

Woodhouse Moor: Fears for women's safety as controversial plans to light Leeds park resurface

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3–4 minutes

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A volunteer group has spoken out after plans to light a Leeds park path resurfaced.

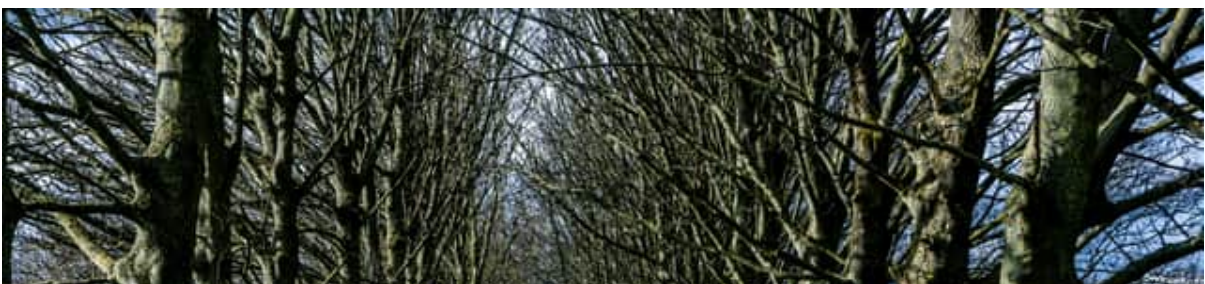
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The [Friends of Woodhouse Moor](#) group has warned the move, scrapped following an initial proposal decades ago, would create "a false sense of security" for those walking through the park at night.

In 1992, a deputation of women from Leeds University Students' Union asked Leeds City Council [not to proceed with plans to light the paths](#) across Woodhouse Moor, over fears that lighting the paths would increase the perception that the paths were safe to use at night.

But there is now speculation that plans to light the park could resurface following a [park artwork project](#) launched by the University of Leeds in response to a safety study.





The Friends of Woodhouse Moor group spoke out after the previously scrapped plans resurfaced. Picture: James Hardisty

Speaking to the YEP, Bill McKinnon, Chair of the Friends of Woodhouse Moor, said: "Initially everyone thinks 'oh that's a good idea and will make the park safer' but it can lead to a false sense of security walking through an otherwise dark park.

"People walking along the lit paths become potential victims to wrongdoers hiding in the shadows so unless you are lighting the entire park, you don't actually increase safety."

Wow Park - a co-creative public art project – is being developed by the University of Leeds following a recent study of women and girls from across West Yorkshire which found that most feel unsafe in parks in some situations.

The University, in partnership with [Leeds City Council](#) and [Mayor of West Yorkshire Tracy Brabin](#), will now use the findings to explore whether creative solutions can help to transform the park, to make it feel safer, leading to fears that lighting the paths might once again be put on the table.

Speaking ahead of the art project, Mayor Brabin said: "We are

determined to create a safer, fairer region and that means ending violence against women and girls.

"I am delighted to see our creative sector playing a role in changing the experience of women and girls across our parks and open spaces. It means we are putting West Yorkshire on the map for innovation nationally, and ensuring our communities feel safe and can flourish."

The research identified several barriers preventing women and girls from using their local parks, including inadequate access routes, poorly lit areas, and male dominated public spaces that feel intimidating and exclusive.

Research England is funding the project, which will be carried out by the Bradford-based social enterprise organisation Street Space.

Mr McKinnon added: "It only takes an extra two to three minutes to walk around the park at night as opposed to walking across it. In this way, people can avoid the dangers associated with crossing the park at night.

"And by so doing, they would be helping to preserve the darkness which the park's flora and fauna need to thrive."

The arts project is due to begin in the next few weeks with the creative designs coming to life by late spring and early summer.