



# The Friends of Debdale Park Annual Report 2024-2025

Registered Charity Number 1154238

Debdale Park, 1075 Hyde Road, Gorton, Manchester, M18 7LJ

## **Overview**

The Friends of Debdale Park continued to work for the benefit of the local community throughout the reporting period, supporting the protection, improvement and enjoyment of Debdale Park as an inclusive and welcoming public green space. The charity's activities focused on enhancing the park's environment, encouraging community engagement, and supporting opportunities for recreation, wellbeing and learning.

Progress during the year was made possible through the commitment of volunteers, constructive partnerships with local stakeholders, and the responsible use of funds in line with the charity's objectives. Despite ongoing challenges, the group remained resilient and responsive to community needs, delivering practical improvements and fostering a strong sense of shared ownership of the park.

## **Governance**

The Friends of Debdale Park – Current Trustees

Alan Grafton – Chairman and Trustee

Keith Norton – Treasurer and Trustee

Fred Taylor – Trustee

Owen Taylor – Trustee

Doreen Grafton – Trustee

Irene Hargreaves – Trustee

Kim Stevenson – Trustee

## **Debdale Park Carnival**

The Gorton Carnival has been running for over 40 years, with a small break in between some past events. There used to be a parade, however heavy traffic has meant this has been unable to continue. The

park event has a fun fair, stalls and a stage with entertainment. The main event is the vintage car show which is very popular. People come from all over to show off their vintage cars, and this is getting bigger every year, drawing around 5,000 people on a good day if the weather is kind to us.

### **Wheels for all**

Wheels for all is exactly what it says on the tin. Running since 2022, it provides cycling opportunities for everyone, regardless of their abilities. The bikes we have are specially made to enable people with all disabilities to be able to join in. There are bikes with hand pedals and we also have a bike whereby a wheelchair can be strapped to the back and a carer can cycle in front, ensuring the individual within the wheelchair can be included. We got funding to lay a track within the park and we have been provided with safe storage for the bikes.

### **Spanish Conversation Group**

The Spanish Conversation Group has proven to be a highly successful and well-established community activity. Meeting weekly at Debdale Park, the group consistently attracts around 14 participants, all of whom are retired. Attendance has remained stable throughout the year, with the same individuals returning regularly, demonstrating a strong level of commitment, enjoyment and perceived value.

Sessions are friendly, inclusive and supportive, encouraging participants to take part regardless of their previous experience of speaking Spanish. The atmosphere promotes confidence and participation, allowing members to practise speaking and listening skills in a relaxed and welcoming environment.

The group delivers a wide range of benefits to those attending. Learning and practising a foreign language provides valuable mental stimulation, helping to keep the mind active and supporting memory, concentration and overall cognitive health, which is particularly important for older adults.

Regular attendance also offers consistent social interaction, helping to reduce loneliness and social isolation. Participants have developed friendships and a strong sense of belonging within the group.

Meeting in Debdale Park encourages members to leave their homes, enjoy fresh air and remain physically active, contributing positively to both physical health and emotional wellbeing.

Overall, the Spanish Conversation Group strengthens community ties within Gorton and makes positive use of Debdale Park as a shared space for learning and social engagement. It demonstrates how simple, low-cost, community-led activities can have a meaningful and lasting impact on the wellbeing of older residents.

### **Debdale Ramblers**

Debdale Ramblers is a well-established walking group that has been running successfully for the past eight years. The group promotes regular physical activity, social connection, and wellbeing for its members.

The group has 40 registered members, with an average weekly attendance of 25 to 30 people. This strong and consistent turnout demonstrates the popularity and value of the group. The ramblers include weekly walks based in and around Debdale Park, which are suitable for a wide range of abilities. There is also a monthly walk, lunch and quiz, providing an opportunity for socialising and building friendships. Debdale Ramblers provides many important benefits: Physical health – regular walking helps improve fitness, mobility, and overall health. Mental wellbeing – being outdoors and socially active supports mental health and reduces stress. Social inclusion – the group helps prevent loneliness and builds a strong sense of community. Routine and motivation – regular activities encourage members to stay active and engaged. The group makes positive use of local green spaces and supports healthy lifestyles within the community.

## **Upcycling Sewing Group**

The Debdale Upcycling Sewing Group has become a well-established and successful community initiative over the past 12 months. Meeting regularly at Debdale Park, the group brings people together around creative sewing activities while actively promoting sustainability.

Participants use donated household textiles such as old bedding, curtains and fabric, generously provided by friends and family, which are repurposed into practical and decorative handmade items. Through this process, members develop a wide range of sewing and crafting skills, from basic techniques to more advanced methods. The group welcomes learners of all abilities, encouraging peer support, shared learning and growing confidence, with participants gaining a strong sense of achievement from completing projects.

The sewing group delivers significant social and wellbeing benefits. Regular sessions provide opportunities for social connection, friendship and mutual support, helping to reduce isolation. Creative activity contributes positively to mental wellbeing by reducing stress, improving mood and promoting relaxation. Completing finished items fosters confidence and self-esteem, while the regular meetings offer participants a sense of purpose, routine and motivation.

In addition to its social impact, the group makes a positive environmental contribution by reusing unwanted textiles and helping to reduce household waste. It also raises awareness of sustainable practices and demonstrates how community-led activities can support environmental responsibility while strengthening local connections.

Overall, the Debdale Upcycling Sewing Group continues to thrive and grow in confidence and impact. Over the past year it has successfully combined creativity, learning, social engagement and sustainability, making it a valued and integral part of the Debdale Park community.

## **Debdale Community Garden**

We plan to revive Debdale Community Garden, which closed in 2022. Since then, the area has become exceptionally overgrown and requires significant work to restore it to its former state. Our goal is to clear the site, repair and rebuild garden infrastructure, and create a welcoming space where local residents can grow vegetables, herbs, and flowers. The garden will include a poly tunnel, raised beds, composting facilities, a small pond, and seating areas. The project will promote physical and mental well-being, reduce isolation, and provide opportunities for skill-building in gardening and sustainability. It will also bring back a valued community resource that many residents have missed since its closure. Restoring the garden will increase biodiversity, encourage the growth of local produce, and promote composting and recycling practices. Beneficiaries include local residents of all ages, including families, young people, older adults, community groups, schools, and volunteers who want to learn about sustainable living.

## **The Debdale Book Club**

The Debdale Book Club is a new community group scheduled to launch on Wednesday 21 January 2026. The group has been carefully planned, with all practical arrangements in place to support a successful and sustainable start.

The book club will be led by a highly qualified and experienced facilitator who is both a qualified linguist and an educator. She brings strong subject knowledge alongside proven teaching and facilitation skills, supported by a range of creative and engaging approaches designed to encourage discussion, participation and enjoyment among members.

The book club aims to encourage a love of reading and literature, promote discussion, critical thinking and shared learning, and create a welcoming and inclusive social space. Sessions will include guided group discussions, shared reflections and themed activities tailored to suit a wide range of reading interests and abilities.

The Debdale Book Club is expected to deliver a range of benefits to participants, including mental stimulation through reading and discussion, improved communication and language skills, and increased confidence through sharing ideas and opinions. The group will also offer valuable social connection, helping to reduce isolation and support wellbeing in a relaxed and supportive environment.

Overall, the Debdale Book Club is a well-prepared and exciting new initiative for the Debdale Park community. With strong leadership, clear objectives and thorough planning in place, the group is well positioned to

become a successful and valued addition to the park's existing programme of community activities.

## **Debdale Park Men's Shed**

The Debdale Park Men's Shed has now completed its first full year of operation. Based in the Aviary building, which was previously close to derelict, the project has successfully transformed the space into a vibrant, practical and welcoming community workshop. Over the past year, significant progress has been made in developing facilities, expanding activities and strengthening community engagement.

## **Development of Workshop Facilities**

During early 2025, a substantial amount of volunteer time and effort was dedicated to converting two large rooms into a fully functioning workshop. Key improvements included the construction of sturdy workbenches, rewiring and the installation of safe electrical supplies to each workstation, upgrades to the kitchen area with new tables and chairs, and the installation of a large PVC window to create a brighter and more welcoming environment.

These improvements enabled the Shed to begin hosting supervised workshop sessions twice each week. Attendance grew steadily, largely through word of mouth, to a regular group of 6–8 participants, including both men and women, demonstrating strong local interest and engagement.

## **Expansion of Workshop Capacity**

The next phase of development involved bringing a larger unused room back into use to house all machinery that produces sawdust. With the support of grant funding, the Shed installed a dedicated electrical supply, additional woodworking machinery, a dust extraction system, and appropriate personal protective equipment including ear defenders, face masks and aprons.

This expansion allowed the workshop to operate in two clearly defined areas: a cutting and machining zone and a separate assembly and finishing area. The improved facilities enabled members to produce a range of high-quality items, which were successfully sold at three fairs held in Debdale Park. Income generated from these events contributed towards consumables and the day-to-day running of the workshop.

## **Improvements to the Meeting Room**

The meeting room at the far end of the building has also been refurbished during the year. Improvements included new tables and chairs, additional heaters to improve comfort, and the installation of a secure serving hatch and opening window for use during warmer months.

These improvements benefit not only the Men's Shed but also other members of the Friends of Debdale Park community group who use the space. Funding for this work was generously provided by Safeway Housing Association, Co-op Bank and the Manchester Airport Community Trust Fund.

## **Financial Position**

The Men's Shed ended 2025 with a positive bank balance, reflecting careful financial management, successful fundraising and income from sales at community events. This healthy financial position enables the Shed to continue offering its activities free of charge for as long as possible, ensuring accessibility for all participants.

## **Looking Ahead to 2026**

The major development planned for 2026 is the creation of a dedicated area to house a laser engraver and cutter. This new equipment will significantly expand the Shed's creative and production capacity, creating opportunities for new projects, skills development and potential future income generation.

## **Conclusion**

In just over a year, the Debdale Park Men's Shed has transformed a neglected building into a thriving community workshop. Through the commitment of volunteers, the support of grant funders and growing community participation, the Shed has become a valued resource for local residents, promoting practical skills, social connection and wellbeing.

The group looks forward to building on this strong foundation during 2026 and beyond.

## FRIENDS OF DEBDALE INCOME & EXPENSE STATEMENT 2025

### Friends of Debdale Park Accounts 2024 - 2025

Bank:

|                  | Date       | Item                                                   | Amount    |               |
|------------------|------------|--------------------------------------------------------|-----------|---------------|
| Brought forward: |            |                                                        |           |               |
|                  | 1/4/2024   |                                                        |           | £5,525.67     |
|                  |            |                                                        |           |               |
| Income:          |            |                                                        |           | Running total |
|                  | 30/4/2024  | MCC NIF Grant - Men's Talking Circle at The Monastery  | £584.99   | £584.99       |
|                  | 17/7/2024  | MCC NIF Grant - Men's Shed Debdale                     | £1,000.00 | £1,584.99     |
|                  | 14/3/2025  | Cash paid in - (Olwyn)                                 | £100.00   | £1,684.99     |
|                  |            | Total Income:                                          |           | £1,684.99     |
| Expenditure:     |            |                                                        |           |               |
|                  | 10/4/2024  | Zurich Insurance                                       | £16.83    | £16.83        |
|                  | 23/4/2024  | (112) - FoDP Web Hosting                               | £59.99    | £76.82        |
|                  | 1/5/2024   | (111) - MSD Key cutting                                | £20.00    | £96.82        |
|                  | 10/5/2024  | Zurich Insurance                                       | £16.83    | £113.65       |
|                  | 15/5/2024  | (116) - DNC banners                                    | £75.00    | £188.65       |
|                  | 17/5/2024  | (114) - W4A Transfer of funds                          | £200.00   | £388.65       |
|                  | 17/5/2024  | (115) - W4A Transfer of funds                          | £250.00   | £638.65       |
|                  | 3/6/2024   | (113) - Irene Roses                                    | £12.00    | £650.65       |
|                  | 10/6/2024  | Zurich Insurance                                       | £16.83    | £667.48       |
|                  | 10/6/2024  | (117) - Transfer of NIF to The Monastery               | £584.99   | £1,252.47     |
|                  | 28/6/2024  | (118) - W4A Transfer of funds                          | £350.00   | £1,602.47     |
|                  | 4/7/2024   | (119) - Tools from GHS                                 | £100.50   | £1,702.97     |
|                  | 4/7/2024   | (120) - Nature Centre Uniform                          | £42.09    | £1,745.06     |
|                  | 10/7/2024  | Zurich Insurance                                       | £16.83    | £1,761.89     |
|                  | 18/7/2024  | (121) - Aviary Cleaning Supplies                       | £43.00    | £1,804.89     |
|                  | 7/8/2024   | (122) - Transfer of Men's Shed funds to Debdale Social | £2,388.51 | £4,193.40     |
|                  | 9/8/2024   | (123) - Cleaning supplies for The Aviary               | £130.85   | £4,324.25     |
|                  | 12/8/2024  | Zurich Insurance                                       | £16.83    | £4,341.08     |
|                  | 10/9/2024  | Zurich Insurance                                       | £16.83    | £4,357.91     |
|                  | 13/9/2024  | (128) - Transfer of Nature Centre funds to GHT         | £331.14   | £4,689.05     |
|                  | 13/9/2024  | (127) - Transfer of Youth Forum funds to GHT           | £592.00   | £5,281.05     |
|                  | 30/9/2024  | (126) - Transfer of W4A funds to Doreen Grafton        | £559.20   | £5,840.25     |
|                  | 10/10/2024 | Zurich Insurance                                       | £16.83    | £5,857.08     |
|                  | 11/11/2024 | Zurich Insurance                                       | £16.83    | £5,873.91     |
|                  | 10/12/2024 | Zurich Insurance                                       | £16.83    | £5,890.74     |
|                  | 5/2/2025   | (129) - Zurich Insurance (For whole year)              | £170.24   | £6,060.98     |
|                  | 3/4/2025   | (130) - Doreen - Sticker for WFA Banner                | £30.00    | £6,090.98     |
|                  |            | Total Expenditure:                                     |           | £6,090.98     |
|                  |            |                                                        | Total:    | £1,119.68     |

No transactions have taken place from the last entry until the end of the annual shutdown and the balance as shown is carried forward to 2026.01.30

Keith Norton