



Yorkshire
Wildlife Trust



Nextdoor Nature

#TeamWilder Communities in Action

CASE STUDY: Flourish

Tell us a bit about your group

Flourish is a Community Interest Company, housed in a stunning Grade II listed Victorian manor house. It is set within the beautiful grounds of Woodfield Park – a site of historic interest. Flourish serves as custodians for the wider park which is owned by RDaSH (Rotherham, Doncaster and NHS Foundation Trust) but was designated a public open space in 2014.

Woodfield Park itself provides a safe green haven in the heart of one of the most underserved communities within Doncaster, with over 21 acres encompassing gardens, open fields, woodland trails, green gym, and cycle routes. It is surrounded by housing estates, schools, residential homes, and the neighbouring hospital, and is within easy walking distance for residents.

Hidden within the park you will find a vibrant community of its own – with places to eat and drink, an arts centre, bike shop, yoga studio, squash and leisure centre, antique store, a barbers, hair and beauty services, disability living advice, sensory play, education providers, counsellors, psychotherapists and complementary therapists, private health care, and other small businesses. Numerous community groups use the space for activities, including forest schools, gardening, art and craft, walking, cycling, tennis, running, singing, peer support groups, and much more!

We believe Woodfield Park creates a unique canvas for us to do something absolutely amazing together, pooling our energy and resources to create a better place for people and for nature alike.



Our vision is to create an inspiring and uplifting destination that serves the community, transforming Woodfield

Park site into a vibrant hub that has inclusivity at its heart. We want to help people flourish, regardless of circumstance, age, ability, and income, giving opportunities to learn new things, give fresh starts and experience life's stimulating moments. We celebrate the human spirit, embracing wellbeing through health and happiness and finding fun ways to get the most from life. We're also here for people when life's journey is ending."



What actions did you or your group want to take and why?

We understand that Yorkshire's wildlife is in crisis, and we know that many people from our community are in crisis too – with significant health inequities amongst the population. We recognise there's a synergistic relationship between nature and people's health, and we care about our planet and our people, so when the opportunity arose to join a social movement to bring people into more sustainable ways of living, we knew we needed to be a part of it!

We listened to people living in our community to find out what they thought our priorities for developing the site should be over the next couple of years. People told us how important it is for them to have access to safe, green spaces, where they can socialise, relax, appreciate wildlife, and where their children can enjoy outdoor-play and explore and learn about the natural world.

We invited Yorkshire Wildlife Trust to come and talk to our community gardening club and team of volunteers, and the idea of Wilder Woodfield was born. Together, we decided that we want to create areas for wildlife within The Walled Gardens – both because we want to help nature thrive, and because people said they found the simple pleasure of listening to and watching wildlife to be healing.

To help us to reach our vision of a 'Wilder Woodfield' we want to:

- Work more closely with the estates management team.
- Explore potential for engaging with other tenants on the site and local residents to form a new 'Friends of Woodfield Park' volunteer group.



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- Develop resources and train our staff and volunteers to run 'nature walks' around Woodfield Park, to enable people to learn more about the flora and fauna that we have here, to benefit from the positive mental health benefits that time spent in nature can have, and to inspire them to replicate some projects on a smaller scale in their own gardens.

- Develop some off-site, nature-based provision through longer guided walks and cycle rides using local greenways, support for people to access nearby Potteric Carr nature reserve, and day trip provision to encourage people to visit new places where they can connect with nature.

What sorts of things have you done for nature so far?

- Built nest boxes from recycled materials, to put up in Woodfield Park's woodland perimeter.
- Given over management of an area of the Walled Garden at Woodfield Park to our Garden Club (consisting of volunteers and service users who attend to benefit their health recovery and confidence), with the brief of creating a space to provide food and habitat for nature whilst educating visitors as to the types of wildlife-friendly gardening techniques they can employ at home.
- Worked with our Garden Club to develop an initial ideas board of actions and projects to improve this area of the walled garden for nature, and actions and projects to improve areas for nature which might be feasible on the larger Woodfield Park site.
- Begun to develop our weekly nature walks around Woodfield Park, which are free to access and allow members of the local community to enhance their nature connection whilst learning more about species on their doorsteps.
- Connected with the Estates management team to discuss practicalities of developing areas of the wider site to develop a 'wilder Woodfield Park'.



- Taken community members on visits to local green spaces, including Yorkshire Wildlife Trust's Potteric Carr reserve, to gather learning and inspiration about actions for nature that they can take in their own gardens and as part of their future activities with us at Woodfield Park.

What resources or support have you used?

- Support to introduce wall climbing plants to the Walled Gardens to create more areas for wildlife.
- A pass granted by Yorkshire Wildlife Trust to visit Potteric Carr with community groups, including access to equipment such as binoculars for bird watching.
- A 'Wild Walk' guide for the trails at Woodfield Park, produced by Andy from Yorkshire Wildlife Trust, along with training for our walk-leaders on how to spot wildlife.
- Plants and nesting boxes to be placed around Woodfield Park.
- An ideas board developed in collaboration with Yorkshire Wildlife Trust, which we are now using to inform future developments and site plans.

Did you empower or involve others?

Yes, feedback from local residents informed all our decision making (collected during a series of conversations and engagement events in 2021/22).

We had several meetings with Yorkshire Wildlife Trust, our Community Garden Club and team of volunteers to co-create an ideas board. Our walking group attended training with Yorkshire Wildlife Trust to learn how to spot wildlife and plan interesting routes.





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How did it make you feel?

We're excited to be working together to create a Wilder Woodfield. Our volunteers are motivated by the knowledge they are making a real difference to nature and creating healing spaces for their communities.

What changes have there been as a result of your actions?

It's early days now – we've certainly learned about more about wildlife and how to care for our planet, our walking group have been enjoying 'wilder' walks, our new plants are taking root, we've got tons of ideas for the future, and a core group of local people who are keen to volunteer under the #TeamWilder banner!

What have been your favourite nature moments or encounters with wildlife whilst doing this?

We've really enjoyed sitting in the gardens, or walking through the woods, and talking to people about their experiences of nature, health, and wellbeing. It's been inspiring listening to everyone's ideas and enthusiasm for developing a Wilder Woodfield Park, and hearing people share their own personal stories about the healing power of nature.



What do you plan to do next?

We are excited as we look to our plans for the year ahead, which include:

- Developing a regular programme of green walks and bikes rides off site, including regular visits to Potteric Carr nature reserve, to support people to improve their mental and physical health through exercise in natural surroundings.
- Working with the NHS site management team at Woodfield Park to develop an action plan for improving the wider site for nature and explore ways to involve both our staff, volunteers, and service users, as well as the wider local community, in the resulting projects – in other words, bringing our 'Wilder Woodfield' vision to life!
- Supporting our Garden Club to work on their amazing ideas for the development of the Walled Gardens – these include: developing a stumpery which will be populated by shade-loving plants and should create the perfect environment for a range of fungi, insects and amphibians, planting a 'sunshine garden' full of different varieties of sunflowers, which we hope will create a jaw-dropping visual display, as well as offer a source of pollen and nectar to the honey bees in our bee hives, and creating more habitat areas for wildlife, from hedgehog homes to insect-friendly log piles to stock dove nesting boxes and more!



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To contact us or find out more visit:

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