



GARFORTH COMMUNITY

WILDLIFE AREA

IMPACT REPORT

2022 - 2023



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INTRODUCTION

And what this is all about

Garforth Community Wildlife Area is a space of around an acre and is located on Oak Grove, Garforth in Leeds. The project is managed by Incredible Edible Garforth and has been supported in the past by Garforth in Bloom and other local community groups.

The space is made up of a range of habitats including grassland, woodland, a pond and wetland. It is home to a variety of wildlife including birds and hedgehogs and there are also many invertebrates and plants.

The area is open to the public at certain times of the year and is free to visit. It is a popular spot for both locals and visitors alike, and is a unique location to observe wildlife in its natural habitat.

The Garforth Community Wildlife Area is an inspiring place to explore and learn more about nature and the local environment. It is a great way to get out and enjoy the outdoors while supporting your local community.



What's to come

The area will soon have a range of educational resources, including interpretive panels and a series of guided walks and talks.

There will also be more community events, such as bird watching and pond dipping, which take place throughout the year.



ABOUT INCREDIBLE EDIBLE

How the Incredible Edible Story Started

Incredible Edible was founded in Todmorden in 2007 and the Incredible Edible Network was formed in 2012 in response to a surge of groups emerging across the UK. Incredible Edible C.I.C is the official vehicle for the movement with a charitable ethos and a board drawn from member groups and professionals with expertise to support its work.

It all started because a small group of people wanted to make a difference: to find a way for everyone to help improve their own community and to make a better future for their children. The answer was food - everyone understands food; food could get people talking and, even better, it could inspire people to take direct action. So edible plots were created on unwanted and neglected land all over the town, growing fruit and vegetables for people to share.

It doesn't take big things to create big changes. It takes small things that capture the imagination - a vegetable plot with a revolutionary sign "Help Yourself" or runner beans planted secretly outside a disused health centre. People talked about those beans. They helped themselves to vegetables. It worked because it started with the small things, but soon other people started getting involved, volunteering, and doing things themselves. Having started with small herb gardens and community plots, IE has captured people's imagination and there are now over 80 IE groups in the UK. Each group is different, large and small, but all are inspired by the inclusive message of "If you eat, you're in".

Led by volunteers, IE has since gone on to back campaigns, support local businesses and develop learning opportunities including the Incredible Aquagarden and the Incredible Farm in Todmorden, urban food trails and community allotments, providing advice, learning and volunteering opportunities. The Incredible Edible model is distinctive and impactful. It articulates its achievements and aspirations to support its member groups in their diverse activities.

Incredible Edible now has over 80 groups in the UK and 800 worldwide which comprise of three elements: community, learning and business.

Incredible Edible's role is to create a network to;

-  inspire groups and individuals to start community food projects and adopt the IE ethos
-  sustain IE members and support the Network as a voice for the movement
-  influence local, regional and national policy, practice and decision-making to prioritise sustainable local food production and consumption
-  promote the IE model as a tool for community integration & redefine the meaning of prosperity



WE ARE ALL CONNECTED

The story of how many hands make light work



89%

of survey respondents reported feeling more connected to people as a result of our work

“Incredible Edible has really helped bring the community together, especially in recent times.”

The Garforth Community Wildlife Area sits on land owned by Leeds City Council's Housing department. Over ten years ago, Garforth in Bloom worked with the authority and local councillors to be custodians of the site and secure it for nature.

Prior to Garforth in Bloom's involvement, the area was used for fly tipping and was simply an unused and unloved space. After apple trees were planted and bee hives placed on site, the space remained inactive for a number of years until nature took over and another local community greening group started to maintain pathways and pull out rubbish and other discarded items.

When Incredible Edible Garforth were asked to take on custodianship of the site, we set about making plans to transform the space. We initially removed a number of self-seeded trees and tackled large inaccessible areas that had become overgrown with bracken and brambles.

After receiving funding from Grow Wild (Kew Gardens) and from Localgiving's Magic Little Grants, we were able to accelerate the transformation and this report shows the progress made so far.

In this much needed era of enhanced climate change focus and biodiversity loss, the Garforth Community Wildlife Area should be an exemplar for positive action for Garforth and the wider Leeds City region. It should serve as a template for how communities can work together with local authorities for a right to grow, a right to act and a right to thrive.

In our most recent consultation:

- 50% asked for more community 'dig days'
- 75% asked for foraging training
- 56% wanted 'Grow your Own' basics training.





WILDLIFE AREA PROGRESS

A flavour of what we've been up to

A list of jobs completed across the year:

- ✓ Cut a path and lined with bark chips and edging
- ✓ Cleared space and created a den building area
- ✓ Created an open meeting space complete with bark chips and log seating
- ✓ Removed Ash saplings suffering from die back
- ✓ Cleared space around apple trees to promote healthy growth and aid access
- ✓ Cleared area to plant wildflowers and fruit hedge
- ✓ Cut back a lot of bramble
- ✓ Installed two hedgehog houses and built a giant bug hotel
- ✓ Completed two pollinator counts for UK Pollinator Monitoring Scheme
- ✓ Cleared space and planted 10 metre hedgerow
- ✓ Dug out a pond and prepared an area around it with plants to increase biodiversity
- ✓ Held an apple juicing and fruit tree pruning workshop
- ✓ Sown wildflowers and planted variety of native bulbs
- ✓ Built and planted up two new edible beds
- ✓ Cleared area and planted cobnut hedgerow
- ✓ Held first children's nature craft day



100+

volunteers involved



17

activities and events held for the community



12+

new species of flower, fruit bush or bulbs planted





BEFORE



AFTER



BEFORE



AFTER

Pond Area
No swimming or paddling
unless you are a frog

MOOREHILL
ENVIRONMENTAL
SOCIETY



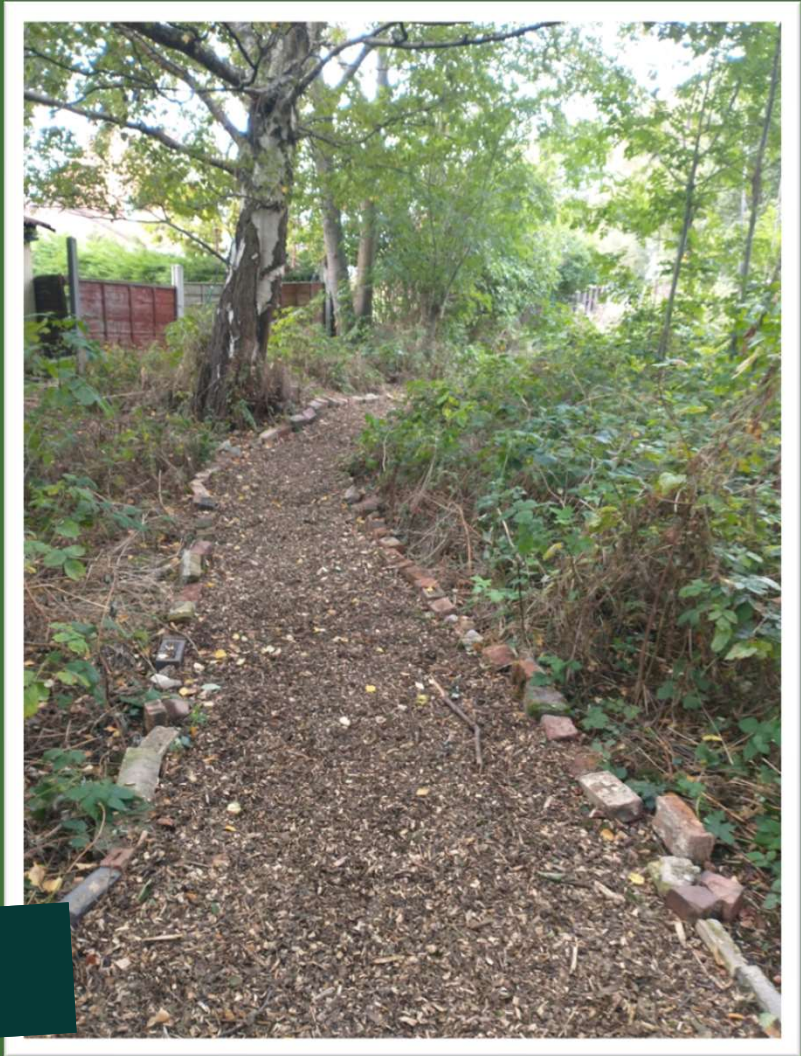
BEFORE



AFTER



BEFORE



AFTER



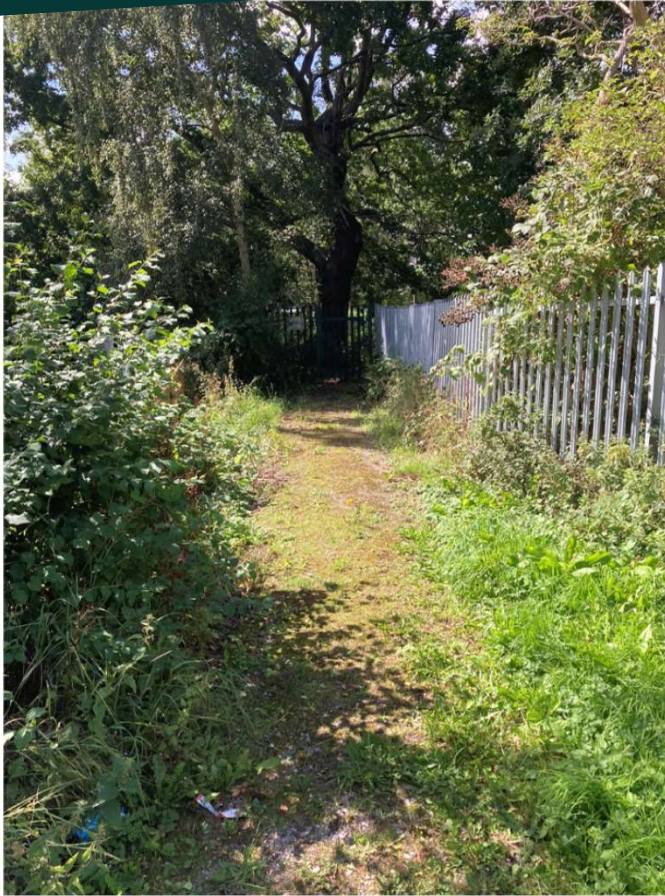


BEFORE



AFTER

BEFORE



AFTER







CASE STUDY

Joy's Story

Joy is a local resident who got involved early on with the transformation work at Garforth Community Wildlife Area.

What I've been up to

It gives me a great sense of achievement being part of Incredible Edible. I've become more active, become part of an amazing team and learnt to grow a variety of vegetables from seed. I'm working with a team and have regained a sense of self worth.

The knowledge amongst our team is fantastic! I've learnt how to plant saplings, built a dead hedge, helped build our pond and planted bulbs. I've gained knowledge on composting and also the steps to organise and set up events within the wildlife area.

I'm totally relaxed and at ease within the wildlife area and appreciate nature growing food for our community. I've helped and watched it transform to a space where we can all enjoy the wonders of nature with pathways, an area for holding events, a den building area and wildlife cameras to capture our birds, hedgehogs and more.



What's next

I want to see more events eventually. I also want to help out and reach further into our community through schools to teach our children how to plant/care for and grow fruit, vegetables and herbs.

It would be great to encourage more volunteers to the group so we can continue to thrive and build Incredible Edible for our community.



CASE STUDY

Alex's Story

Alex is a local resident who got involved early on with the transformation work at Garforth Community Wildlife Area.

What I've been up to

Being involved in the project is a great opportunity to use the skills and knowledge that I have built up over the years and to learn new things from like minded people. I have cleared away brambles to uncover the plants underneath and create space for new planting and observing wildlife.

The Wildlife Area is a peaceful oasis away from the roads and shops. I feel its potential and it will be great when the pond is fully operational and it is full of plants and flowers.

The whole space was covered in brambles which suppressed lots of other plants and was a bit of a mono culture. A few areas of brambles are good but they will smother everything and so they have to be cleared sensitively to allow other things to grow. The space is a bit emptier now than it was before, but it will start to bloom in the spring with existing plants such as snowdrops and wild garlic, as well as new varieties of plants.

There are already loads of mature plants that have been left to grow wild. It is still in the early days of its development but it is a unique resource in a suburban community for engaging with nature. It provides something extra in addition to the other Incredible Edible beds. It will be a great resource for getting kids involved in nature e.g. having fun, observing plants and animals, planting, harvesting, pond dipping, learning new growing skills. And all of this is on the doorstep of the Garforth community. It can also bring the adults together in the community and create intergenerational connections. The latter can reduce isolation and loneliness and enrich Garforth as a community.

What's next

I would like to see more community events where members of the Garforth community pass on their knowledge and enthusiasm. For example, the Garforth allotment association has very knowledgeable people who may like to get involved in activities and talks.

Eventually I would love to see arts events in the area including theatre and music.

WITH THANKS TO ALL OUR
PARTNERS & FUNDERS

