

FRIENDS OF GIPTON WOOD

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING – Monday 27 April 2026

The Roundhay Pub, Roundhay Road, Leeds

7.30pm

Note of the Meeting

Present

Tom Thorp (Chair)	Danny Smith (Treasurer)	Jenni Rauch (Secretary)
Laura McFarlane-Shopes (Community Engagement Officer)	Dora Goldsbrough (Youth Engagement officer)	Heather Baker (Co-opted Committee member)
Christine Mather (Honorary President)	Liz O’Sullivan	Liz Crick
Robin Heighway	Stephen Ongley	Norman Carr

Apologies

None were received

Notes

Item	Subject	Action
1	Standing Items	
1.1	Elections and Appointments Danny Smith’s three-year term as Treasurer has come to an end. No expressions of interest were made from others interested in taking on this role. Danny confirmed his willingness to continue in the role and was unanimously re-elected. Heather Baker, who was a co-opted member of the core group in April 2025 after she stepped down as secretary has decided that she needs to stand down from this role too. Her huge contribution to the group over at least eight years was recognised by all, in particular the part that she played in keeping the group going through the difficult COVID period.	
1.2	Confirmation of Standing Officers Tom Thorp, Jenni Rauch, Laura McFarlane-Shopes and Dora Goldsbrough confirmed that they would continue in their respective roles. For Laura and Dora this will be their third year in the role, and for Tom and Jenni it is the second year.	
1.3	Minutes of the last AGM These were unanimously accepted with minor amendments as notified by Dora, Laura and Tom.	Jenni
1.4	Annual report	

	Tom presented the 2025/26 Annual report with copies available to attendees. The report records the extent of the work undertaken by the group in just 12 volunteer action mornings (VAMs) per year. All members of the Group should be proud of this achievement. Tom highlighted the current beautiful display of bluebells which is a testament to the bramble-pulling undertaken in the summer. The dead hedge, which was controversial in the beginning has been extended, and is now bedding in, providing both access controls and an excellent habitat. Work is still needed to add in dog roses and hawthorns. There is a need to check with Louise (council ranger) about her contact with Northern Power with regard planting around the substation. This is because of access requirements to the substation and the wires etc underground. Litter picking remains an ongoing activity (with a shout out to those who do this throughout the year, not just at the VAMS) as well as either directly clearing fly-tipping, or reporting it promptly to the Council for their attention. The quarterly Rhythm of Nature events are becoming increasingly popular with a number of families turning up to all event as well as to the feature extra events like the bluebell and fungi walks led by Steve Joul. This increasing family engagement with the wood and FOGW is very pleasing to see. In June 2025, FOGW celebrated its 25th anniversary at the Summer Party which had a good number of participants. A bring and share stall was included in the event for the first time, with garden produce, cakes and preserves sold. This was a useful addition to our fundraising activities. Thanks were also given to those who bake for these events and the regular VAMs. In addition to activities in the Wood, the FOGW website (https://fogw.org.uk/) was launched. There are good statistics on engagement with the site, and in particular the nature library which is accessed not only from the UK, but internationally. To kick off planning for the next 25 years for the Wood, an ecology survey was commissioned from Brooke Ecological Limited, with funding support from REAP and Morley Glass. The report provided a broad overview of the Wood's ecology and provided options for the longer term management of the Wood. This report provided the foundation for a successful funding proposal to Wades for work to be carried out by	Core Group Tom
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	Groundwork (who have experience of working with the Council) to develop plans for the Wood for the next 25 years, which take account of the ecological requirements as well as those of users of the wood and local residents. The plan developed by Groundwork in conjunction with relevant Council officers and the FOGW core group members was basis of the Gipton Wood 2050 consultation for local residents, businesses and other interested parties in January and February. The results are presented under item 3 of the Agenda. Membership of FOGW (i.e. those who have signed up to the fogw email) has now grown to 111 (from 87 last year), and there are over 600 followers of the FOGW Facebook account. The Instagram account also has a significant reach. Danny presented the Statement of Accounts which have been reviewed by an accountant. The statement is included in the Annual report. Income for the year was £8,816, of which £8,100 was grant funding and the remainder was from donations gratefully received. Thanks were extended to REAP, Morley Glass, Wades Charity, our local Councillors (MICE funding) and the community for their generous support for FOGW's activities and enhancement plans. Expenditure was £9362.19 which was primarily spent on the projects reported above (website design, ecology report, and Groundworks plan). Funds are also used to buy equipment needed for VAMs and Rhythm of Nature events, and for recurrent and necessary expenditure such as for insurance and website hosting. This year, our expenditure exceeded income as we worked on these major projects, but there was surplus funding from previous years which the Group was able to draw on to cover the difference. Danny also reported that the bank account has been moved from Lloyds to Virgin Money Charity Account as Lloyds was introducing charges.	
	The Joy of Gipton Wood We took the opportunity to screen this beautiful short film, which featured FOGW President, Christine Mather, and which was filmed in the Wood by members of the Oakwood Film Academy. The film talks about the history of the Wood as well as the diversity of its ecology and the joy that it brings to those who use it.	

	It was noted that one of the conditions to the gift of the Wood to the Council in the 1920's it remained fenced, whilst allowing local residents to have access. Almost all the railings were removed in the 1940s as part of the war effort. The question was asked whether the Council should uphold the condition of the gift, and reinstate the railings. However, it was also noted that the Council has <i>very</i> limited funding, and that this would not be seen as a priority for them this long after the railings were removed.	
3	Gipton Wood 2050 Tom reported on the results of the community consultation which took place in January and February 2026. All houses and businesses in the area were leafleted, and information events were held both specifically for volunteers and one for the wider community. Thanks to Oakwood Solicitors for their support in producing the leaflets for this consultation. 67 responses were received, which compares well with response rates for government and business surveys. 93% of respondents either entirely or mostly agreed with the plans with 48% of respondents leaving positive comments in support of their responses. The survey requested information on age, gender and ethnicity. Analysis of the results showed no clear difference in responses. Respondents reporting disability all appreciated plans to make the wood more accessible to them. We noted that the accessible path may also allow local care home residents to make more use of the wood. The main concerns raised in the responses were • <i>The proposed new entry to the Wood at the bottom of Boundary Road (by Ricos)</i> Some respondents suggested that the new entrance should come off Roundhay Road, rather than towards the bottom of Boundary Road. This would ensure that access to the Wood was more visible to the wider community, and may therefore become a resource to a greater number of local residents. This is being investigated. • <i>Not showing sufficient concern for nature/and the hop paths not being a natural surface which would detract from the sense of the Wood's natural environment.</i> However, one of the major issues faced in the wood is that where paths don't have a hard surface, the path spreads especially in wet weather, pushing the vegetation further and further back. At the moment	

	nature is closest along the tarmac paths where there is a defined edge for walkers. By opting to use the hop path (or similar surface) we will provide a long-term solution, which should be cost effective and allow nature to come closer to the paths. Core group members will be visiting Frickley Country Park on Friday 12 June to view a hop path laid a few years ago to see how it wears and weathers in to the environment. Others are welcome to join if interested. ● <i>Design/desirability of the chicanes</i> There is some concern that these are an over-engineered and unsightly way to restrict entry to the Wood, with particular concerns expressed about the entry at the top of Boundary Road. There was also some concern as to whether the restrictions were needed at all access points. Tom advised that we are limited by the type of restrictions that the Council will permit, with bollards and metal chicanes the only options. Also, even if a particular entrance is not currently used by bikes /quad bikes it is very likely that the problem will move as entry at other access points is made more difficult by new controls. As this is a 25-year plan, the changes made need to anticipate these changes in use. It was noted that in some Leeds locations more sculpturally styled chicanes have been used, and we should consider whether these could be used in the Gipton Wood 2050 project. Furthermore, as the hedge which is being laid along Boundary Road develops the entry restrictions should become less visible. There was some concern that as Boundary Road is in a conservation area, the design of any entry restriction needs to be approved by the conservation planner. Whilst the plans have been developed in consultation with the Council, it is not certain whether the conservation planners have had any input. This will need to be followed up by the core group. ● <i>The re-siting of the bench closer to Boundary Road.</i> There was concern that this would cause noise and nuisance to the residents of Boundary Road. Tom advised that there was an error in the plans which had been circulated as part of the consultation, and the bench will be much closer to its current location and should not adversely affect residents in this area. ● <i>The proposal to include seating at the proposed plaza at the Green Arch entrance</i>	Core Group/ others if interested Core Group
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	This was a concern raised by a number of respondents, as it was thought that groups gathering there could cause noise and disturbance to the immediate neighbours, as well as deterring others from entering the wood, at least at this entrance. It was agreed that the seating should be removed from the plan. • <i>Concerns were raised about the potholes in the tarmac paths</i> This has been raised with the Council. Unfortunately their budget has already been allocated, and they do not see when funding for repair to these paths would be available. This is why resurfacing of the paths is included as a project activity. It was agreed that the core group should continue with the project taking the above survey feedback and discussion at the AGM into account. The main next step is to develop funding proposals for the work. There are two significant potential sources of funding for the whole project. These will require strong funding proposals: • The Roundhay Festival Fund: This will be funding specific to Leeds, but the amount of funding available will depend on ticket sales for the festival. • The Heritage Lottery Fund: This can provide funding of up to £250,000. If these funding applications are unsuccessful then we will need to break the project down into smaller elements and seek funding from different sources.	Core Group Core Group Core Group
4 4.1	Calendar of Activity <i>Calendar</i> • Rhythm of Nature Series (June, September, December and March) • Dead hedging (April, May and November) • Bramble pulling (July) • Sapling thinning (November and February) • Invasive/non-native clearance (June and January) • Bird boxes (January) • Spring clean / Autumn tidy (March/August) • Litter picking -throughout the year It was noted that our insurance doesn't cover for climbing ladders, so the bird box cleaning needs to be done together with Louise (Council Ranger), unless we arrange for one or two volunteers to undertake ladder training. We also discussed	Core Group and volunteers

	whether bird boxes were needed in the Wood which provides a natural habitat for birds. However, if bird boxes are located near the accessible path (when installed) it would mean that people using the path would be highly likely to see bird nesting sites. It was agreed that this coming January, the focus would be to take down, clean and repair the old boxes. This would also allow us to monitor whether they are used. Decisions would be made regarding the installation of new boxes when the new path has been laid.	Core Group/ volunteers
4.2	<i>Expanded opportunities for involvement</i> The support for the growing range of events and activities reported at the start of the meeting currently sits mainly with the members of the core group. As the work which we undertake grows this places increasing demands on the group. It is recognised that there is a group of people who may not be interested in taking on the regular commitment which a core group role requires, but would be interested in doing more than attending the monthly VAMs and quarterly Rhythm of Nature events. Two areas where people currently get involved are making cakes for the monthly events and emptying/cleaning the bins in the wood but other opportunities also exist. It is therefore proposed that more roles are created where volunteers can take ownership and become more involved without making a major commitment. At the moment, we are looking at two specific areas: Events Team, and Project Support. ● <i>Events team.</i> We need a small group to help run the practical side of events. This would include Support running VAMs; support across Family (Rhythm of Nature) events; extra help at the larger events (Summer Party and Christmas); This would involve helping things run smoothly on the day; setting up and packing down; welcoming people; looking after the tea break and donations (at family events); taking photos and capturing the day, including covering issues around consent for image capture/use; and having a nice walk around the wood putting up /pulling down posters. ● <i>Project Support</i> Alongside the events, there will be more project work coming up in the wood, associated with the enhancement project, once funding is secured and work starts. Project support will allow volunteers to get involved in small practical ways as the work happens. Projects will be short term and clearly defined and will support specific tasks, working alongside others. Work	

	could involve preparing areas ahead of work; helping with lighter tasks; planting and habitat work; and tidying up or finishing off areas. Where needed, training will be given In discussion all agreed that this was a good development for the group. It was agreed that this proposal would be communicated via social media, with WhatsApp groups set up for communicating with those interested in getting more deeply involved in this way.	Core Group
4	Any other Business There was none	
5	Thanks Thanks to all who attended and endorsed the plans for the coming year. Thanks were also expressed to Tom for chairing the meeting so effectively.	