

use of the area. Cultivation and mulching of the ground within the tree groups should be undertaken to improve soil conditions. Some supplementary planting with alder species would be appropriate in these groups following the specification in Appendix 3 provided suitable aftercare can be provided.



Photograph 4: *Lonicera nitida*, a garden escapee, in Compartment W2a

Compartment W2b

This is a denser area of regeneration with paths running along the edges rather than through it. The area should be thinned in favour of better specimens and under-planted with additional species to improve its biodiversity value. Soil improvement through gentle cultivation with hand tools (avoiding damage to any roots) followed by mulching should be undertaken annually to improve soil condition

Compartment W2c

This compartment is very open with just a scattering of middle-aged birch trees

which should be retained. The compartment provides an excellent opportunity for establishing new planting with alder species to the specification in Appendix 3, provided suitable aftercare can be provided.

Area W3

Compartment W3a

Area W3 is the largest woodland area on the site. It is dominated by semi-mature and thicket stage birch which has developed over the former tennis courts. The site is heavily used for group activities and trampling will inevitably limit the development of ground cover and understorey species in some areas. Ideally this area of woodland should be 'zoned' for use, so that areas for recreation and community use can be defined and managed with these uses as the principal management objective allowing the remaining areas to be managed with woodland development and management as the principal objective.

Shallow rooting due to compaction is an issue throughout W3 and soil improvement through gentle cultivation with hand tools and regular mulching will be essential to improving site conditions in the long term. Colonising *Rhododendron ponticum* within W3a should be removed and replaced with alternative non-invasive species (e.g. holly and hazel).

Dense thicket stage birch regeneration is evident throughout the site with willow particularly in the southern part of the compartment. This should be heavily thinned leaving only the better specimens and supplementary planting with alternative species should be undertaken in accordance with the specification in Appendix 3. A high level of aftercare will be required to ensure successful establishment.

The ash and sycamore establishing along the southern boundary of W3a immediately adjacent to the walls of the tenements and gardens should be removed

to avoid future structural damage to the walls. It may be necessary to cut to ground level and treat the stumps with a systemic herbicide such as glyphosate as it is unlikely that the root systems can be removed. On-going weeding along this boundary will be necessary to prevent further tree establishment.

Compartment W3b

This is a prominent small area of woodland opposite the main pedestrian entrance to the site. The sensory garden lies immediately adjacent to it. Currently the group is dominated by birch and willow regeneration but there is scope to enhance and extend this area of woodland through further planting.

Given its prominence and the more intensive use of the area, introduction of additional species to provide colour, shade and structure to the site to enhance the users experience would be appropriate. The ground conditions clearly restrict the species but rowan, alder species, whitebeam and Corsican pine, planted in groups of 3-5 would introduce colour and diversity into the area. Pit-planting is also recommended for establishing trees in this area. Trees planted as whips (100-125cm) or feathered whips (up to 175cm with side branches) would be appropriate planted into pits about one third larger than the size of the trees roots, single staked with stakes no more than one third the height of the tree (and at least 60cm below ground) and backfilled as per the specification in Appendix 4.

In the existing woodland area soil improvement through gentle cultivation with hand tools (avoiding damage to any roots) followed by mulching should be undertaken annually to improve soil conditions. Some additional planting could be undertaken to improve diversity.

The existing woodland should be thinned in favour of the better birch specimens.



Photograph 5: *Existing woodland in Compartment W3b*

Recreation and Access

Currently there is a dense network of paths through the site, indicative of the high level of use the site receives. The resulting erosion and compaction is preventing vegetation from establishing in many areas. Work is progressing to formalise a path network through the site by delineating the preferred paths with woodchip. Ideally once the permanent path network is defined within the woodland areas, the other areas should be cultivated and planted to deter further use and to encourage development of field and understorey layers to the woodland. Once the permanent footpath network is well-defined and vegetation is established on the adjacent areas, the footpaths outwith the woodland areas could be scrapped back to the underlying blaes which is hardwearing and compact and with regular maintenance to remove leaf mould, fill holes etc. will provide an appropriate permanent wearing surface. Within the woodland areas on-going protection of the tree root systems will be required to minimise damage. Installation of ‘no-dig’ ground protection

systems for heavily used footpaths and events areas could be considered or alternatively, on-going regular application of woodchip.



Photograph 6: *Work is progressing to delineate the path network through the site using woodchip*

The site is currently used by less-able visitors but wheelchair access within the site is limited. There are significant opportunities within the site to improve disabled access, particularly at the pedestrian access point at Kelbourne Road where the current gradient is too steep (>1:12) to be recognised as suitable for disabled access. The Countryside for All/ Fieldfare Trust provides advice on widths, gradients, access control designs and management of sites for all-abilities access (see http://www.fieldfare.org.uk/?page_id=53). Paths for All can provide technical support and advice on path construction and may be able to provide advice on funding opportunities (see <http://www.pathsforall.org.uk/pfa-home> or contact on info@pathsforall.org.uk). Upgrading of the Kelbourne Street access will not provide all-abilities access into the main woodland area however, due to the difference in site levels, and it would therefore be necessary to create a ramp or an alternative