

# Friends of Whirlow Brook Park

## Two Year Forward Plan

### September 2021-August 2023



### Background

FoWP was initiated in February 2021 and constituted in September 2021. It is one of over 80 Friends groups who look after parks and open spaces in Sheffield, with the encouragement and support of the landowner, Sheffield City Council Parks and Countryside Department. It was conceived by members of Su3A who have restored the area around the rock garden and upper pond, but who recognised that the remainder of the 39 acre park was becoming increasingly neglected due to lack of resources.

FoWP is a separate entity, with its own constitution, management committee and group of volunteers. It will work operate in close cooperation with colleagues in Parks and Countryside

### Primary Aim of FoWP

To help restore and develop the Park for the benefit of the people of Sheffield in order to maintain its natural beauty and atmosphere of tranquility which contribute to a sense of well-being in all who visit.

### Forward Plan 2021-23

In producing this plan we have drawn heavily on feedback obtained at the consultation event held in May 2021, together with information supplied by SCC Parks Department. There are nine key objectives for the next two years, together with the means of achieving them. Annual operating plans and budgets will now need to be produced.

Much can be achieved with an active volunteer force but many activities will require funding. SCC may be able to provide some materials. Membership subscriptions are expected to cover running costs e.g.insurance, publicity, website, some plants and bulbs. Fund-raising events will need to be considered.

Requests for small amounts may be made to the local Ward Pot and to the SW People Keeping Well Partnership, provided that the activity to be funded falls within their priorities. Grants may be available from charitable trusts and foundations, most of which would require match funding

#### 1. Provision of a cafe and toilets.

This is top of everyone's list. The lack of these facilities does more than anything else to deter people from visiting the park. But although we have included it in the plan it is not currently in FoWP's gift to fulfil this need, only to campaign for it. As part of the 'Better Parks' initiative SCC have been in negotiations with a provider to build a cafe with one accessible toilet on the site of the shelter/toilets half way up the drive. We have made it clear that we think this is an unsuitable site for a cafe (although we would like to see the toilets restored), and that we would prefer to see a cafe adjacent to the Hall or as part of the proposed development in the compound.

#### 2. Make the Park look cared for.

**Current state: Overgrown shrubs, self sown saplings, weed-infested areas and neglected fabric. We will correct this by:**

- 2.1. Clearing the formal gardens of weeds, scrub and unwanted trees, replanting as funds allow.
- 2.2. Clearing/cutting back the drive-side borders near the main entrance.
- 2.3. Cleaning out and replanting the margins of the lower pond.
- 2.4. Sanding and repainting the benches.
- 2.5. Replacing the broken screen fence between the top car park and the

lawns.

2.6. Repainting the white lines in the car parks.

2.7. Clearing out and replanting the heather beds.

2.8. Repairing walls.

2.9. Undertaking an audit of key trees and learning about their future maintenance needs.

2.10. Repairing the roof of the gardeners' store in the compound.

**3. Make the Park more accessible for people with mobility problems. Current state: Many trip hazards and areas inaccessible for wheelchair users. No encouragement for people with mobility problems to use the Park. We will alleviate this by:**

3.1. Undertaking an audit of paths and steps with a view to reducing trip hazards.

3.2. Putting in hand-rails.

3.3. Ensuring access to as many parts of the park as possible for those using wheelchairs.

3.4. Indicating wheel-chair routes.

**4. Restore and develop play opportunities for very young children.**

**Current state: Limited facilities, natural features hidden by weeds, wood sculptures rotted away. We will correct this by:**

4.1. Repairing and re-painting the maze.

4.2. Introducing new features in the play area such as a log walk, a rope swing, a willow wigwam.

4.3. Improving seating provision for parents and carers.

4.4. Commissioning replacement sculptures.

4.5. Holding events aimed specifically at families with young children.

**5. Improve access to and from the Limb Valley through the woodland. Current state: many paths are boggy, especially in winter. Little or no signage. We will address this by:**

5.1. Identifying and treating muddy areas.

5.2. Putting in boardwalks where appropriate.

5.3. Improving signage.

**6. Make the Park more wildlife-friendly.**

**Current State: A preponderance of non-flowering shrubs, heather beds past their best, absence of flowering plants at certain times of year. We will correct this by:**

6.1. Diversifying the planting.

6.2. Choosing plants attractive to pollinators.

6.3. Introducing wild-flower areas.

6.4. Avoiding disturbance to nesting birds and other species.

**7. Provide opportunities for learning about/working with nature.**

**Current state: No organised provision apart from the Su3a and FoWP volunteer sessions. We will add to these by:**

7.1. Holding talks, walks and demonstrations.

7.2. Identifying specimens of particular interest.

7.3. Offering placements under the Green Prescribing and similar schemes.

7.4. Encouraging classroom provision within the compound.

**8. Increase the number and range of people visiting the Park.**

**Current state: The Park is not on most people's radar and some previous visitors are deterred by the lack of toilets and cafe. We will address this by:**

8.1 Continuing to highlight the need for cafe and toilet facilities.

8.2. Reaching out to under-represented communities.

8.3. Producing targeted publicity via the press and social media.

8.4. Holding events of special interest - plant fairs, musical events, Tai Chi, outdoor theatre.

8.5. Developing planting schemes that offer year-round interest.

### **9. Maintain and develop the Friends Group by**

9.1. Increasing the number of friends and volunteers.

9.2. Attracting more corporate sponsorship.

9.3. Seeking charitable status.

9.4. Increasing the frequency of volunteer sessions.

9.5. Maintaining a pro-active and forward-looking management committee.

9.6. Playing an active role in the Sheffield Green Spaces Forum.

9.7. Working constructively with SCC Parks Department colleagues, Su3a, Vine Hotels and with other local organisations such as Grow UK.

9.8. Fostering a team approach to make supporting the park a pleasant, sociable activity.

### **Medium Term Aims**

This Park has huge potential.

1. The compound beyond the upper car park could be developed with a greenhouse, growing beds, a teaching area, a cafe, composting toilets or septic tank, and an area for plant sales. The bed adjacent to the hall could house raised demonstration beds. The old orchard near the bottom of the drive could be replanted. This is more than FoWP can aspire to, and it would be good to be able to operate in partnership with an organisation like Grow UK.

2. The lower pond leaks into the lower car-park. It should be dredged and re-lined.

3. The mill-pond could be dredged and made safe for kayaking. The board-walks along the Limb brook could be extended. The paths through the woodland could be improved.

4. Climate change is likely to have an impact on the Park. The ponds currently dry out in late summer -this could start to happen earlier if springs dry up. Some trees may start to suffer in dry weather. Our future plans need to take account of this.

We must keep these longer term goals in mind whilst we concentrate on the short term restoration work. Over the next two years let us strive to make the Park as attractive as it did in its heyday.

FoWP Steering Group, 10 September 2021

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