

Proposed Ecological Survey & Report

Troopers Hill Local Nature Reserve



Introduction

This survey and report has been commissioned by Friends of Troopers Hill as part the development of the Troopers Hill - Stepping Forward Project to improve the steps and paths on the hill. Funding has been provided by the Big Lottery through their Community Spaces Programme managed by Groundwork UK.

Purpose of the Survey

Primary purpose:

To consider the ecological impact of work to improve the flights of steps on Troopers Hill. In particular the steps on the south facing slopes below the chimney.

There are a number of options for work to the steps and the report should consider the relative ecological impacts. The options are:

- a. Do nothing and allow the steps to further deteriorate
- b. Remove the steps completely and allow people to find their own desire lines.
- c. Rebuild the steps to a similar design to the original 1991 construction.
- d. Rebuild the steps as above and add a handrail.
- e. Rebuild the steps to full DDA access standards with handrails both sides, this would probably require revised route to allow sufficient landings and even step spacing.

The report should also consider alternatives for the surfacing of the steps in options c & d. In particular would the use of limestone aggregate with dust binding or resin bound surfacing cause any adverse ecological impact? An option for the surface is a plastic grid with grass growing through - either seeded or turf with the mesh fixed over it. If this was used what grass varieties would be best? Would importing a small amount of topsoil for the steps be acceptable?

In addition are there any restrictions that should be placed on contractors carrying out the works to minimise ecological impact during construction and comply with any relevant legislation. This would include the time of year during which it is best to complete the works and areas which contractors should be prevented from entering. Would the larger scale works required for options d & e - excavation and placing concrete raise any additional ecological issues?

Secondary Purposes:

To suggest other management or capital works that would improve the ecological status of Troopers Hill.

To comment in terms of ecological impact on proposals to install waymarking on the paths through the adjacent woodland, which may increase their use.

Timescales

Provided the weather is suitable it is intended that the survey work should be undertaken in April 2011 with the final report produced by the **end of May**. In the event that the weather is not suitable during April it is accepted that these dates may have to be revised and this will need to be discussed at the time.

In order that more detailed design work can be progressed an initial report should be produced by the **end of March** based on existing information about the site and considering the above options.