

Greenspace 5- Hazard Railway and Woodland

1.0 Introduction

1.1 Hazard Railway and Woodland is composed of four blocks of plantation woodland connected by a recreational multi use path, which is the line of a disused railway. The path connects Moorsley and East Rainton, passing through woodland, residential areas and arable fields to the south. Hazard Lane intersects the path. Walkers and cyclists regularly use the path which connects them onto adjoining footpaths to create circular walks and routes, including National Route 70 on the NCN, the Walney to Wearside Cycle Route.

2.0 Location and Accessibility

2.1 Hazard Railway and Woodland is located around the south and eastern boundaries of East Rainton, south of Houghton-le-Spring. The wooded, disused railway path runs north-south, connecting larger areas of woodland as it connects the former Hetton-Durham railway line (to the south) up to the A690 at Rainton Bridge (to the north). The largest area of woodland lies on the former Hazard Pit site, which connects eastwards to the Moorsley Letch (watercourse). The surrounding area includes arable fields with residential areas to the west (East Rainton), east (Hetton-le-Hole) and north (Houghton-le-Spring).



3.0 Maintenance

3.1 Hazard Railway is a mixed site with a number of woodland parcels connected by a disused railway. SCC has responsibility for the woodland parcels along the Hazard Railway. SCC have a systematic programme of woodland management across Sunderland.

4.0 General description and observations

4.1 Hazard Railway and Woodland is composed of distinct woodland blocks connected via a wide surfaced track, which runs through open countryside and residential housing. Hazard Lane bisects the railway path and divides the site. The woodland blocks vary in character and condition with evidence of anti-social behaviour in some areas. One woodland block in particular is particularly vulnerable to anti-social behaviour due to being isolated and easily accessible by bikes. It appears to be used as an informal bike track. Management intervention would be beneficial but regular usage by motorbikes does not make this viable. Therefore, Links with Nature actions will focus on the following woodland parcels:

4.2 The northernmost section of woodland (alongside the former mineral line from Rainton Bridge towards Hazard Lane)

Linear woodland, alongside residential development, which would benefit from management to open up the canopy and to create a more diverse understory, increase the amount of dead wood and enable woodland regeneration. There is potential for volunteer involvement in woodland management.

4.3 The large woodland block east of the mineral line running down to Moorsley Letch

– The largest plantation woodland, which is in moderate condition. There is little structural diversity in the woodland. Trees are even aged and planted close together. There is no permitted access into the woodland but there is evidence of motorbike use. A two-year programme of woodland management to thin out areas of the canopy to create woodland glades and wet woodland areas associated with the water course would be beneficial. There is evidence of fallen trees and storm damage, which could be managed to create habitat piles and enhance deadwood habitats. The ground

is boggy and heavily rutted from motorbike use. Therefore, creating of a series of scrapes to manage water flow will create new wetland habitat.

4.4 There is an intersection between the main track with a footpath running East West from School Road in East Rainton to B1284. This footpath crosses Moorsley Letch which flows alongside the woodland. There is evidence of bank erosion close to the footbridge with fallen trees. There is the potential that flows will undermine the footbridge structure. Wear Rivers Trust have identified instream works to protect the banks from erosion. Further upstream further, works have been suggested to improve passage for fish.

4.5 Woodland at Moorsley Marsh

This is an isolated woodland. There are a series of non-functional fences and barriers into the woodland, so it is unclear whether access is allowed. It has also suffered wind damage with a number of fallen and hanging trees. Therefore, management to make safe and remove structures would be beneficial.

Access and Interpretation

4.6 The main track is in good condition and is well used by local residents for dog walking and cycling. However, there is no signage to give the location any identity or to show connections with other routes.

5.0 Proposed Works

Locations of proposed works are shown in the map below.

5.1 Habitat Management Aims

- To improve woodland structure by creating woodland glades and rides and manage deadwood;
- To encourage woodland regeneration by opening up the woodland canopy;
- To improve ground flora diversity by plug planting and opening up the canopy;
- To protect banksides from erosion and improve fish passage.

5.2 Access and Interpretation

- To provide greater identity and promote routes along Hazard Railway and connections with other routes.
- Minor informal pathway improvements will be encouraged through Hazard Woodland
- Investigate access barrier improvement at Moorsley Marsh.

6.0 Budget

Source of Funding	Amount (£)
S106	28,638
Area Committee	16,835
NECF	N/A
NLHF	15,165
Total	60,638

Habitat	Project	Season Completed	Budget (£)
Woodland Management (parcel 1)	Woodland thinning and creation of glades, rides	October – March	4,506

	Planting understory	March – June	900
Woodland Management (Parcel 2)	Woodland thinning and creation of glades, rides and wet woodland areas	October – March Years 1 & 2	19,494
Woodland Management (Parcel 5)	Assessment of fallen trees and management	October – March	8,100
Wetlands	Creation of woodland scrapes	May – August	-
Instream management – WRT costs combined	Greenbank Protection	May – August	10,432
	Fish Pass	May – August	-
	Management Fee for WRT	-	3,217
Access	Access into parcel 5 – removal of structures to make access safe	April to October	943
	Implementation of signage and trails	April to October	6,982
Contingency – DWT			1,516
Contingency – SCC			4,548
Total			60,638

The specification for each area of work is outlined in the Specifications Links with Nature document and details of future maintenance and management are outlined in the Maintenance and Management Plan document.

