



## **FRIENDS OF RISING SUN COUNTRY PARK**

### **Chairperson's Annual Report Executive Summary – 2025-2026**

The Friends of Rising Sun Country Park has achieved a year of steady progress, staying true to our aim of protecting the park's biodiversity, heritage and community value. Regular Thursday volunteering remained the foundation of practical conservation work, supported by a dependable group of volunteers. Several focused projects were completed, including new tree planting behind Asda, a full redesign of the entrance beds to create healthier, low-maintenance planting, and the creation of an invertebrate rubbing trail.

Community engagement stayed strong through support for summer and Christmas events, the Scarecrow Trail, and a range of self-led nature activities. Monthly litter picking continued throughout the year, with 148 bags collected and over 230 volunteer hours recorded, alongside a Rubbish Nature Walk that contributed to a national call for better protection of green spaces.

The group supported early woodland management at Swallow Field, replacing around 1,000 tree tubes to help young trees establish. Nature Discovery Walks continued despite park staffing changes, with the Friends maintaining wildlife recording and preparing to reopen the walks to the public in May 2026. Citizen science remained a major strength, with contributions to the City Nature Challenge, Waxcap Watch, the New Year Plant Hunt and a wide range of national and local surveys, helping build a detailed year-round picture of the park's wildlife.

The Backyard Allotment thrived early in the year, but safety concerns led to access being withdrawn, ending the project and representing a notable loss for the group. Fundraising through duck food, produce, calendars and cards supported small improvement projects, while social media and the website continued to grow as tools for sharing updates.

A new Heritage Research Group was established to develop accessible, verified material about the area's history, responding to strong public interest. Governance was strengthened through the introduction of public liability insurance and updated procedures for all regular activities.

Looking ahead, the Friends will focus on maintaining core volunteering, reestablishing nature walks, expanding heritage resources and continuing fundraising. Despite challenges, this has been a year defined by commitment, resilience and meaningful progress, with volunteers playing a central role in supporting the Rising Sun Country Park as a thriving place for wildlife and people.