



UPPER DON TRAIL TRUST ANNUAL REPORT 2024–25

Overview

After several years of patient and sometimes discouraging work, 2025 has seen very significant breakthroughs on three of our major objectives: **Oughtibridge Links, More Hall Tips, and Wayfinding**. We have also helped secure important initial improvements to part of the Penistone Road section of the Trail.

We remain hopeful that the Parkwood Springs Levelling Up project will finally bring attention and resources to the problems of Club Mill Road.

Linking up with other stakeholders in Barnsley and with new MP Marie Tidball has also opened up potential to resolve the longstanding missing link to Langsett village at the western end of the Little Don Link.

However, recently published strategies on Active Travel by both Sheffield City Council and the South Yorkshire Mayoral Combined Authority still show a lack of vision for longer-distance or off-road routes such as the UDT, even where they already exist or are being delivered through other programmes. Encouragingly, we now have active and improving channels into SYMCA, which we hope will lead to a change in attitudes.

We continue to attract new members and supporters, but have so far been only modestly successful in encouraging more active participation. We hope to improve this through better communications, and as projects move from campaigning into actual implementation.

Huge thanks go to all our volunteers, supporters, rangers, litter-pickers, and trustees.

Our Treasurer, Chris Prescott, and our Secretary, Yvonne McMenemy, are both standing down this year. Chris has contributed decades of experience and deep local knowledge of active travel, regeneration, and the Upper Don. Yvonne has brought organisational and business skills, as well as enthusiasm and imagination, to her role. We offer our grateful thanks to both and are delighted that Chris Prescott will continue as Trustee.

Achievements of the Year

The following objectives were set by Trustees at the beginning of the year, following our last AGM.

1.Complete Wayfinding and Signage of Accessible Sections

We are now close to completing a comprehensive signing and Wayfinding strategy for the trail to support partnership proposals with a number of stakeholders along the route including Bradfield Parish, Stocksbridge Town, Barnsley and Sheffield City Councils, North and Central Local Area Committees, Stocksbridge Town Deal, house builders along the route including David Wilson and Bloor Homes .

Lady's Bridge to Oughtibridge via Kelham–Neepsend and Penistone Road

Much of this signage work has been concentrated on this section. Repeated representations were made to SCC Transport Planners to ensure that existing named routes (Upper Don Trail, Five Weirs Walk, Trans Pennine Trail, National Cycle Network) and local destinations were identified in new active travel signage associated with the major improvements between West Bar and Neepsend. These were ignored. Now seeking funding from Central LAC.

Wortley Road Deepcar to Langsett – Funding committed from Stocksbridge Town Deal and Stocksbridge Town Council.

Oughtibridge – BPC support for a Trail Map at Coronation Park and waymarking in Beeley Wood.

2.More Hall Tips / Wraggs Quarry

Objective: consolidate the emerging partnership and secure funding to reclaim the sites for re=forestation, flood control, biodiversity and to formalise public access via the Trail.

Momentum is building towards a joined-up strategic approach, combining these separate investment streams to achieve more than the sum of their parts. The Stocksbridge Town Deal's offer of funding for feasibility and costing and its willingness to collaborate on further funding applications, represents a welcome change of approach under a refreshed Board.

Partners: South Yorkshire Woodland Partnership, Sheffield & Rotherham Wildlife Trust, Liberty Steel, Wharnccliffe Estate, SCC Flood & Water, Stocksbridge Town Deal, Bloor Homes.

3.Underbank Loop

Objective: If the STD wish to progress their scheme, we continue to press them to focus on safe crossing of Manchester Road at Underbank Lane.

The STD has now agreed to fund a new feasibility study for an affordable crossing at this junction. The earlier “Underbank Loop” project has been dropped.

4. Parkwood Springs

Objective: Continue to press for the inclusion of Club Mill Road in the programme and for the relocation of the traveller camp.

Legal proceedings to rehouse the remaining Travellers are now progressing slowly. Decisions on investment in improved gateways to the new park are awaited.

There is renewed focus on the Old Park Silver Mills site, which may lead to an initial joint intervention to:

- target-harden against fly-tipping
- improve safety for pedestrians, cyclists, and wheelers by creating a shared cycle-footway
- encourage private investment.

5. Planning Applications / Developments

Thanks in part to our campaign and intervention at Planning Committee, the Aldi development on Penistone Road has provided a significant section of fully segregated and joined-up cycle/footway. This runs along almost its whole frontage. We hope this will contribute to the larger improvements now being designed and put forward for funding by SCC.

Attempts to secure private-sector funding to improve Club Mill Road, as part of a proposal for a renewable electricity storage installation at the old Neepsend Power Station, fell through when National Grid chose an alternative site on Livesey Street.

6. Oughtibridge Links

Forge Lane/Bridge Crossing –

- We have continued to apply pressure on Sheffield City Council to progress this project urgently. Gap funding has now been approved, and a contractor is due to be appointed in October 2025. Subject to further design, costing,

and planning approval, construction is expected to begin in summer 2026, with completion in spring 2027.

- **Wharncliffe Woods Link** – Forestry England and Yorkshire Water have both agreed to designate this as a 'Permissive Footpath'. We now await the signing of the final agreement and installation of a new accessible gate by Yorkshire Water. Barnsley Public Rights Of Way Officer has promised to supply signage, and we hope to launch a new volunteer ranger group for the route in 2026.
- **Phase 2 Link to Holmes Farm / More Hall** – A new path along our proposed extension route appears in early plans for flood storage around Holmes Farm. We are in dialogue with the project manager to align this proposal with ours.

7, Member Recruitment and Engagement

We have been most successful in Oughtibridge, where progress is visible to the local community, particularly the new housing developments along the trail route.

We hope for a similar effect at Deepcar as the new Bloor Homes housing is occupied.

Our stalls at events such as Oughtibridge Gala and Wardsend Bio-blitz have been very well received.

Professional advice has been secured to improve our website and social media, and to create templates for regular newsletters. The consultant is also compiling heritage, nature, and geology material for a series of route guides for each section of the trail.

Looking Forward

A public meeting with writer and journalist Laura Laker has been organised for October 2025, jointly with Sustrans, Friends of the TPT, and the Sheaf & Porter Rivers Trust. The main aim is to promote wider debate and support for a more joined-up approach to long-distance and off-road active travel in Sheffield and South Yorkshire.

We are also developing an alliance with Cycle Barnsley and other local stakeholders, with the goal of persuading Highways England, Yorkshire Water, and

Barnsley and Sheffield Councils to agree on a pragmatic and achievable way of completing the final 50–100 metres of the route. This would connect the trail to its intended destination while avoiding a seriously dangerous road, tragically highlighted by a recent fatality.



UPPER DON TRAIL TRUST

FINANCIAL STATEMENT FOR YEAR ENDING 30th November 2024

Charity Number 1104333

Balances as at 30th November 2024 on the accounts held with the Co-op Bank

Account Number 6516168350 £ 21,858.89

Account Number 6516168300 £ 1,245.05

Total £ 23,103.94

Expenditure

Printing Maps (Reprint) £ 248.40

Artwork and QR code £ 494.97

Insurance (Zurich) £ 157.00

Oughtibridge Gala £ 25.00

Kick Sampling £ 424.99

Total £1350.36

Income

Donation from East Peak Innovation £966.56

Ward Pot Fund (D.Chinchen) £335.00

Interest (savings account) £348.09

Oughtibridge Gala £ 45.22

Total £1724.87