



Friends of Gipton Wood

# Annual Report

2025-2026

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 /FriendsOfGiptonWood

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A thriving woodland,  
for nature, the community  
and the future.

# Foreword

*Christine Mather, Honorary  
President*



Another busy year for the Friends. It has been wonderful to see our Volunteer Action Mornings so keenly attended – we’ve got so much done.

Our dead hedge grows longer improving safety and providing excellent habitat, paths kept tidy, litter and dumped rubbish cleared. Reward, a cup of tea with home-made cakes, knowing we’ve made a difference.

In June, we celebrated the Friends 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary with a summer party. It was fabulous to celebrate our hard work and this wonderful woodland with our community and so many families. The children and all had a great time with lots of activities and food, including two celebration cakes!

There have been many more woodland craft activities, bluebell and fungi walks enjoyed by many. My highlight was helping the children toast wild garlic bread over the campfire in March at our Leap into Spring event, and seeing them make pictures with coloured wool wound round nails which they all loved hammering in. Pure joy.

There is always more to do. But we should never lose sight of how much we have done, and how far we have come in these 25 years. Thank you volunteers, have another great year.

## About Friends of Gipton Wood

Friends of Gipton Wood is a group of volunteers helping make Gipton Wood a thriving woodland for nature, the community and the future since 2000.

We do lots of different activities throughout the year in partnership with Leeds City Council who own the Wood.

Our aims are to conserve and protect this wonderful ancient Woodland, its plants and wildlife, to engage our community with the Wood to ensure its future, and to make it safer and more accessible for everyone in our community to use.

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### A note from the Chair

Another year, another set of achievements for our amazing volunteers! It is fantastic how much we manage to do in only 12 (relatively short!) sessions throughout the year, not just for conservation in the Wood, but for engaging our community, making the Wood safer and helping people to connect with the Wood and with nature. It can only be done through the hard work of our volunteers. Thank you!

## Get involved!

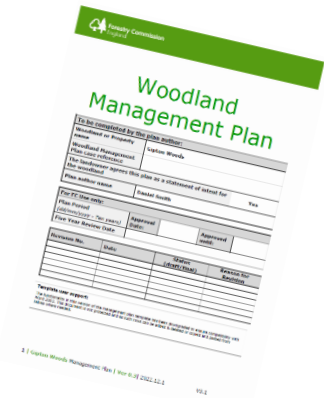
We are always open to new volunteers, new Friends of the Wood.

All are welcome, all ages, all experience, all abilities.

**Our Volunteer Action Mornings** take place on the first Saturday of each month, 10am-12noon, meeting at the green arch at the end of Gipton Wood Road.

# A plan for Gipton Wood

Friends of Gipton Wood have a Management Plan for Gipton Wood agreed with Leeds City Council (LCC) for 2023/24-2027/28. This sets out eight shared objectives for the Wood and the parameters for how we can work in the Wood.



As a group, we have three objectives set out in our constitution. The eight Management Plan objectives fall under these as follows:

1. Promote the conservation and protection of the Woodland
  1. To conserve an ancient managed oak woodland, the bluebells and ancient woodland flora.
  2. To restore the Woodland as an ancient managed oak woodland through minimal interventions.
  3. To improve and protect the Woodland's features and boundaries.
  4. To conserve the Scheduled Ancient Monument.
2. Involve the local community in the Woodland
  6. To improve knowledge about the Woodland and inform those who use it.
  7. To engage the community about the Woodland.
3. Promote the wellbeing and safety of those using the Woodland
  5. To improve the accessibility and safety of the Woodland.
  8. To increase use of the Woodland by the community to connect with nature.

The three priority objectives for 2025/26 were:

1. To conserve an ancient managed oak woodland, the bluebells and ancient woodland flora.
2. To restore the Woodland as an ancient managed oak woodland through minimal interventions.
3. To improve and protect the Woodland's features and boundaries.

Our Calendar of Activities was set against these priorities using the proposals set out in the Management Plan and this Report reviews our progress and achievements.

## Key Successes this year

1. We have extended our preservation of the density of native bluebells in the north-east corner of the Wood by pulling a further patch of brambles.
2. We have all but completed the longest section of our new dead hedge along the Copgrove Road boundary to prevent quads and dirt bikes accessing the Wood.
3. We have removed Cotoneaster and regrowth of Snowberry.
4. We have thinned saplings along our main paths to manage the regeneration of more vigorous trees and to increase natural light along paths during the summer evenings.
5. We have kept the Wood clear of litter and flytipping.
6. We have successfully run our Rhythm of Nature series of family events to engage the community with the Wood.
7. We have increased community ownership by planting acorns with local children.

# Gipton Wood 2050

This year, Friends of Gipton Wood put forward an exciting vision for how we could enhance Gipton Wood, setting it up to remain a thriving woodland for nature and our community through to 2050.

Back in 2000, Gipton Wood was known for burnt out cars and discarded sofas. Friends of Gipton Wood was set up to change that. We cleared the fly tipping, restored and improved paths, and fundraised to rebuild the Roundhay Road steps. And, as the ecology survey published this year shows, we have definitely succeeded.

Twenty-five years on, however, more work is needed. Paths we restored are becoming uneven or encroaching on the native flora or eroding the Scheduled Monument as people make them wider to avoid the mud. The Wood is very open, which is good, but more people are driving motorbikes and even quadbikes through, making people feel unsafe. The wonderful canopy grows ever thicker, but this makes the Wood darker, making them feel less safe and weakening regeneration. Some habitats are disappearing, threatening some of our ancient woodland species.

In 2023, we conducted the Your Gipton Wood survey, asking how people wanted to see the Wood improved. Our community identified nature conservation, safety, accessibility and heritage conservation as the most important things. These were the basis for our Management Plan. But it is not possible to do all these things through volunteer power alone, and in the current financial climate LCC cannot afford to do them either.

We met with different Council departments, the West Yorkshire Archaeology Service and commissioned the ecology survey to develop proposals to make our community's vision a reality. With the support of LCC, in June 2025 we won funding from Wade's Charity to commission Groundwork Yorkshire to create plans to bring these proposals to life.



These plans would represent a once in a generation investment to renovate, update and enhance this special ancient woodland, to ensure it will continue to thrive for nature and our community for the next twenty-five years.

Between 17 January 2026 and 15 February 2026, we held a community consultation to gather feedback and understand support for these proposals.

We provided an online survey and full details of the proposals on our website, as well as hard copies in Oakwood Library. We held three consultation events, a launch event at the Oakwood Farmers Market on 17 January, a walkabout for Friends on 24 January, and a Q&A event for the general public on 7 February 2026. Representatives from Groundwork Yorkshire attended the latter to be able to answer technical questions.

Thank you to everyone who responded and gave their feedback. We are delighted that 92% of respondents supported all or most of the proposals. Full details of the proposals and consultation response, and how we have adapted our proposals in return, can be found on our website.

We are now seeking funding for these proposals, and we hope work will start by the end of the next financial year.

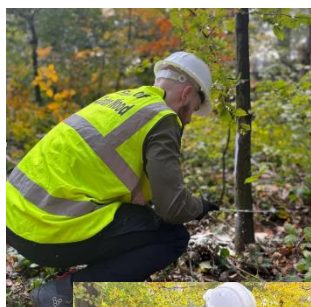
# Achieving our objectives

We have had a very busy and enjoyable year, doing great work, welcoming new volunteers and, of course, helping ensure Gipton Wood is thriving, for nature, the community and the future.

## Conservation

One of the key proposals in the Management Plan for restoring the Woodland is the removal of invasive and non-native species. This year we have monitored and maintained the patches of Snowberry we previously cleared, and taken out some remaining rogue Cherry Laurels, as well as Cotoneaster that had been planted by Northern Gas in the south-east corner of the Wood.

In July, we continued our work of last year, pulling Brambles from another large area in the north-east of the Wood to preserve the density of the Bluebells. It was agreed that we would only do this in specific areas as Brambles are a very important habitat for small birds like Wrens, but it is also clear that their encroachment has a negative impact on the Bluebells. We made great progress again, and are being richly rewarded this year with a renewed density of Bluebells in this area.



Gipton Wood has historically been managed as an Oak woodland, and many of its features are due to this history. Our Management Plan sets out plans to thin saplings in the Wood, to increase light to the woodland floor to help ancient woodland flora (in lieu of what large herbivores would naturally have done), and to thin the regeneration of more vigorous trees that would otherwise out-compete the Oaks.



In November and February we undertook this work, focused on saplings along our main paths which block out the light along these during summer. Saplings were marked in advance to ensure we only removed what was necessary. We made good progress, but with many paths to cover, there is still more to do, which will be picked up later this year.

Perhaps our biggest achievement this year is the completion of the longest section of our new dead hedge, which we plan to build all the way down the Copgrove Road boundary. This has been a huge effort, with multiple sessions dedicated, as well as significant physical exertion! Work will continue this year to fill the most open sections.



## Community

This year we again ran our popular Rhythm of Nature series of family events, to high acclaim thanks to Dora's efforts, bringing families into the Wood and connecting young people with Nature and the Wood. In September we sowed wildflowers and planted acorns alongside woodland crafts.

In December, our Wreath workshop proved popular again, with a fabulous array of winter creations made from evergreens within the Wood. In March families

enjoyed some early Spring sunshine, weaving woodland pictures, and toasting wild garlic sourdough on sticks over the campfire.



We also ran our annual Bluebell Walk in May and Fungi Walk in October. Both events were well attended, learning from Steve Joul about the wealth of flora and fungi we have in the Wood.

Our big community highlight, however, was our celebration of our 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary in June. Despite the weather looking iffy to begin with (typical British June!), the sun shone, and we had an excellent turnout. There were multiple craft tables which hummed with activity, the BBQ sold out, and the two celebration cakes (and more) were decimated. It was wonderful to share this moment with so many in our community, to hear the appreciation for our work, and to give back to everyone who helps and supports our work throughout the year. It was also wonderful to see old faces, with founding members traveling to join us for the event.

Our website went live this year, making the Wood and our work more accessible and more visible. It is already helping us to engage our community and volunteers more effectively, and was particularly useful during our consultation on proposals for Gipton Wood 2050. As we engage funders around these proposals we hope it will be a clear demonstration of our proficiency and value that will support our case. The site also has information about the history of the Wood and the group, ways to explore the Wood with maps to download, information about our events, blogs and a 'Nature library' full of the species we have in the Wood, and more.



 Gipton Wood

Home Get Involved About the Wood Who We Are News [DONATE](#)



**COME AND ENJOY  
AN ANCIENT  
WOODLAND IN THE  
HEART OF LEEDS**

Gipton Wood is a beautiful ancient oak woodland covering 8 hectares at the heart of Oakwood in north-east Leeds. Teeming with wildlife and a wide variety of ancient woodland plants and fungi, there is always something new to see in every season. Grass-crossed with paths and holding a bronze-age ring-ditch, it is perfect for exploring and getting close to nature, a natural playground for children and adults alike.

[FIND OUT MORE](#) [EVENTS](#) [WHAT'S IN THE WOOD](#)



## Wellbeing and safety

We have continued to maintain the paths and boundaries of Gipton Wood this year, keeping them cleared back and free of leaf litter and moss so that they are safer. We have also cleaned the benches, bins and lampposts in the Wood as needed to keep it looking welcoming and cared for.

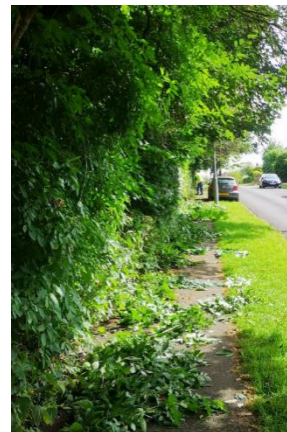
We worked with the Council to bid for our tarmac paths to be resurfaced this year, but this was unfortunately unsuccessful. This work is a part of our proposals, and in the meantime we will look to fill the worst potholes to help avoid trips and falls.

We continue to have trouble with quadbikes, dirt bikes and e-bikes driving dangerously in the Wood, making people feel unsafe and churning up the paths. Access controls are a part of the proposals, and we have made significant progress on the dead hedge that will help to secure the Copgrove Road boundary so that they can't get around the access controls. We are aware that this will never stop all bikes getting in, but we hope that it will be a far less desirable route for vehicles, while remaining accessible to wheelchairs and pushchairs.

It goes without saying that our volunteers have continued to diligently clear the Wood of litter, either during walks in the Wood, or as part of our Action Mornings. There have been some small instances of flytipping, all of which our volunteers have dealt with quickly.

Our volunteers have continued to clear paths to maintain access and make fallen limbs safe when they have fallen and where they are able, or else reporting to LCC to get them dealt with as quickly as possible.

This year also saw a Yoga session run our behalf, helping people to connect with nature and look after themselves amongst the trees.



# Statement of accounts

In the financial year 2025-26 we have run a deficit of £545.64 where we have spent against grants from previous years. Our accounts have been validated by an independent accountant.

	FY 25-26	FY 24-25
Starting balance April 1 <sup>st</sup>	£2973.99	£2,712.76
<b>Income</b>	<b>£8816.55</b>	<b>£1,674.48</b>
Donations	£716.55	£275.09
Grants	£8100.00	£1,399.39
<b>Expenditure</b>	<b>£9362.19</b>	<b>£1,413.25</b>
Events	£146.37	£126.29
Equipment	£684.66	£412.53
Projects	£7929.88	£625.04
Insurance	£213.05	£249.39
Recurring	£388.23	-
Surplus/deficit	-£545.64	£261.23
<b>Closing balance March 31<sup>st</sup></b>	<b>£2428.35</b>	<b>£2,973.99</b>
Held in Reserve	£500	£500
Available balance	£1928.35	£2,473.99

## Value of assets

Tools - Approximately £250, including bowsaws, loppers, long arm loppers, helmets, safety vests, wheelbarrow, brushes, kept securely in a tool store. Printer and ink - £25. Display boards – Approx value £25, kept securely. Gazebo - £130, kept securely.

## Commentary

We have transferred to a Virgin Money Charity account which is free of charges, offers a debit card and payment of cash into a post office. The added benefits of having a debit card and being able to pay cash in at the post office have made management of funds easier. The account is app based with Tom and Danny having access.

57 transactions this year 24 transactions last year.

Events costs and donations received on the day were approximately even. Website costs - £258 for 123.Reg to host our website for three years until 2029. 123.Reg have given us an extra year for the FOGW domain name registration.

## Grants

Grant body	Funded activity	Amount
Wades	Design of improvements	5850
Morley Glass,	Ecology report	500
REAP	Ecology report	500
Councillors (MICE)	Insurance + summer party activity	500
Community committee	Website design	750

# Statement of membership

Over the course of the year, the group has attracted 14 new Friends.

The list of Friends now stands at 111. There are 46 members of groups within our WhatsApp Community.

Our social media presence has been one of the main reasons we are attracting new Friends. We have 639 followers on Facebook (up 61) with posts reaching on average 1500 people every month and around 400 engagements with our posts each month. We have 149 followers on Instagram (up 33) with posts reaching around 500 people every month.

