



Report for year ended 31 March 2025

Building on the huge success of the Big Help Out Day in 2023 when volunteers from Boughton and Obelisk Rise came together to resurface some of the paths in the Spinney, we held another similar event in June 2024 to finish the job. Although not as well attended as the previous year, we managed to shift, spread and compact 20 tonnes of gravel on to the remainder of the paths, which are now in a much tidier and more accessible state and will last for years to come. We are very grateful to Kingsthorpe and Parish Council for providing the funding for the materials.

At the end of the previous year we had identified several trees in the Spinney which were in a poor condition and required expert attention, so we approached both Kingsthorpe and Boughton Parish Councils for financial help, which they very kindly provided. This work, carried out in June by Fernwood Arboriculture after consulting WNC's Tree Preservation Officer, involved topping or felling several mature trees that had become potentially unsafe, and removing a detached overhanging branch. Where possible we left the trunks standing as habitat for wildlife. We continue to monitor all the trees on a regular basis and intend to commission a full arboreal survey of the Spinney in the coming months to document their condition and make recommendations for their continuing care.

Throughout the year our aim has been to encourage and enhance the biodiversity of the Spinney. A local Obelisk resident kindly made us some sturdy bat and bird boxes from scrap wood which we installed during the autumn period, and we will be monitoring them closely this spring for signs of use. We didn't get around to mowing or re-sowing the wildflower meadow this year, but nevertheless a promising show of cowslips appeared in mid-March. Unfortunately these were then mown flat a week later by the contractor looking after WNC's parks and verges, in an administrative oversight. In following up the incident with the contractor however we have established a useful relationship with their Community Engagement Officer, who had some useful expertise to impart. We have also had a meeting with a local Wildlife Trust representative to discuss how we can improve habitats in the Spinney, which has again given us some good ideas. We are glad to report that the cowslips have now recovered from their early scalping, so no permanent damage was done.

We had a reasonably good show of bluebells this year, as a result of plantings in earlier years, though sadly there was little sign of the snowdrops we planted in 2023. The hedgerow plants we put in along the eastern edge of the Spinney in 2024 have started to fill in many of the gaps along that edge and provide much-needed cover for birds and small animals. We've also created several "dead-hedges" around the Spinney with dead twigs and branches to improve the habitat for hedgehogs and other small animals and invertebrates. This spring has been a hive of bird activity with song-thrushes, chiffchaffs, black-caps, robins and tits singing busily and spotted woodpeckers tapping out their rhythms the tree stumps.

We have continued with our themed woodland trails, which attract younger children and their parents and grandparents into the Spinney. They're just for fun, to spot the posters scattered along the paths, tick them off and sometimes perhaps learn a little in the process, but they've proved very popular. We try to do a trail every school holiday, and we get lots of very appreciative comments on our Facebook page.

The Spinney has continued to be well used by walkers, dog walkers, runners, cyclists and horse riders throughout the year and thankfully we've experienced very little vandalism or other antisocial activity. Our Facebook page has continued to be our public face, and our WhatsApp group keeps our volunteers informed. We regularly pick litter and generally keep the place neat and tidy, demonstrating to all that the place is loved and cared for by the community, and demands respect.

We're extremely appreciative of Boughton and Kingsthorpe Parish Councils' generous support and funding, and of course last but not least to our caring and dedicated band of volunteers, who regularly turn up to give a few hours of their time every month and without whom none of this would be remotely possible.

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25 April 2025