



GARFORTH COMMUNITY

WILDLIFE AREA

IMPACT REPORT

2023 - 2024



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INTRODUCTION

And what this is all about

Welcome to our second impact report for the Garforth Community Wildlife Area. This special place sits on an acre of land just off Oak Grove in Garforth, Leeds. The project is managed by Incredible Edible and has been supported in the past by Garforth in Bloom and other local community groups.

The area 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.

Garforth Community Wildlife Area has been transformed over the past 18 months by a dedicated team of volunteers. It is open to the public at certain times of the week and is free to visit. It is a popular spot for both locals and visitors alike and is a unique urban location to observe wildlife in its natural habitat.

As the area develops, it is being opened to more of the community with further events, workshops and activities. It is an inspiring place for both adults and children to explore and learn more about nature and the local environment.



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 hundreds of 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
-  Advocate for a Right to Grow - changing the rules to make it easier for communities to grow food on suitable public sector land





WE ARE ALL CONNECTED

The story of how many hands make light work



“The wildlife area is somewhere to escape to and the people I have met have become like family to me.”

“Whether you love growing veg or you’re a complete novice, there’s a space for everybody at Incredible Edible.”

“Incredible Edible is about sharing the experience of growing veg for free and bringing the community together.”



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.

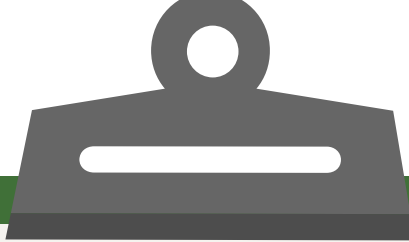
When Incredible Edible were asked to take on custodianship of the site, we set about making plans to transform the space. We initially removed a number of self-seeded trees and tackled large inaccessible areas that had become overgrown with bracken and brambles.

After receiving funding from Grow Wild (Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew) 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 Leeds and the wider 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 2023, WE WERE AWARDED A WILDLIFE GARDENING AWARD BY YORKSHIRE WILDLIFE TRUST!





WILDLIFE AREA PROGRESS

A flavour of what we've been up to

A list of jobs completed across the year:

- ✓ More benches built and installed along the pathways
- ✓ More brambles cleared
- ✓ Hedgehog feeding stations installed
- ✓ Held another apple juicing session
- ✓ Launched weekly forest school sessions
- ✓ Sown more wildflowers to create wildlife corridors
- ✓ Developed compost bins
- ✓ Planned and installed a willow dome
- ✓ Planted willow shoots to create a tunnel
- ✓ Bird feeders and bat boxes installed
- ✓ Fallen leaves collected & stored in new leaf mould bin
- ✓ Designed and built an on-site composting toilet
- ✓ Strengthened and renewed pathways
- ✓ Made links with local schools for children to visit
- ✓ Wildlife camera installed and footage shared online
- ✓ Mud kitchen installed for children
- ✓ Bird box building workshop held
- ✓ Water collection & storage designed and put in place
- ✓ Raised platform installed for bird watching



75+

volunteers involved



31

activities and events held for the community



4+

Additional new species of flower, fruit bush, tree or bulbs planted

BEFORE



AFTER



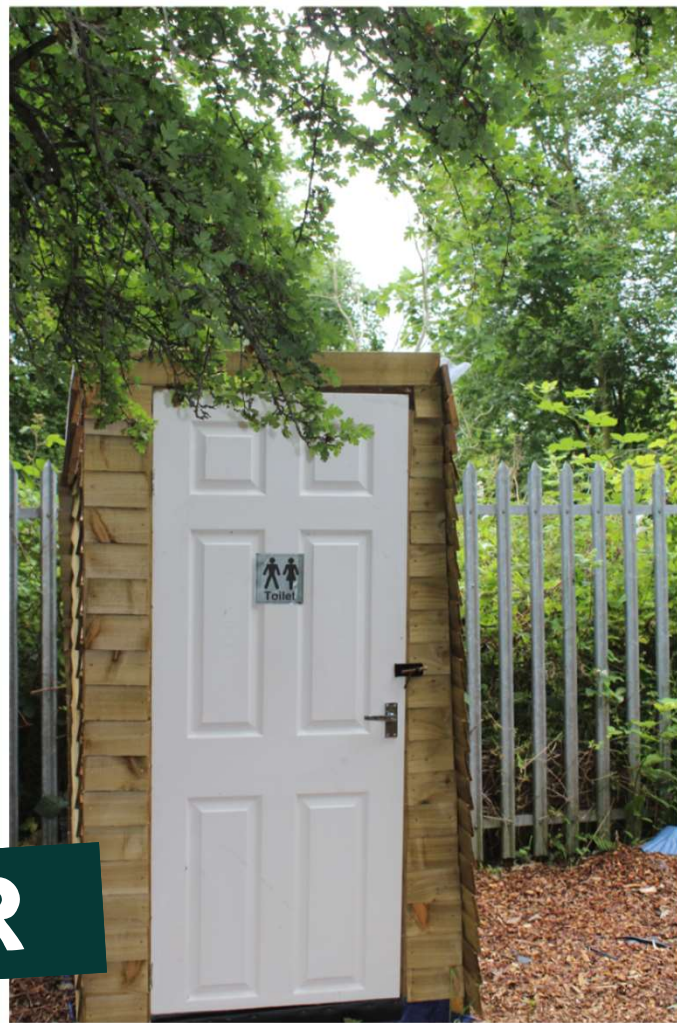




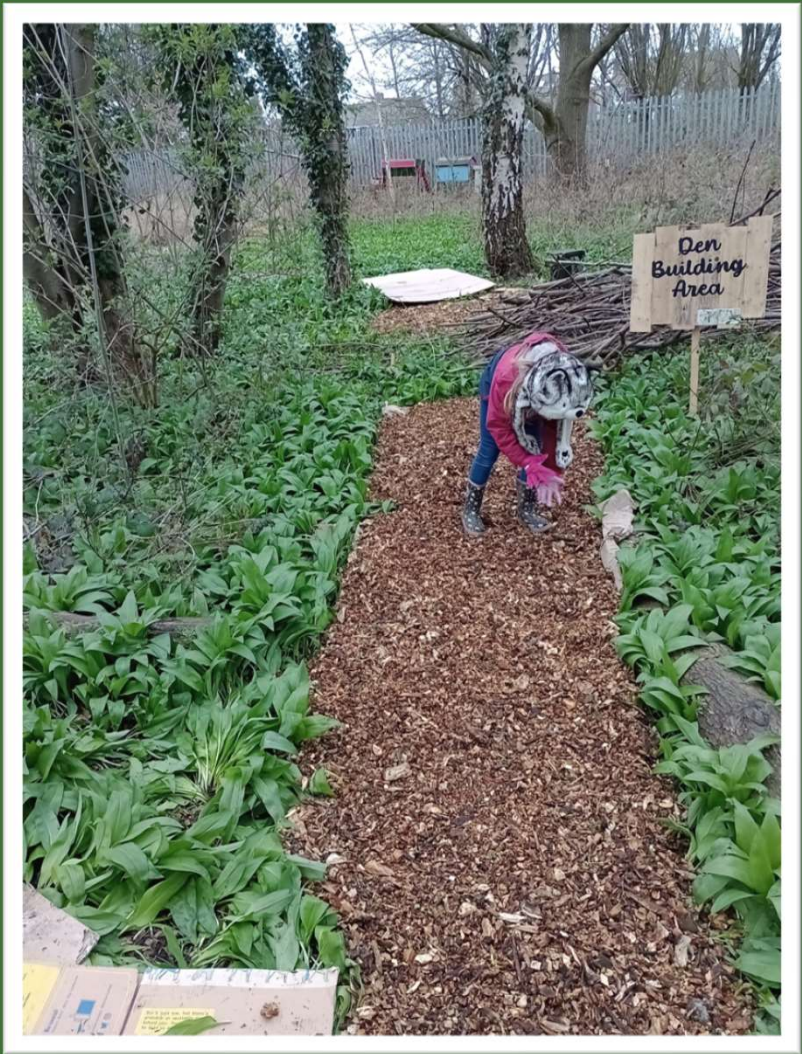
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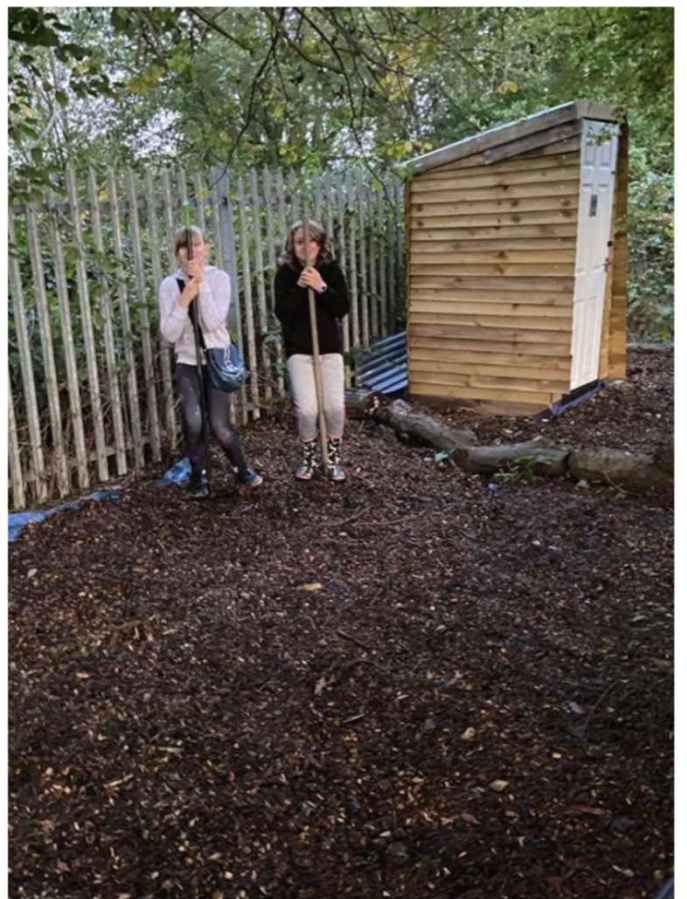














CASE STUDY

Lindsay's Story

Lindsay is a local resident who loves volunteering! Find out why she got involved with the Garforth Community Wildlife Area.

What I've been up to

I first found out about Incredible Edible from a friend who suggested I come along to the wildlife area. I attended one of the activity days and loved it. I was really impressed with the whole space, especially because I didn't even know it was there!

This year, being involved has really helped with my mental health. Since my Nan passed away, I have really struggled but the wildlife area is somewhere to escape to and the people I have met have become like family to me.

One of the things I love the most is the sense of achievement. I get to take on my own tasks and see them through from start to finish. At the Open Day, it was great to see familiar faces from the community and I loved that I could answer questions that people asked about the area..

I feel like my confidence has really increased since I got involved. I know about the wildlife – hedgehogs and newts, and I got involved with events and activities like apple pressing.

What's next

I've been inspired to look after my own vegetable bed. I'm really looking forward to having something that I will be responsible for – being able to put the time into it and see it grow.

I also want to be a bigger part of Incredible Edible moving forward and maybe take on more of a volunteer role.





CASE STUDY

Helen & Edie's Story

Helen & Edie are a mother and daughter team who have been spending regular time transforming the Wildlife Area.

What we've been up to

I first got involved with the community garden as I wanted something to do with my (almost) teenage daughter. I thought it would be a good opportunity to spend some time together, doing something useful for the community and hopefully meet some new people.

I have no real knowledge or experience with gardening so I have relied on other volunteers to show me what I should be doing and the best ways to go about the various tasks. Everyone has been incredibly friendly and welcoming, and I've learned lots in this last year.

Together with my daughter we've weeded and planted new bulbs, moved rocks around, helped create the wildlife pond and built numerous dens. Our favourite task has been building the willow dome and seeing it continue to grow and create a cosy hideaway. We also love the fact that refreshments are provided each week which give us an opportunity to down tools and sit and chat with fellow volunteers.



What's next

This year we're looking forward to seeing the treehouse take shape and getting to know a few more names of some of the plants in the garden.



**WITH THANKS TO ALL OUR
PARTNERS & FUNDERS**



Want to get involved with our work?
Email grow@edibleleeds.org.uk

