 1857.

The move to where it all began, which spawned the modern game leading to 350,000 clubs, 300 million active players and 1.6 billion fans, has been supported by Sheffield City Council. The authority helped reached an agreement for the land to be used on a lease basis.

The switch from Sheffield's current home at Dronfield, north Derbyshire, features a three stage process over a number of years and comes on the day the club officially launches a worldwide funding campaign, which has already got the backing of some great footballing names, to raise £2m.

The first phase will see the creation of a playing area, maintenance of the area, a new driveway and fencing around the area. Phase two, which will be subject to future public consultation, planning and funding, will see the creation of a football site suitable for non-league standards, including, changing rooms, small stands and the infrastructure for fans.

Phase Three will see the proceeds from the fundraising campaign used to develop a community and history centre celebrating the role the club has played in the beautiful game. It will feature a museum, classrooms, educational facilities and the original greenhouse of 1857.

The Club has worked closely with the committee of the Olive Grove Sports Club. The organisation will have a seat on the board of Sheffield FC.

Sheffield FC Chairman Richard Tims said: "We really are establishing a new spiritual home for football on the original ground and, as a charitable foundation, we will continue to protect and preserve the world's first football club, back where it all began.

"Sheffield FC has played football without a permanent home and its own ground for more than 140 years. Now it's time to take the club back home to Olive Grove in Sheffield to where it all began. We're looking forward to working with the city, the local community and schools in developing our plans for the site.

"Let's all remember, without Sheffield FC there would be no game as we know it today. So, the efforts of so many people and, in particular, the city council and Olive Grove Sports Club to make this happen should be applauded. We hope it will provide the impetus for people and football fans across the world to back our unique fundraising campaign and, of course, visit our original home adding to Sheffield's appeal as a destination city.

“I have just returned from Europe where I briefed football clubs and organisations about our plans and the fundraising efforts. As a result a number of clubs – including Borussia Dortmund – have said they will financially support our campaign.”

Sheffield City Council has been instrumental in getting Club back to Olive Grove, creating a partnership between the football club and the sports club committee to facilitate safeguards, arrangements for existing users and a sustainable immediate future for the ground.

Councillor Isobel Bowler, cabinet member for neighbourhoods at Sheffield City Council, said: “It's great to welcome Sheffield FC back to the city. This is a boost for the club, the city and Olive Grove sports ground.

“While the club is known throughout the world as the oldest football club, they also do great work with local teams and schools, and are a real credit to Sheffield.

“We're particularly pleased that the club will work closely with the existing committee at Olive Grove to secure the future of this important sports ground.”

Sheffield FC will, for the immediate future, continue to use the Coach and Horses stadium at Dronfield.

- For more information about the fundraising campaign go to www.theworldsfirst.org
- For donation to the project visit <http://igg.me/at/homeoffootball>

ENDS

Notes to editors

- Sheffield FC – the world's first football – was founded in 1857 by the pioneers Nathaniel Creswick and William Prest
- The Club was responsible for the first officially adopted set of rules and laws for the game
- It is recognised by FIFA and the FA as the world's first football club
- In 2004 Sheffield FC was awarded the FIFA Order of Merit together with Real Madrid.

Issued on behalf of Sheffield FC by HR Media Ltd. For more information contact Martin Ross at HRM, telephone 0114 252 7771