

## Havelock Recreation Ground: Biodiversity Report and Suggestions.

6<sup>th</sup> February 2015

This small recreation ground covers about 9 acresCHECK about 1km south-east of Bromley Town Centre. It is surrounded by housing and consists mainly of a level area of short amenity grassland with about 3? mature specimen trees in the eastern corner. In the northern part of the site some smaller trees grow on a slope which provides some shelter. There is little scrub cover, most of the gardens backing onto the recreation ground are fenced. One boundary has wire netting fencing. Currently there is little room for wildlife here, but sympathetic management with some planting of locally provenanced native species would improve this situation and help LBB fulfil its biodiversity duty under the NERC Act 2006, Section 40 of which states, *'Every public authority must, in exercising its functions, have regard, so far as is consistent with the proper exercise of those functions, to the purpose of conserving biodiversity .....Conserving biodiversity includes, in relation to a living organism or type of habitat, restoring or enhancing a population or habitat.'* Enhanced biodiversity would also provide an important educational resource for children.

Suggestions for enhancing the habitats at Havelock Recreation Ground for biodiversity are as follows:

1. Plant a hedgerow of mixed, native, locally provenanced (at least from south-east England) bare root whips against the wire-netting fence where there is plenty of light for young plants to thrive. They should be planted in a staggered double row 5-6 plants /metre between November and March. Suggested species:
  - Hawthorn: white flowers in spring, red berries in autumn for birds and important for a large number of invertebrates (food for birds and bats).
  - Hazel: catkins early in spring, nuts in autumn, vigorous and can be coppiced.
  - Field Maple: golden yellow leaves in autumn
  - Dogwood: white flowers after hawthorn, black berries in autumn
  - Guelder Rose: very attractive white flowers in late spring, red berries in autumn and stunning red/orange autumn foliage
  - Alder buckthorn: white flowers, berries go from green to red to black. Foliage important for caterpillars of brimstone butterflies
  - Beech: brown leaves retained over winter

The hedgerow will support a wide range of invertebrates: the more mixed the plant species the greater the invertebrate variety. These can be found by children doing mini-beast hunts. In the long-term the hedgerow will provide nesting sites for birds and the base will provide shelter for small mammals such as hedgehogs, shrews, voles and possibly slow worms.

2. The hedgerow should link to the area of scrub in the north-east corner of the site, at the end of the 'valley' area. Bramble scrub is very important for a wide range of invertebrates, birds and small mammals providing them with food, nesting sites and shelter. Nesting sites in bramble will be safer for birds than the hedgerow for a number of years until the hedge has grown sufficiently thick. The scrub will need to be cut back a bit in autumn to prevent it invading the meadow, but plenty should be left. Encourage people to come and pick blackberries - in trying to reach the best ones, the edges of the bramble scrub may be pushed back enough!
3. Leave a wide margin of grass bordering new hedgerow uncut over summer. Cut & clear away clippings in August/September annually. Suggested width of 'hay meadow' to extend beyond the existing recently planted line of trees (? 10-20 metres or more). This will provide habitat for a different set of invertebrates compared to the hedgerow and provide opportunities for children to see different species e.g. grasshoppers and the butterflies whose caterpillars eat

grass such as skippers, meadow brown, gatekeepers etc. By siting the wildflower/hay meadow here it may help prevent damage to the new hedge by inappropriate mowing. It must be stressed to any contractor that they should not cut grass within 1metre of the new hedge.

4. Plant understorey of hazel, dogwood, hawthorn etc under mature trees to give this area a better structure supporting more invertebrate species and therefore more birds & bats.

Other things to consider may be having a second area of 'wildflower/hay meadow and/or planting an area with orchard trees such as apples, pears, damson and wild cherry.

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