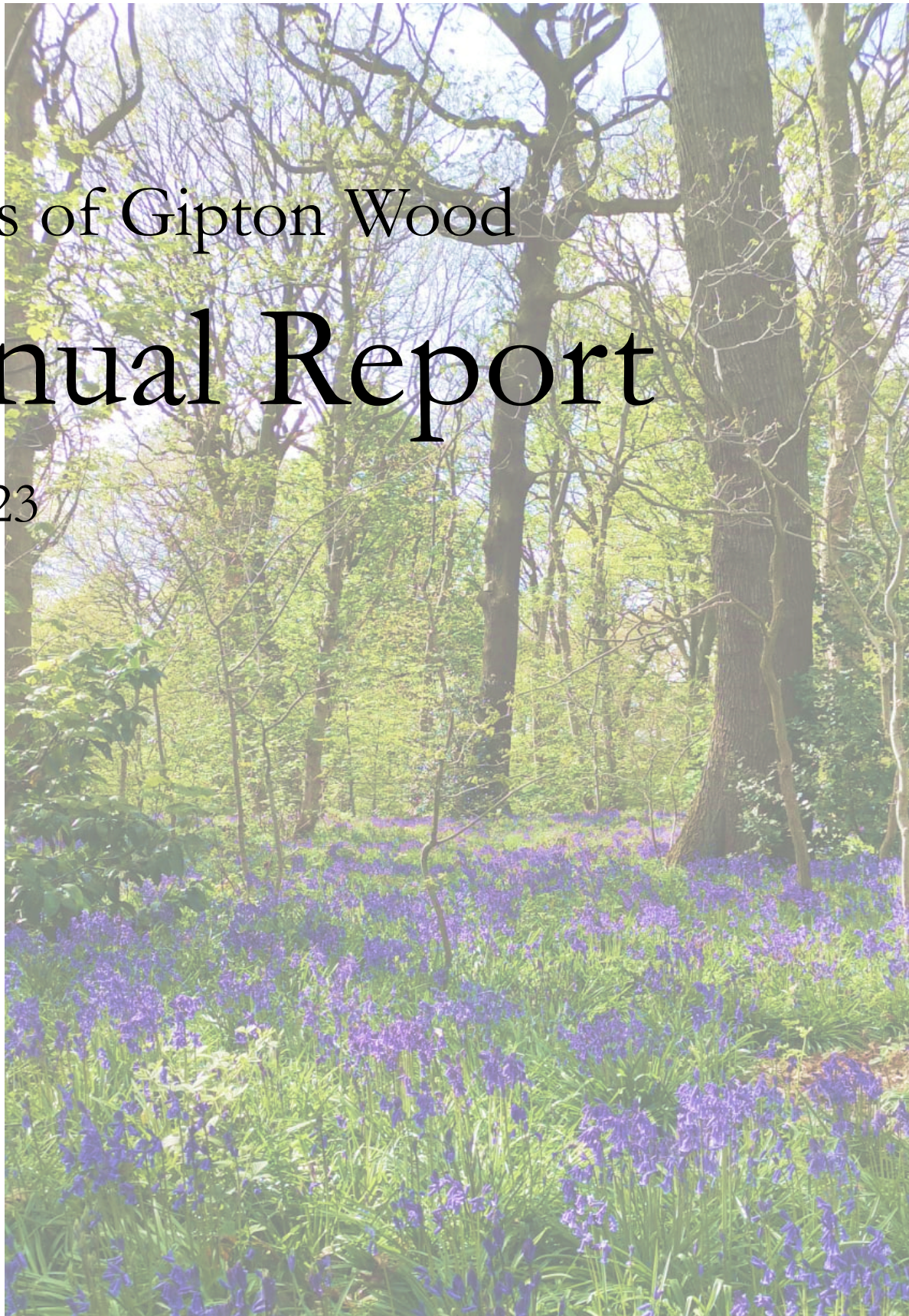




Friends of Gipton Wood

Annual Report

2022-2023



Achieving our objectives

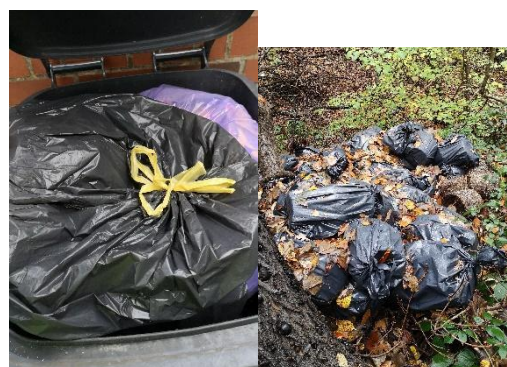
The Friends of Gipton Wood have three objectives defined in their constitution and to which they work to improve, promote and protect the woodland and engage the community.

1. To promote the conservation and protection of Gipton Wood, and features therein, and to undertake, assist and encourage projects of environmental, natural and recreational benefit, and management of Gipton Wood, in partnership with LCC.

Following the fantastic response to our first community survey, *Your Gipton Wood*, and subsequent discussion at the AGM 2022, the focus of the Committee this year has been to turn the results into a new five-year Management Plan in partnership with Leeds City Council (LCC). After several iterations, this is now close to being achieved, and a Community Partnership Agreement is being drafted to formally enable FOGW to act in the wood on behalf of LCC.

Meanwhile, the Friends have been busy acting upon the feedback given through the survey and are making great progress on some key aspects.

Litter picking efforts continue, with monthly picks being supplemented by volunteers tidying the main paths during the intervening weeks. Our monthly picks are still returning large amounts of waste, regularly filling a wheelie bin. Unfortunately, we have also had a couple of instances of flytipping, with large numbers of refuse sacks being dumped in the gully. Where these are plant waste, Friends have dealt with them, and the Council has removed others.



Further work has been undertaken to clear non-native and invasive species, with a number of cherry laurels taken out. Their damage is evident after their removal, with the area under their canopy being devoid of other plant life. Removal has taken place over several Action Days, needing to take down the branch and then dig quite extensive root systems out.

Particular mention to Graham Watt for his exemplary laying of the hedge at the bottom of the Oakwood Boundary Road. In time, hedging planted on the Copgrove Road side can also be laid to form a more permanent living boundary.



2. To involve, as far as possible, the local community and other interested groups, organisations and agencies, in the management and enhancement of the woodland.



The Friends once again attended the Oakwood Farmer's Market in April to promote the group and its work, engage new volunteers, and advertise our AGM and Bluebell Walk.

FOGW has been accepted onto the Coop's Community Fund for 2022-23, receiving donations from shoppers using local stores. This has been an opportunity too, to engage with residents, providing information about what we are hoping to do. It has also brought interest in the wood from the Coop's local school.

The FGOW Volunteer and Nature Chat Whatsapp groups have continued strongly post-pandemic, as a useful way to exchange information. Our Facebook page has also been revitalised, with over 500 followers seeing the results of our Volunteer Action Days and other events. We also have plans to restart use of our Instagram account to engage younger audiences and provide available information on woodland flora in an accessible way.

3. To promote the wellbeing and safety of those using the woodland for access or recreational activities.

Over the winter months, the Friends have cleared back the edges to all the tarmac paths and the Copgrove Road pavement that runs along the edge of the wood to improve access and safety. In some places this was several inches of leaf litter and plants growing out more than a foot over the path. It also included a particularly soggy morning in January, but even driving rain couldn't dampen the resolve of our valiant volunteers, greatly helped by some of Graham's leftover mulled wine and mince pies!

Following strong winds, there have been boughs down across paths, and our volunteers have continued to clear the paths to maintain access and make fallen limbs safe, reporting as necessary to LCC.



Statement of accounts

Due to the pandemic, there has been little movement in funds since the last Statement in 2019.

Opening balance (AGM 2022)	£1467.41
Cash in	£150
Cash to be deposited	£54.55
Cash out	(£76.98)
Closing balance (AGM 2023)	£1540.53

Statement of membership

Over the course of the year, the group has attracted 17 new Friends.

The list of Friends now stands at 80. There are 27 members of the WhatsApp group. We have 504 followers on Facebook.

