

The Hobbayne Half Acre Field and the Severed Land at Billets Hart

Greening Project 2016

The project:

The Charity of William Hobbayne has owned the land at the Hobbayne Half Acre Field and Severed Land at Billets Hart for centuries. Both sites have huge potential which they are not currently reaching. The Hobbayne Half Acre Field is attracting intimidating and unsafe anti-social behaviour due to dense undergrowth and lack of visibility. Both sites lack suitable habitat for wildlife species and have low biodiversity. Access and information on both sites could also be improved in order to create more welcoming and visually pleasing spaces. This project aims to clear, restore and enrich both sites and bring the woodland back under management.

The Hobbayne Half Acre Field is located north of Half Acre Road and Connolly Dell, adjacent to the Great Western Railway, Hanwell W7 3JJ.

Grid Reference: TQ150804:

Billets Hart is located north of Green Lane, Hanwell, W7 2PJ.

Grid Reference: TQ150795



Photographs from the Hobbayne Half Acre Field

What we are planning to do:

Woodland Management Plan:

Trees for Cities has created a Woodland Management Plan for The Charity of William Hobbayne. The plan includes a full site survey, underground assessment, woodland profile, wildlife species and habitat profile and management actions.

Clearance work:

It may seem counter-productive for a tree planting charity to clear existing trees and plants. However as the Hobbayne Half Acre Field has such as dense mid canopy of self-seeded trees, it is important to undertake selective thinning as it is limiting understory growth that is essential for a thriving woodland. Poor specimens will be removed with careful consideration.

Other plants will also be removed if necessary. For example, excess ivy must be cleared to allow for an enriched woodland composition, but some will be maintained in places that provide excellent habitats for insects, birds and small mammals.

Invasive species such as Japanese knotweed, Himalayan Balsam and Giant Hogweed (which has sap that can cause severe burns) will be removed.

Creating a woodland ride:

A 'woodland ride' will be created at the Hobbayne Half Acre Field. A woodland ride is an open space leading into the woodland. It will create an edge to the woodland, which is hugely beneficial for wildlife as a greater number of species inhabit the first 10 metres of any woodland edge than the rest of the woodland itself. It will also allow for more herb growth which will boost insect numbers and support the whole eco-system.

The path at the Hobbayne Half Acre Field is perfect for ride creation as it runs east to west, meaning the space will see a lot of sunlight and be protected from cold winds. It will also reduce anti-social behaviour by increasing visibility.

New planting and restoration work:

New planting and coppicing will be included on both sites to enrich the spaces. Coppicing will encourage a shrub zone that will provide a vital habitat for species that favour open woodland, such as butterflies. New planting will include native and non native tree species to build resilience against pests and diseases.

Mature apple trees that once provided fruit for past allotments are still growing at the Hobbayne Half Acre Field. Although they are not healthy, Trees for Cities will attempt to restore them while also planting successive heritage apple trees to ensure the woodland retains this distinctive feature.

If clearance work opens up the appropriate space, wildflower and bulb planting will be included.

Habitat creation:

The area is home to a large population of bats, predominantly the common pipistrelle and Daubenton's bat which is a European-Protected Species. A large population has historically been living inside one of the columns of the viaduct. However a recent survey has shown that the Daubenton's are no longer present in large numbers and this may be due to recent works to the railway. New habitat will be provided for bats at the Hobbayne Half Acre Field which is excellently positioned to provide deadwood roosting sites right next to the river (a hunting ground for insects).

We also hope to encourage water voles by creating a range of bank side habitats. Water voles are highlighted as a priority species on Ealing Council's Biodiversity Action Plan. Although works to the river banks have reduced population numbers, they have been spotted in the area.

By developing a richer understory at the Hobbayne Half Acre Field woodland and retaining tall trees, this project aims to increase the availability of insects, fruits and seeds that will also attract an interesting range of birds. Establishing perches along the river might also attract Kingfishers.

A deadwood habitat will also be created for stag beetles. Stag beetles play an important ecological role in returning minerals from dead plants back to the soil. They are also Britain's largest beetle and in decline across the nation.

Providing access to the river:

Clearance work will include new access to the river bank. This will provide opportunities to observe river wildlife and create a relaxing space by the water.

Interpretation board:

An interpretation board will be installed at the Hobbayne Half Acre Field. The board will provide information on wildlife, the woodland and the history of the space.



Photograph: An example of an interpretation board and deadwood habitat

Opportunities:

We hope to include educational features such as a wildlife trail at the Hobbayne Half Acre Field. The design will be approved by The Charity of William Hobbayne, however if you have any additional ideas, please email the charity hobbaynecharity@btinternet.com who will share them for consideration.

Both sites are open to the public and will provide new and beautiful spaces for wildlife observation, relaxation and walking. If you are interested in using the space for a particular activity, please contact at hobbaynecharity@btinternet.com



Heathrow Community Fund

