

Friends of Whirlow Brook Park- Strategic Plan July 2023



Executive Summary:

This plan has been produced by the Friends of Whirlow Brook Park (FoWP), whose aim (as stated in the Charity Commission Objects) is **“to promote for the benefit of the public the conservation, protection and improvement of the physical and natural environment at Whirlow Brook Park and the surrounding woodland and waterways.”**

The Park, which covers about 15 hectares, lies to the south west of Sheffield on the edge of the green belt. Created from bare hillside in 1908, it is a typical industrialist's house and garden, and as one of very few surviving intact it, deserves to be preserved as a highly valuable asset.

Acquired by Sheffield City Council (SCC) in 1946, it opened as a public park in 1951 and for decades it was the jewel in Sheffield's crown. Lack of funding over the last thirty years has led to minimal resourcing levels and parts of the park are now overgrown and neglected.

Spurred on by the success of a Sheffield u3a volunteer gardening group which cares for the upper pond and surrounding gardens, the Friends of Whirlow Brook Park (FoWP) was set up in 2021. With SCC providing background information, an initial public consultation exercise showed what people valued most. A National Lottery funded 'Climate Change Action Project' has provided a steer for improving biodiversity and coping with climate change, whilst an archaeological survey has indicated which aspects of the hard landscape should be preserved.

The FoWP management committee have taken all of these findings into account in order to produce a ten year strategic plan. The plan has two key aims:

- **‘to improve visitor facilities, whilst conserving the natural and heritage landscape’**
- **‘to enhance the local landscape and ecosystems to be resilient to change’**

The plan will be delivered through a combination of

- Volunteer labour with assistance from SCC colleagues.
- Donations and local fund raising for small scale projects.
- Funding applications to national organisations in respect to larger projects.

An active and committed Friends Group, the engagement of Park users and the cooperation of SCC will all be critical to the delivery of the plan.



Friends of Whirlow Brook Park: Strategic Plan – Context - July 2023

Introductory Background:

Whirlow Brook Park is located in the south west of the city of Sheffield and covers an area of about 15 hectares (8000sq.m). It is located adjacent to the valley of Limb Brook in the east and the forestry area of Rough Standhills Plantation to the north. The Park is a formal greenspace created in the mid twentieth century, centred on Whirlow Brook Hall (c1906), and is now under the ownership of Sheffield City Council (SCC). The site is regarded as one of the city's most prestigious historical parks, with its Japanese rock garden and ponds evoking a classic example of an early twentieth century woodland garden. The grounds are laid out in a 'natural style', characterised by using and manipulating the natural contours to create informal areas and more formal gardens. (See Appendix A) The original garden has undergone a series of modifications, but a lack of resources/ investment over the last thirty years, plus changes to management practices, has led to parts of the Park becoming neglected and overgrown as natural ecological change has taken place.

In response to this, a new 'Friends of Whirlow Brook Park' (FoWP) group was initiated in February 2021 and constituted in September 2021. It was granted registered 'Charitable Status' in July 2023 (Charity no.1204004) and operates as an independent entity, with its own constitution, management committee and group of volunteers. It will work/ operate in close cooperation with colleagues in Sheffield City Council Parks and Countryside Department and with other interested stakeholder groups eg. Su3a, Wildlife Trust, Park service providers...

The primary purpose of FoWP (see Charity Commission objects) is “to promote for the benefit of the public the conservation, protection and improvement of the physical and natural environment at Whirlow Brook Park and the surrounding woodland and waterways”

There is a particular emphasis on enhancing the ecosystems and developing resilience against a changing climate, whilst also maintaining the Park's natural beauty and atmosphere of tranquility to contribute to a sense of well-being in all who visit.

An initial 'Forward Plan 2021-23' was established based on feedback obtained at a public consultation event held in May 2021, together with information supplied by SCC Parks Department. Our aim is now to develop a draft strategic plan for the next ten plus years based on these initial ideas together with those developed from a year-long Community Climate Action project, sponsored by the National Lottery and in partnership with South Yorkshire Biodiversity Research Group. (See Appendix B)

This plan will allow FoWP to develop and agree a **holistic vision** for the Park and its surrounding environment that will be flexible to climate change and improve the facilities available for all park users.

Our two **key aims** will be;

- **To improve visitor facilities, whilst conserving the natural and heritage landscape.**
- **To enhance the local landscape and ecosystems to be resilient to change.**

Vision Statement

The contributors involved in the production of this strategic plan have agreed the following holistic vision for the park:

To conserve and enhance the ecological, historical and heritage landscape of Whirlow Brook Park whilst encouraging greater use, understanding and enjoyment of the environment by the local and wider community.

This will be achieved by developing the key objectives of ‘improving visitor facilities through future developments’ and ‘enhancing the local ecosystems to be resilient to change’ through the work of FoWP volunteers, partnership development and adequate funding.

Aim A – To improve visitor facilities, whilst conserving the natural and heritage landscape.

Our priorities will be;

A1. To develop the infrastructural facilities for park users

A2. To establish an historical and archaeological record of the Park and Hall for public information and education

A3. To develop facilities to support the education, health and well-being of children and adults

A4. To ensure the provision of biodiversity interest, public activities and suitable ecosystems on a year-round basis

A5. To increase the range and number of people visiting and volunteering within the Park

A6. To maintain and conserve the heritage aspects of the Park

Aim B – To enhance the local landscape ecosystems to be resilient to change.

Our priorities will be:

B1. To review and implement new parkland management techniques

B2. To review, monitor and develop natural and managed water, wetland and flow systems

B3. To enhance natural ecological habitats

B4. To support, promote and adapt managed gardens in terms of biodiversity

B5. To promote ‘Action for Climate Change’ to visitors and the wider community

B6. To promote and support the recording of ecosystem and biodiversity evidence data

Other issues:

1. Funding

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 eg. insurance, publicity, website, some plants and bulbs.

Bidding for funds has already been successful via the National Lottery, local council funds and specialist charity trusts and foundations, Access to such funds may be improved now charitable status has been achieved.

The need to develop income generation events, that also raise the profile and user numbers of the park, will need to be considered.

2. Data

The need for as much data as possible concerning the Park is paramount in establishing baselines on which to plan. This applies to both Climate Change ecological survey data but also to numbers of park users and what they use (and would like to use) the park for. The need for research and data collection/ surveys is clearly important, and requires liaison and partnership with both SCC and other Park core stakeholders (eg. Vine Hotels & the new 'Shelter' café).

3. Partnerships

FoWP will need to develop several active partnerships if it is to flourish and implement its plans. These will include regular liaison with the Park's owners Sheffield City Council but also with the commercial enterprises in the park ie the new 'Shelter' café, Vine Hotels who lease the original Whirlow Hall facility, and the new tenant of the compound area.

Liaison with other major active environmental and ecological interests eg Sheffield & Rotherham Wildlife Trust (SRWT), South Yorkshire Biodiversity Research Group (SYBRG) and smaller specialist groups eg. Su3a, Bat group, Swift group etc will all be essential. Joint project work and the avoidance of duplication or conflicting activities is desirable. Regular liaison meeting may be necessary for more extensive plan implementation (eg. 'Slowing the Flow project) and for the sharing of resources and plans.

Cooperation and partnership with other local volunteer groups will also be desirable to share good practice, specialist skills, training, equipment, project activity, data recording etc.

Friends of Whirlow Brook Park (FoWP): Strategic Plan - July 2023

Introduction:

This plan aims to allow the Friends of Whirlow Brook Park (FoWP) to develop and agree a holistic vision for the Park and its surrounding environment over the next ten years. It will be flexible to climate change and improve the facilities available for park users.

It will have two key aims:

- 'to improve visitor facilities, whilst conserving the natural and heritage landscape'
- 'to enhance the local landscape and ecosystems to be resilient to change'

These will contribute to the holistic vision for the park:

'To conserve and enhance the ecological, historical and heritage landscape of Whirlow Brook Park whilst encouraging greater use, understanding and enjoyment of the environment by the local and wider community'.

Management process

Objective	Short term (Year 1)	Medium term (Years 2 - 5)	Long term (Years 6 +)	Comments
To deliver the holistic vision for the Park and its surroundings	Use the 'Climate Action Plan', the FoWP 2 year Forward Plan and discussions with park users and stakeholders to deliver the vision and plan	Produce draft statements of guiding principle, agreed with key stakeholders to promote and adopt an annual plan. In liaison with SCC, work towards gaining 'Green Flag' status for the Park	Review and monitor the vision and annual plans to adapt and maintain relevance for key stakeholders (Park users, FoWP volunteers, SCC, park service providers...) Achieve 'Green Flag' status via SCC	Essential to achieve and evidence progress

Objective	Short term (Year 1)	Medium term (Years 2 - 5)	Long term (Years 6 +)	Comments
A. To improve visitor facilities, whilst conserving the natural and heritage landscape				
A1. To develop the infrastructural facilities for park users				Need to ensure that we complete some survey work as 'evidence' of what the park users want in the future
a. Accessible café and toilet facilities for public visitor use	Support SCC in ensuring that new 'Shelter Café' provides adequate facilities.	Monitor, evaluate and support provision. Review development/ access opportunities.	Monitor, evaluate and support provision. Review development/ access opportunities.	
b. Car and bike access and parking facilities	Support SCC and café/ hotel owners in finding solutions to the deficiencies in car parking including the lack of 'designated parking' and markings Liaise to enhance roadway health and safety utilising speed bumps, weight limits and access conditions.	Review bike parking facilities in liaison with SCC and café/ hotel owners. Develop as appropriate Continue to monitor H & S requirements for park user safety.	Monitor car and bike use and access issues Continue to monitor H & S requirements for park user safety.	
c. Equality of access for all park users – regardless of mobility etc	Liaise with SCC and other interest groups to plan increased flexible access to all park areas.	Review, maintain and enhance seating provision, signage, parking, raised /	Review, maintain and enhance seating provision, signage, parking, raised /	

Objective	Short term (Year 1)	Medium term (Years 2 - 5)	Long term (Years 6 +)	Comments
A2. To establish an historical and archaeological record of the Park and Hall for public information and education				
a. Historical research group	Establish a FoWP 'History Research' group to undertake initial research into the site's history, including ownership and archaeology.	Develop and extend materials, including oral histories.	Develop and extend materials, including oral histories	Making contact with the family of the previous owners is necessary
b. Image library and display materials	Develop initial displays, posters and in situ information display boards for public use Enact annual events, plus regular in Park and external publicity talks to increase interest/ use of the Park	In situ display boards erected and maintained, liaising with SCC	Monitor, maintain and evaluate displays and materials, adjusting accordingly	Need to consider income generating events
c. Talks, lectures, guided tours and publicity displays.		Monitor and evaluate events to ensure quality and popularity	Monitor and evaluate events to ensure quality and popularity	

Objective	Short term (Year 1)	Medium term (Years 2 - 5)	Long term (Years 6 +)	Comments
A3. To develop facilities to support the education, health and wellbeing of children and adults.				All facilities and activities need to reflect 'green priorities' and use natural materials
a. Develop and support plans for modern/new children's' play facilities	Liaising with SCC, research history of facilities and review modern needs in a play area – age group appropriate	Design and develop a suitable area, with an emphasis on health and safety aspects. Link to planned maintenance plan (PMP)	Maintain and service area as part of planned maintenance plan (PMP)	Funding grants etc will need to be considered for a major project.
b. Develop a children's' activity trail	Liaise with SCC staff on options and initiate as short route option	Develop routes and features of the trail.	Develop routes and features of the trail.	Need to review satisfaction with trail
c. Develop a programme of events for children	Establish a variety of events and activities to encourage visitors eg. seasonal and regular events (annual plan?)	Establish a variety of events and activities to encourage visitors eg. seasonal and regular events (annual plan?)	Establish a variety of events and activities to encourage visitors eg. seasonal and regular events (annual plan?)	Need to consider income generating events
d. Develop 'natural environment' features for children's' play	Use of fallen trees and natural rock, wood and vegetation should be encouraged	Establish and maintain new 'natural environment' play facilities	Establish and maintain new 'natural environment' play facilities	Sculptures (adapted trees/ logs) as an option

Objective	Short term (Year 1)	Medium term (Years 2 - 5)	Long term (Years 6 +)	Comments
e. Encourage 'green prescribing' options within the Park	Investigate options and opportunities for implementation, including any costs	Establish new events and programmes to support health benefit opportunities	Establish new events and programmes to support health benefit opportunities	
A4. To ensure the provision of biodiversity interest, public activities and suitable ecosystems on a year-round basis				
a. Enable visitors to appreciate the range of biodiversity within the park	Review, plan and publicise findings of 'Climate Action Plan' into activities within the Park	Adopt and implement plan including food sources for wildlife, formal and informal planting to cover all seasons	Adopt and implement plan including food sources for wildlife, formal and informal planting to cover all seasons	Will need to cross reference to other priorities including parkland management techniques (B1.)
b. Showcase habitat creation and management processes	Liaising with SCC plan and promote varied zones for habitat creation, including mowing regimes, pond maintenance and bird/ bat boxes	Implement habitat zones enhancement and develop both new habitats and programmes of info workshops for park users	Implement habitat zones enhancement and develop both new habitats and programmes of info workshops for park users	
c. Provide workshops and guided walks to show the park's ongoing activities	Liaising with SYBRG develop workshop and walk plans from the 'Climate Action Plan'	Establish a regular programme of walks and talks about the park's biodiversity and ecosystems, and their management	Establish a regular programme of walks and talks about the park's biodiversity and ecosystems, and their management	

Objective	Short term (Year 1)	Medium term (Years 2 - 5)	Long term (Years 6 +)	Comments
d. Develop an audit of key features and their maintenance needs	Review how best to develop an ecosystem audit to establish evidence and how to maintain it	Undertake a regular audit, and implement a maintenance plan, making the info/ data available to park users	Undertake a regular audit, and implement a maintenance plan, making the info/ data available to park users	
A5. To increase the range and number of people visiting and volunteering within the Park				
a. Increase the number/ diversity/ age profile of FoWP active volunteers	Continue publicity via multiple methods and target potential interest groups eg schools, universities. Learn from good practice of other 'Friends' groups	Undertake 'skills audit' (and training need) of volunteers and establish methods to target new members	Undertake 'skills audit' (and training need) of volunteers and establish methods to target new members	
b. Survey present park user activity and develop a programme to increase footfall	Liaising with Sheffield University, establish and plan a park user survey. Review and implement actions from the survey (including in this strategic plan)	Develop regular (annual) park user surveys, review and implement feasible actions	Develop regular (annual) park user surveys, review and implement feasible actions	

Objective	Short term (Year 1)	Medium term (Years 2 - 5)	Long term (Years 6 +)	Comments
c. Work in partnership with others (eg. Sheffield Green Spaces Forum) to establish good practice in access to the park	Become active members of local parks forums and share good practice. Sign up to join local groups with similar aims eg. Nature Recovery Sheffield	Continue partnership work, sharing good practice and planning ideas	Continue partnership work, sharing good practice and planning ideas	
d. Foster a positive and collective approach to supporting the park and its users	Ensure that plans for and activities in the Park are supported by park users. May be part of survey work	Review plans and activities via surveys of park users and volunteers	Review plans and activities via surveys of park users and volunteers	
A6. To maintain and conserve the heritage aspects of the Park				
a. Preserve the Park's 'natural style' garden planting patterns	Review, maintain and replant formal garden areas, based on previous records	Review, maintain and replant formal garden areas, based on previous records	Review, maintain and replant formal garden areas, based on previous records	
b. Restore, link and maintain key features of the original garden and industrial Limb Brook	Research historical records and review amendments to planting and feature patterns. In liaison with SCC review raised pathway routes to Limb Brook (linked to proposed trails – A3 (b))	Develop new planting options, repair and improve stone work and establish clear accessible route options linking to Limb Brook	Develop new planting options, repair and improve stone work and establish clear accessible route options linking to Limb Brook	

Objective	Short term (Year 1)	Medium term (Years 2 - 5)	Long term (Years 6 +)	Comments
c. Restore and maintain (where possible) original footpaths, water channels, cascades and sight-lines	Research and check on the condition of original footpaths, water channels, cascades etc to plan for repairs (need costing)	Implement plan for restoring historical features, including their maintenance	Continue restoration and maintenance of heritage/ historical features of the Park	
d. Ensure the minimalist approach to commercialisation and over-use of the Park	Monitor and evaluate commercial activities in the Park. Work in positive partnership with all such groups to minimise conflicting aims/ outcomes	Monitor and evaluate commercial activities in the Park. Work in positive partnership with all such groups to minimise conflicting aims/ outcomes	Monitor and evaluate commercial activities in the Park. Work in positive partnership with all such groups to minimise conflicting aims/ outcomes	Issues of H & S with deliveries, vehicle numbers/ sizes etc need monitoring

Objective	Short term (Year 1)	Medium term (Years 2 - 5)	Long term (Years 6 +)	Comments
B. To enhance the local landscape ecosystems to be resilient to change				
B1. To review and implement new parkland management techniques				To be resilient to climate change issues
a. develop new grassland mowing regimes	Identify one or two key areas for extended grassland/ scrub edge (ecotone) habitat and amend (with SCC) zoning mowing regimes and wildflower seeding.	Monitor and continue 'no mow' practice, recording species (link to B6) Sow more wildflower seed and identify further potential no mow areas	Monitor and continue 'no mow' practice, recording species (link to B6) Sow more wildflower seed and identify further potential no mow areas	
b. Enhance tree planting and management	Liaise with SCC to identify opportunities for new tree (indigenous species?) planting eg. Western boundary, Rough Standhills and its periphery	Identify areas for new planting – including fruit trees and berry bushes. Work with SCC to maintain and replace existing trees. Apply for grants and fund raise	Identify areas for new planting – including fruit trees and berry bushes. Work with SCC to maintain and replace existing trees. Apply for grants and fund raise	Need to liaise with SCC and west boundary landowners/ managers/ stakeholders.
c. Design and develop a Tree Trail	Liaise with SCC Tree Officer to identify 'special' trees and a potential Tree Trail route. Review label/ info board options	Implement, maintain and extend Tree Trail route and review/ enhance information notices	Maintain and extend Tree Trail route and information boards	

Objective	Short term (Year 1)	Medium term (Years 2 - 5)	Long term (Years 6 +)	Comments
d. Enhance and retain deadwood habitats	Retain, manage and maintain all 'old' (dead/ dying/ standing /fallen) wood including brush piles as 'natural ecology'	Retain, manage and maintain all 'old' (dead/ dying/ standing /fallen) wood including brush piles as 'natural ecology'	Retain, manage and maintain all 'old' (dead/ dying/ standing /fallen) wood including brush piles as 'natural ecology'	
e. Enhance and update the visual amenities of the Park via varied (and climate change resilient) planting	Maintain a balance and variation between formal planting and heritage 'natural planting' using appropriate climate change resilient and bee/ insect/ bird attracting plants	Maintain a balance and variation between formal planting and heritage 'natural planting' using appropriate climate change resilient and bee/ insect/ bird attracting plants	Maintain a balance and variation between formal planting and heritage 'natural planting' using appropriate climate change resilient and bee/ insect/ bird attracting plants	
B2. To review, monitor and develop natural and managed water, wetland and flow systems				
a. Establish a varied ecosystem within the three water features of the park. ie.	Review and plan for differentiated water ecosystems in each pond area. Liaise with SCC, Su3a etc to establish best options and costings.	Monitor and evaluate proposed developments and implement them within cost restraints	Monitor and evaluate proposed developments and implement them within cost restraints	NB. The water levels and silting issues in the upper pond are considered intractable (cost/ time/ ecology) so best to take the opportunity to develop an uncommon but 'natural process' habitat - Sheffield's first Bog garden - and at the same time reduce silt into the lower pond.

Objective	Short term (Year 1)	Medium term (Years 2 - 5)	Long term (Years 6 +)	Comments
i. the upper (bog garden) pond;	Review options (5 to 10 year plan) with SCC and maintain the annual clearance of the bog margins (H & S need)	Maintain annual clearance of bog margins and plant/ enhance are with 'bog builder' sphagnum and marshland flowers.	Maintain annual clearance of bog margins and plant/ enhance are with 'bog builder' sphagnum and marshland flowers.	NB. Silt in the upper and mill ponds contribute to 'carbon capture' as organic sediment (if left undisturbed)
ii. The lower (duck) pond; and	Clear the channel, silt traps and lower margins to reveal original stone work Plant reedmace and iris in channels and pond neck. Maintain and clear pond debris	Monitor and maintain water quality, plant ecology and ecosystems. Maintain and clear pond debris	Monitor and maintain water quality, plant ecology and ecosystems. Maintain and clear pond debris	
iii. The mill pond/ lake	Need to plan for a major detailed survey of the ecology and ecosystems of this pond/ lake. H & S issue with footpath fence and signage needs reviewing with SCC	Maintain 'duck pond' in heritage form Liaise with external bodies to plan and cost a survey and undertake it.	Maintain 'duck pond' in heritage form Plans subject to evidence of survey	
b. Liaise with SR Wildlife Trust/ SCC and others to monitor the ecological condition of Limb Brook	Liaison, volunteer input and other support to be offered in terms of 'Slow the Flow' and water quality monitoring	Subject to data/ evidence liaise with other partners to ascertain future plans	All water channels to be cleared annually and maintained to ensure flow of water between ponds and other water habitats	NB. The mill pond /lake is an important site for wintering and breeding birds and a feeding habitat for bats. There is a natural /ecological process of succession taking place that should be retained.

Objective	Short term (Year 1)	Medium term (Years 2 - 5)	Long term (Years 6 +)	Comments
c. Establish a maintenance programme for water channels	All water channels to be cleared annually and maintained to ensure flow of water between ponds and other water habitats	All water channels to be cleared annually and maintained to ensure flow of water between ponds and other water habitats		
B3. To enhance natural ecological habitats				
a. Create artificial support to increase bird, animal and insect activity	Create an insect/ bug hotel, log / brash piles, install bat boxes, bird feeders / boxes and similar	Maintain and increase numbers of artificial support facilities	Maintain and increase numbers of artificial support facilities	
b. Showcase/ publicise habitat management and habitat creation	Plan and build bird feeding station adjacent to the new café and encourage recording of use by birds Run workshops/ displays for the public and develop permanent display boards Involve children in events / activities including recording	Maintain and increase facilities with an emphasis on data recording of birds (see B6)	Maintain and increase facilities with an emphasis on data recording of birds (see B6)	

Objective	Short term (Year 1)	Medium term (Years 2 - 5)	Long term (Years 6 +)	Comments
B4. To support, promote and adapt managed gardens in terms of biodiversity				Appropriate planting might include; foxgloves, red valerian and marjoram in borders and stone walls
a. Review, clear, control and manage formal gardens	Plan/ redesign – liaising with SCC and Su3a – formal planting areas by zones. eg. ‘Sunken garden’ and ‘Children’s’ Horseshoe area’.	Plan/ redesign – liaising with SCC and Su3a – formal planting areas by zones eg. ‘Concert lawn’	Plan/ redesign – liaising with SCC and Su3a – formal planting areas by zones	Use of ‘cottage garden plants’ eg alliums to be encouraged
b. Introduce pollinator planting in managed beds	Introduce in new areas by deliberate planning eg. New café area	Review progress and changes to insect/ bird life – data collection – and add new planting	Review progress and changes to insect/ bird life – data collection – and add new planting	Buddleia beds as butterfly and bee areas to be encouraged. Plus berry bushes eg. cotoneaster and berberis for spring flowers and berries to encourage birds and mammals.
c. Review options for borders adjacent to Rough Standhills Plantation	Agree a landscape plan for the cleared border margin - needs funding for hazel, rowan, nut trees and similar	Implement new natural planting schemes. Crop hazel for wider uses in the park eg. fencing	Review and monitor progress	
d. Review options for orchard and fruit growing	Review locations in the Park for planting, and fruit choice options in ecological benefit terms	Implement planting plans eg. crab apples	Review and monitor progress	NB. Need to record bee/ bird/ butterfly numbers to assess changes from planting (see B6)

Objective	Short term (Year 1)	Medium term (Years 2 - 5)	Long term (Years 6 +)	Comments
e. Promote and practice environmentally friendly gardening	FoWP 'Statements of Intent' to be displayed and adhered to ie. 'No to Peat', no artificial (chemical) pest control nor fertilisers, use homemade compost/ leaf mold for soil improvement, reduce/ minimise use of single use plastic pots, plant nectar/ pollen source plants ie establish good practice	Review statement and how well they are adhered to. Advertise and improve practices	Review statement and how well they are adhered to. Advertise and improve practices	NB. Be aware that bought in plants may use peat for growing – including plant sales Development and on-site use of 'Compost' toilet facilities with explanations? Plus education on such options
f. Develop 'in Park' (on-site) support processes for self sufficiency	Establish and utilise park based 'on-site' composting –'recycling' garden waste/ leaf mold eg. bins. Provide workshops and advice for home composting. Also review water storage and on-site plant 'nursery'	Utilise compost bays fully and improve soil throughout. Collect rainwater via butts etc and grow on and share plants where possible	Utilise compost bays fully and improve soil throughout. Collect rainwater via butts etc and grow on and share plants where possible	

Objective	Short term (Year 1)	Medium term (Years 2 - 5)	Long term (Years 6 +)	Comments
B5. To promote 'Action for Climate Change' to visitors and the wider community a. Inform and educate park users about climate change activities in terms of park ecosystems and planting plans b. Develop visual information boards, guided walks and workshop learning programmes for adults and children	Use all publicity, - media, boards, events and signage to publicise activities and clearly explain changes taking place in the Park Provide noticeboards (café?) and info boards explaining actions /aims. (May need SCC's design agreement.) Develop children's' Trail and guided walks for all. Hold craft events for children using natural materials etc	Establish regular user /info surveys of visitors. Develop an overall plan for actions to climate-proof the Park. Extend links to schools with age appropriate info displays (digital?) Get involved in partnership networks to share good practice Extend info boards etc and produce promotional materials and workshops for visitors and local residents to develop 'green' schemes in their own gardens	Continue survey work and implement / amend plans. Extend links to partnership groups Maintain info boards and develop/ extend workshops and materials for 'green' gardening	

Objective	Short term (Year 1)	Medium term (Years 2 - 5)	Long term (Years 6 +)	Comments
B6. To promote and support the recording of ecosystems and biodiversity data a. Establish a baseline of observations and wildlife recordings within the Park b. Create a competent recording team of FoWP members c. Develop a system of annual eco-audit recording	Organise wildlife recording sessions with expert partners. Develop clear recording sheets and digital methodology. Work in partnership with other bodies eg. SRWT to share recorded data Organise and promote a 'recording group' and attract and train new members Develop clear recording sheets and digital methodology. Establish annual reporting of data to FoWP AGM	Compile annual data reports of wildlife observations etc. Publicise data via info boards (café?) and digital means. Share data with other groups for a wider picture to develop a local network Continue training and development of 'recording group' team. Recruit new recorders and ensure regular recording sessions Review, update and improve recording systems. Ensure annual FoWP AGM data reporting takes place	Compile annual data reports of wildlife observations etc. Publicise data via info boards (café?) and digital means. Share data with other groups for a wider picture to develop a local network Continue training and development of 'recording group' team. Recruit new recorders and ensure regular recording sessions Review, update and improve recording systems	NB. Collection of data to establish a baseline of evidence is vital to reflect ongoing changes.

Objective	Short term (Year 1)	Medium term (Years 2 - 5)	Long term (Years 6 +)	Comments
d. Establish and monitor/ record a Park weather station	In liaison with Vine Hotels erect the weather station and link to a recording system in the FoWP work room	Establish a 'weather station' group for recording and review. Share data with other local recording groups and organise public info sessions	Develop group (training) and data recording systems. Develop public workshops – sharing data information	
e. Develop partnership links for data recording and sharing	Develop closer partnership links with other local groups eg. SRWT, Sorby Natural History Society, SYBRG...	Maintain, develop and share active links. eg. Joint 'Bioblitz' surveys. Share skills/ activity options eg. photo-monitoring points, re-establish the Sorby Trail in Limb Valley	Maintain, develop and share active partnership links	

NB. Some **details** will be included in an annual 'Operating Plan' eg. Use of magnifying posts for trails, planting details by plant name.

Appendix A:

Whirlow Brook Park: the History and the Case for Conservation

The Location

Whirlow Brook Park borders the Limb Brook, a small stream but an important border, which once separated the ancient kingdoms of Mercia and Northumbria and was the county boundary between Yorkshire and Derbyshire. It is also the ecclesiastical border between Canterbury and York and the parishes of Ecclesall and Dore. The name Whirlow is said to mean a boundary mound. (See Shirley Frost's book 'Whirlow – a history of an ancient Sheffield hamlet')

The land was originally owned by the Duke of Devonshire, 5 acres of which were bought in 1908 by Percy Fawcett. Percy was a great grandson of James Dixon, the founder of James Dixons and Sons, a major Sheffield manufacturer of pewterware, Britannia metal, silverware and electroplated nickel silver. His elder brother Alfred had already acquired a large estate, Standhills, nearby. Percy built Whirlow Brook House and in 1913 bought 8 more acres from the Duke of Devonshire, constructed the drive and built the lodge at the main entrance.

The estate lies at the edge of Sheffield's expansion to the south west, at the edge of the green belt, and free of any encroaching development.

The Design

The grounds are laid out in the 'natural style' promoted throughout England by Kent, Brown and Repton, and in Sheffield by Robert Marnock and William Robinson. Whirlow Brook is typical of this style in that the designer

1. Used and manipulated contours to create naturalistic landform planted with informal shrubberies, and tree clumps and solitary trees.
2. Gave great consideration to views from, and the approach to, the house.
3. Incorporated rock and water gardens as key features.

When the house was built the view down the garden included an open stretch of water, a mill pond, built to store water for the Whirlow Mill lower down the valley. Originally a corn mill, by 1802 saws and later scythes were manufactured there. By 1935 the mill was no longer used and now lies derelict on the far side of Ecclesall Road South. The view of the mill pond from the house has been obstructed over the years by self-sown trees and undergrowth; and the pond itself is heavily silted.

An ornamental weir known as 'the Cascades' was built across the Limb Brook and the area above widened to form a bathing pool. The two families also enjoyed field sports and one of the maps shows an aviary close to Whirlow Brook's kitchen gardens where grouse were probably reared.

Connections to Sheffield Industry

The estate is connected to the Sheffield steel industry. Percy Fawcett OBE was born in Sheffield in 1871, educated at King's College, London, and trained as a mechanical engineer. He was employed

initially at Laycock's Victoria Street Works before being appointed chief engineer at Thomas Firth and Sons in 1897. Percy lived at Whirlow Brook from 1909 to 1919. The house was then sold to his sister Lily Marguerite, known as 'Madge', and her husband Walter Benton Jones. [Walter Benton Jones, the son of a baronet, was a prominent industrialist. In 1915 he had succeeded his father as managing director of Rother Vale Collieries which owned mines around Treeton near Rotherham. In 1936 he inherited the baronetcy.]

Madge Benton Jones was a keen gardener and is thought to have developed the formal rose gardens as well as adding many of the plants and trees. She employed six gardeners, some of whom were resident on the estate. [In 1936 she purchased 17 acres of grazing land on the western boundary from her brother Alfred's estate. It is not clear what plans Madge had for this land because sadly her health deteriorated and she died in 1938. Her wish to be buried in her beloved garden was honoured.

Transfer to Public Ownership

Sir Walter remained at Whirlow Brook for a few years, buying a further 8 acres from Alfred's estate in 1939, this time on the northern boundary. He then made the decision to relocate to the family seat, Irnham hall, near Grantham. The neighbouring Standhills Estate, comprising 122 acres, had already been sold to Sheffield City Council in 1945 after the death of Madge's brother Alfred. In 1946 the Whirlow Brook estate was put up for auction and was acquired by Sheffield City Council thanks to generous donations from the J G Graves Trust and the Town Trustees.

Much of the land acquired by the Council was then leased to tenant farmers. The wood pasture to the north of Whirlow Brook became a larch plantation. The Limb Valley was thus opened up to the public and became a popular part of the Sheffield Round Walk.

Before its opening as a public park in 1951, changes were made to the garden to make it suitable for visitors. The body of Lady Madge Benton Jones was disinterred and she now lies beside Sir Walter in the churchyard at Irnham. Paths and drains were laid, the drive was strengthened, part of the kitchen garden became the upper car park and the tennis court was made into the lower car park. A bus service was laid on and a bus-shelter built with toilets. The house was altered to make a café downstairs and two flats on the first floor, one for the manager of the cafe, one for the head gardener.

For many years the house was leased to catering businesses on condition that they ran it as a café. In 2013, when Fretwell Downing declined the lease, Saxon Hotels took it on. The Hall is currently run by Vine Hotels as a wedding and conference venue but the requirement to provide a café hasn't been enforced. In 2023 the shelter in the garden was repurposed to make a café and toilets.

In its early years the garden was well cared for by Sheffield City Council but cutbacks led to fewer resources being available for its maintenance. Although the lawns continued to be looked after, the higher maintenance areas became neglected. In 2011 the gardening group of Sheffield U3A took responsibility for the rockery and lily pond to a design and planting plan produced by Sheffield City Council parks department. In 2021 at the 70th anniversary of the opening of the park and the 10th anniversary of the Commemorative Garden, a new shelter was opened by Lady Madge's great, grandson, Sir Jamie Benton Jones and the Lord Mayor of Sheffield, Gail Smith. In

June 2021 Sir Jamie agreed to be a patron of the Friends of Whirlow Brook, a newly formed group committed to restore and develop the rest of the park.

The Case for Conservation

Whirlow Brook is contained within an environment that has remained largely unchanged for centuries. It tells the story of wealth created through industry, but also of local authority ownership and values. Whilst neighbouring estates have been subdivided and most of the great houses pulled down, Whirlow Brook has survived intact. It is a highly valuable asset and deserves its place on Sheffield's heritage list.



Appendix B:

Whirlow Brook Park: Ecology and Likely Impact of Climate Change

The Whirlow Brook estate was created on a south facing hillside at the beginning of the twentieth century. The land was previously farmed and some of it is described as ‘ancient woodland or ancient woodland pasture’. The estate’s south west boundary is close to the moorland of the Peak District National Park; its northern boundary abuts a former larch plantation, now replanted with native tree species (2023); and to the east, on the far side of Limb Brook, it is fringed by a belt of mature trees. Whirlow Fields and Ecclesall Woods lie to the south, across the A625 Sheffield/Hathersage road. Within the estate lies an old mill pond fed by Limb Brook and two smaller ornamental ponds.

In 2021 the newly established Friends of Whirlow Brook Park (FoWP) successfully applied for grant funding from the National Lottery Community Fund for a ‘Climate Action Project’ under the Together for our Planet initiative. The Group wished to work with the local community to understand and address the likely impact of climate change on the Park and its environs. In order to do this an eco-audit of the Park was undertaken in 2022 and its findings have informed the strategic plan.

The full report can be seen on the Friends’ website – www.friendsofwhirlowbrookpark.org.uk

Key issues raised in the **Climate Action Project** report are:

- An increase in stormy weather with prolonged rainfall, together with the felling of the larch plantation (Rough Standhills) immediately above the Park’s northern boundary, is likely to cause drainage problems and more boggy areas. This needs to be monitored.
- Extensive short mown grass areas, lack of ecotone edge and limited planting in the ornamental borders, are all less favourable for wildlife. Remedial action is needed to improve habitats for all species.
- There is an extremely limited range of aquatic invertebrates in the shallow ornamental ponds, due to drying out, lack of oxygen and excessive silting. The silt needs to be removed, leaks repaired and the ponds replanted.
- There are very limited opportunities for the public, including children, to learn about the biodiversity and management of the Park. This needs to be reviewed.

Target outcome:

1. Achieve measurable increases in local biodiversity.
2. Improve and enhance the visual appearance of the Park and garden with abundant year round flowers and berries.
3. A positive visitor experience for all Park users around the climate change actions.

4. 'Action for Climate Change' management of the Park is explained and interpreted to all users and the wider communities to increase understanding of the issues.
5. Achievement of 'Green Flag' status.
6. Become the area's 'Action for Climate Change' showcase/ exemplar for local parks' management.

'Slowing the Flow' Project – Sheffield & Rotherham Wildlife Trust

The Limb Brook, adjacent to Whirlow Brook Park, feeds into the River Sheaf which joins the River Don in Sheffield city centre and flows east where there has been recent extensive flooding. A research and demonstration project was undertaken in 2022 at the head and along the upper reaches of the Limb in order to slow the flow and reduce future flood risk. A number of attenuation ponds and 'leaky dams' have been constructed with a view to slowing the flow during period of heavy rainfall. The effects of these measures will be studied over the coming years and the extent to which water management in the Park might affect downstream floodwater will also need to be assessed.