

**EXTENDED PRELIMINARY ECOLOGICAL APPRAISAL
FOR TUBING EXPERIENCE PROJECT**

**ZIP WORLD
HEATON PARK
MANCHESTER**

BY

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SERVICES**

1 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 A sloping area of mature Broad-leaved Plantation Woodland within the grounds and activity area of Zip World, Heaton Park, Manchester (SD 829 045) was surveyed to the CIEEM Guidelines for Preliminary Ecological Appraisals Second Edition 2017 and for Biodiversity Net Gain by Dave Bentley Entomology and Ecology Services on 3rd June 2024. This is an extended version of a PEA. Zip World is in the woodland to the immediate south of Heaton Park Reservoir. The whole site is owned by Manchester City council and leased to Zip world.
- 1.2 The project is to create a tubing experience in this sloping area which is currently bisected by Zip World's circular ground walkway - in summary, a tubing experience consists of a ground-based netting upon which riders sit in a large inner-tube and ride a tubing slide to the bottom of the slope. It is suitable for all ages, but will be particularly attractive for children. The location has been identified to maximise the natural topography on the site and to minimise the impact on trees within the woodland. An image of a tubing experience is shown at the end of this report.
- 1.3 The project site starts immediately adjacent to Zip World's outdoor picnic tables and seating. 5m to the south of the project site beyond the site fence is a park footpath. 37m from the project site to the south east is the Heaton Park Waste Management facility. The project site (a "small site") measures 2555 square metres or 0.26 Hectares. Woodland edge habitat will still occupy much of the project area after completion. A plan is supplied at the end of this report.
- 1.4 David Bentley conducted the survey. He has been in conservation since 1983 and has been a professional ecologist since 1993. Steven Higginbottom conducted the bird survey and is a mature, talented and lifelong bird recorder.
- 1.5 The CIEEM Guidelines are explicit in what is required to be assessed and provided:
 - * A Habitat Survey Map.
 - * A desk study. In this case the NBN Atlas and iRecord were consulted.
 - * An assessment of the possible presence and likely importance of the following:
 - Plants
 - Fungi
 - Terrestrial and aquatic invertebrates
 - Fish (where relevant, based on an assessment of any watercourses and water bodies present);
 - Amphibians (including both breeding and terrestrial habitat)
 - Reptiles
 - Breeding, wintering and migratory birds
 - Bats (including potential roost sites, and foraging and commuting habitats/features)
 - Other protected or priority mammal species, as relevant.
 - * Mapping of any stands of non-native invasive plant species

* Recording of any incidental sightings of priority or protected species, or field signs of such species.

* Box 1 of the PEA Guidelines discusses Protected and Priority Species information and this is stated to include Protected and Section 41 Priority Species and Priority Habitats and also Red Data listed taxa and indeed Nationally Scarce taxa, as well as Birds of Conservation Concern Red and Amber listed taxa. The JNCC Taxon List names the plethora of higher plants, bryophytes, fungi and wild animals, including invertebrates that are considered scarce.

2 METHODS

- 2.1 The survey morning was early (from 6am) on 3rd June 2024. The site opened early to allow Dave Bentley Ecologist and Steven Higginbottom Birder appropriate access well before the public visitors appeared at Zip World. All equipment and PPE was cleaned beforehand to meet biosecurity needs.
- 2.2 There was a slight breeze, the morning was overcast but dry with no more than a few spots of rain. Sunrise 04.44am. Weather. Overcast, Perception 6am till 8am 0mm. 8am till 9am 0.10mm. Humidity 98%. Wind North westerly 7mph increasing to 9mph.
- 2.3 The project site was appraised and divided into vegetation stands. Plants were examined and noted to DAFOR rating. Trees and young saplings were examined. Moss and Fungus samples were collected for examination under a microscope.
- 2.4 The invertebrate assessment was extended to include the use of a canvas net bag which was swept throughout the vegetation, the samples being potted in alcohol and identified under the microscope. Some invertebrates were located by direct observation.
- 2.5 The wider site was examined within the boundary fence and also outside it where the tree top trail extends beyond the fence and over the brook which issues from nearby Heaton Park Reservoir.

3 DESK STUDY

- 3.1 The GMLRC SBI map was checked and it was confirmed this woodland is not a Site of Biological Importance. However on MAGIC Map and on Natural England's Priority Habitats Inventory online mapping system as Priority Habitat Inventory Deciduous Woodland. The brook from Heaton Park Reservoir runs 25m from the project site and watercourses are regarded as Priority Habitats.
- 3.2 A search of NBN Atlas and iRecord revealed no records for the site itself.
- 3.3 However in the locality **mammals** recorded in Heaton Park are Badger (Badgers Act), Hedgehog (Section 41, Red Data Vulnerable), Mole, Red Fox, Wood Mouse, Brown Rat, Shrew, Rabbit (alien naturalised) and Grey Squirrel (invasive alien).

3.4 iRecord has records of **amphibians** - Smooth Newt, Common Frog and Common Toad (Section 41 Priority Species). Dave Bentley surveyed Heaton Park Reservoir on 12/06/2004 and recorded ordinary Newt eggs, a Smoothy Newt adult and Common Toad in the water. Dave Bentley surveyed all the watercourses and ponds in Heaton Park for GMEU (and Manchester CC) in 1998 and located Common Toad, Common Frog and Smooth Newt. Zip World staff have confirmed that Common Toad (Priority Species) has been found in terrestrial habitat within the perimeter fence.

3.5 The terrestrial/ woodland birds recorded (with their statuses) at Heaton Park are:

iRecord: Swift (Red), Jackdaw, Magpie, Carrion Crow, Jay, Woodpigeon (Amber), Collared Dove, Rock Dove, Sparrowhawk (Amber), Buzzard, Red Kite (Protected), Tawny Owl (Amber), Goldfinch, Chaffinch, Blue Tit, Great Tit, Coal Tit, Long-tailed Tit, Robin, Song Thrush (Section 41, Amber), Mistle Thrush (Red), Starling (Section 41, Red), Blackbird, Redwing (Protected, Amber), House Sparrow (Section 41, Red), Dunnock (Section 41, Amber), Wren (Amber), Tree Creeper, Pied Wagtail, Chiffchaff, Lesser Redpoll (Section 41, Red), Great Spotted Woodpecker,

Additional species on NBN Atlas: House Martin (Red), Sand Martin, Swallow, Red-rumped Swallow, Raven, Rook (Amber), Stock Dove (Amber), Harris' Hawk (alien), Kestrel (Amber), Bullfinch (Section 41, Amber), Greenfinch (Red), Brambling (Protected), Common Linnet (Section 41, Red), Common Redpoll (Red), Reed Bunting (Section 41, Amber), Yellowhammer (Section 41, Red), Siskin, Marsh Tit (Section 41, Red), Nuthatch, Tree Sparrow (Section 41, Red), Woodcock (Red), Kingfisher (Protected), Green Woodpecker, Lesser Spotted Woodpecker (Red), Blackcap, Garden Warbler, Willow Warbler (Amber), Goldcrest, Tree Pipit (Section 41, Red), Meadow Pipit (Amber), Rock Pipit, Grey Wagtail (Amber), White Wagtail (Vagrant), Yellow Wagtail (Section 41, Red), Skylark (Section 41, Red), Fieldfare (Protected, Red), Common Redstart (Amber), Whinchat (Red), Wheatear (Amber), Ring-necked Parakeet (alien).

3.5 There is no point listing the water and waterside birds found on NBN and iRecord that will not occur in this woodland habitat. Several of the above species are grassland /reedbed species so equally will not be found in woodland in Heaton Park.

3.6 BoCC 5 Red List are species with severe population/range declines. BoCC 5 Amber List are species with moderate population/range declines.

3.7 A variety of common garden butterflies and well-recorded insects are recorded.

4 RESULTS OF FIELD SURVEY

4.1 A Habitat Survey Map is appended below.

4.2 31 higher plant and 11 bryophyte species were recorded. All of the species are common in England and Greater Manchester. Five of the species are alien species and one of these, Himalayan Balsam, is a Schedule 9 Alien Invasive species. The species lists is given in the table below. The species lists are given below (D = Dominant, A = Abundant, F = Frequent, O = Occasional, R = Rare, V = Very, L = Locally):

4.3 The project area is currently bisected twice by a woodland path and thus three areas were studied for botany. The eastern highest portion, the middle and biggest portion, and the lower portion, also fairly sizeable.

4.4 **The Eastern Higher Section** will become sandwiched between the buildings and the tallest part of the tubing ramp, but may not otherwise be much affected:

Bramble	A
Wood Avens	O
Meadow Buttercup	R
Broad-leaved Willowherb	R
Cleavers	O
Creeping Buttercup	O
Herb Robert	LO
Nettle	O
Wavy Bittercress	VLO
Rough Meadowgrass	R
Smooth Meadowgrass	R
Himalayan Balsam (Alien)	O-F (actively being pulled by site staff)
Spanish Bluebell (Alien)	O
<i>Brachythecium rutabulum</i>	F
<i>Kindbergia praelonga</i>	F
Sycamore sapling (Alien)	1
Hawthorn sapling	1
Wild Cherry whip	1
Holly small bush	1
Elder small bush	1

Bordered by Ash trees, Beech trees, Sycamore and Hawthorn outside the proposal area.

4.5 **The Middle Section** is between the two sections of path and is shown on the plans to host the highest part of the tubing ramp as well as most of descending run of the experience.

Bramble	F
Wood Avens	O
Creeping Buttercup	O
Meadow Buttercup	R
Broad Buckler Fern	O
Lady Fern	R
Soft Rush	R
Broad-leaved Willowherb	VLO
Short-fruited Willowherb	VLO
Nettle	F
Smooth Meadow-grass	R
Holly sapling	1
Hawthorn sapling	1
English Oak sapling	1
Sycamore sapling (Alien)	1

Norway Maple (Alien)	2
Elder (prone tree 18cm dbh)	1
Spanish Bluebell (Alien)	VO
Himalayan Balsam (Alien)	O-F ((actively being pulled by site staff)
<i>Brachythecium rutabulum</i>	F
<i>Kindbergia praelonga</i>	F

At the west end there is an area of impeded drainage just before the path where are found a rich little habitat. There will be waterlogging in winter as this the surface collection of water moving downslope. NB after the path the slope is dry with water moving through the soil rather than at the surface.

Creeping Buttercup	LF
Bittersweet	LO
Enchanter's Nightshade	LO

Bordered by Silver Birch trees, Ash trees, Beech trees, Sycamore and Hawthorn outside the proposal area.

- 4.6 **The Western Lower Section downslope of the path** the experience will end in a canopy to finish the experience, where parents can wait, with connecting paths. The existing path is of course being diverted into this new path system. Note the existing path is simply a soil path indicated with an informal natural log edge in places. There is a little waterlogging at the foot of the slope, on bare ground.

Enchanter's Nightshade	LA
Wood Avens	F
Rough Meadowgrass	LO
Lady Fern	R
Pendulous Sedge	LO
Meadow Buttercup	R
Soft Rush	O
Creeping Buttercup	O-F
Bramble	F
Broad-leaved Willowherb	R
Nettle	OLF
Spanish Bluebell (Alien)	O
Himalayan Balsam (Alien)	F
Hawthorn sapling	O
Grey Willow sapling	R
Snowberry (alien)	LF

There are mature Beech and Silver Birch in this area

- 4.7 **Bryophytes.** Tentative DAFOR given for all area. *Polytrichastrum formosum* vlf, *Atrichum undulatum* (ovlf), *Brachythecium rutabulum* (f), *Hypnum cf cupressiforme* (olf), *Kindbergia praelonga* (f), *Bryum capillare* (ovlf), *Mnium hornum* (vlf), *Dicranella heteromalla* (lo), *Lophocolea heterophylla* (ovlf), *Metzgeria furcata* (ovlf), *Pellia epiphylla* (vlf).

- 4.8 A walk around the **rest of the fenced Zip World woodland** revealed other damp and open areas replete with Buttercups, some bare areas under shading Beech and a marshy seepage line north of the pedestrian gate to the steam area. Other plants located include Creeping Soft-grass, Ivy, Yellow Pimpernel, Field Horsetail, Great Willowherb, Rosebay Willowherb and native Bluebell. Note the Bluebell determinations in this survey were based on leaf width and number and arrangement of developing seed pods. Along the western boundary fence just inside the side grows a patch of Pale Willowherb – it grows in damp, shady places and is our regions least common Willowherb. In the south west corner of the site is another patch of Snowberry and that is an invasive alien, though not on the Schedule 9 list.
- 4.9 **Just outside the Zip World's southern boundary** next to the parkland path is a clearing of bramble and tall herb looking very much the same habitat as the one in the project site.
- 4.10 **Fungi:** The best survey period for woodland fungi is the autumn so this cannot be a complete list. However the following common species were recorded on logs and stumps Turkey Tails *Trametes versicolor*, Bleeding Oak Crust *Stereum gausaptum*, Artist's Bracket or similar *Ganoderma sp* and King Aldred's Cakes *Daldinia concentrica*. Dog Vomit Slime Mould *Fuligo septica* was found just outside the boundary fence on a large stump by the stream. Bootlace of Honey Fungus *Armillaria mellea* found on dead log. The site staff report Chicken of the Woods *Laetiporus sulphureus*. This area of the fenced site contains more logs than the other areas given it is a clearing in the wood.
- 4.11 **Invertebrates:** This was a very short sweep net session but it shows we have a damp woodland clearing and fallen trees habitat invertebrate community in this damp woodland clearing with fallen trees. The following were recorded:

Molluscs: Slugs *Arion rufus*, *Arion subfuscus*, *Arion fasciatus*, Smooth Glass Snail *Aegopinella nitidula*.

Bugs: *Philaenus spumarius* Common "Frogspit" Froghopper, the Creeping Buttercup Leafhopper *Eupteryx vittata* (3rd Greater Manchester record - found on a wide range of flowering plants, often in meadows and open woods, including Buttercup, Ground-ivy, Mint and Plantains. Prefers damp conditions – Naturespot), *Anthocoris nemorum* common Two-spotted Flower Bug, *Stenodoma calcarata* and Fern Bugs *Monalocoris filicis* and *Bryocoris pteridis*. *Grypocoris stysi* lives in woods on Nettles and umbellifers. A yellow Mirid nymph unknown also found.

Beetles: *Cantharis nigricans* a common Soldier Beetle of Heges, wood edge and flower meadows, liking umbellifers. *Hydrothassa marginella* the fairly Common Yellow-edged Creeping Buttercup Beetle, Raspberry Beetle *Byturus tomentosus* a fairly common beetle of Raspberries and Blackberries, and *Byturus ochraceus* a beetle strongly associated with Wood Avens Beetle whose known range in the NW does not extend much further north than Manchester. The last three beetles were all found on flowering Creeping Buttercup. The common Rove Beetle *Stenus impressus* was found – its habitats include woods and marshes. The common Black & Red Click Beetle *Athous haemorrhoidalis* lives in hedges, tall herbs and meadows so favours this clearing habitat. The smaller Click Beetle *Agriotes pallidulus* lives in grassland with trees and shrubs, again a wood edge/clearing dweller. The common weevil *Leiosoma deflexum* resembles a tiny Blackberry fruit but lives on Buttercups. The common

weevil *Strophosoma melanogrammum* and is associated with Oak and Hazel fruit and the ground layer. The common fungus beetle *Octotemnus glabriculus* seems attracted to both Turkey Tails and Chicken of the Woods.

Butterflies and Moths. It is not known which Butterfly species use this woodland clearing but there are likely to be several common species such as the Speckled Wood Butterfly and many moth species.

Sawfly caterpillars species unknown.

Centipedes, Millipedes, Woodlice *Tachypodoiulus niger*, Common Striped Woodlouse.

Spiders and Harvestmen *Enoplognatha ovata*, *Paidiscura pallens*, *Metellina menzei*, *Neriene peltata*, *Mitopus morio*.

Tinies: Springtail *Dicyrtomina ornata*, Large Nettle Weevil *Microlophium carnosum* and Mites *Galumnidae*.

True Flies –Scarce Pufftail Hoverfly *Sphegina verecunda*, a fly of damp woods probably needing fallen trees and wetland vegetation – there are just 9 NW England for the Scarce Pufftail with three Greater Manchester records, this record, one in Philips Park Prestwich and the other in Cotteril Clough by Manchester Airport and the Hoverfly is considered widespread but localised. Considering Hoverflies are the best recorded of flies this record is a notable one.

The common Crane flies noted were *Phylidorea ferruginea* (mostly a fly of ponds and ditches) and *Ormosia cf hederæ* (damaged sample - if correct likes damp woodlands).

The less well-studied flies area Picture-winged Flies *Opomyza germinationis*, *Lauxaniidae* *Meiosimyza rorida*, Long-legged Flies *Dolichopodidae*, the probably fairly common Dance Fly *Rhaphomyia nigripennis* (this is just the 3rd Greater Manchester record)(it seems to favour umbellifers in a variety of habitats), Lesser Dung Flies *Sphaeroceridae*, Grass Flies *Chloropidae*, Fungus Gnats *Sciaridae* and *Mycetophilidae* and *Chironomus* midges.

- 4.6 **Fish and amphibians:** there are no waterbodies on site and no amphibians were found under debris. However we know that Smooth Newt and Common Toads breed within Heaton Park Reservoir which lies 200m to the north. Common Toad, a Priority Species, has been found in the Zip World grounds by site staff. Whilst the stream from Heaton Park Reservoir runs nearby and watercourses are a Priority Habitat there is no need for any further ecological consideration in that respect in relation to this project.
- 4.7 **Reptiles:** Nothing seen under logs and the habitat structure is wrong. Reptiles (other than dumped Terrapins) are virtually unknown in Bury District and Heaton Park (and are unconfirmed where such vague records exist).
- 4.8 **Breeding, wintering and migratory birds:** List of birds recorded during the survey by Steven Higginbottom:
Wren (Amber) 3 territories 1 West, 1 Northeast and 1 in project site.

Robin 3 Territories 1 Northwest, 1 South, 1 in project site with 2 Robins bringing food feeding young.

Great Tit 2 foraging inside project site flying to and from South side and in rest of Zip World.

Blackcap 3 territories 1 Northwest, 1 Northeast, 1 Southeast.

Jay Feeding recently fledged North to Northwest just inside boundary fence and outside.

Mallards (Amber) just outside North of boundary fence near Brook.

Tawny Owl (Amber) just outside North boundary fence.

Woodpigeons (Amber) in tree canopy.

Blackbirds 1 North, 2 West feeding young just outside boundary fence. 3 birds foraging inside boundary fence.

Ringed-necked Parakeets (alien) in tree canopy in and outside boundary fence.

Magpies 4 West.

Goldcrest 2 singing , 1 West 1 South.

Nuthatch 1 West 1 Northeast.

Tree Creeper 1 West 2 Northeast

Blue Tits foraging in and around Zip World.

Carion Crow tree canopy.

Dunnock (Section 41 Amber) foraging North

Chaffinch 2 1 North 1 Northeast both singing.

Mistle Thrush (Red) North

Stock Dove (Amber) 2 in tree canopy.

Song Thrush (Section 41 Amber) singing Northwest.

Summary of recorded bird interest

The shrub area (with prone dead tree trunks) in the tubing experience proposal site has Robins feeding young. Wren has it as part of its territory so potentially could have a nest in or near by. Wrens build several nests then the female chooses which one to use. Therefore there could be nests present but not used. Blue tit and Great Tit seen foraging in the shrub area as well as the rest of the area. The site may be too disturbed by Zip World activities to be of much value to nesting birds and this site is directly adjacent the picnic area.

- 4.9 **Bats:** There are no trees or structures in the project site that could be used by hibernating or roosting Bats, although large trees fringe the site and there is no intention to disturb these trees. The insects that rise above this site of an evening will be part of the local Bat population's feeding resource. The plot is part of the local feeding mosaic available to Bats.

- 4.10 **Mammals:** During the survey visit the presence of Badgers was ruled out as there were no signs within the fenced Zip World area. Grey Squirrels were seen. Rabbits were seen on the roadway outside and site staff confirmed they come in the fenced area. The fence is secure at the base and the only apparent openings are beneath the double entrance gate and the rear pedestrian gate. Mammals such as Fox and Hedgehog might slip in these areas.

The NBN Atlas records of Hedgehogs in Heaton Park. **Hedgehogs are a Red Data Near Threatened Section 41 Priority Species** of Principal Importance and the Local Planning authority has a legal Biodiversity Duty to seek to conserve the species. Voles, Shrews, Wood Mouse and Brown Rat may occur.

When the fencing is replaced (part of a separate scheme) it is vital to include (e.g. in the gates) a gap small enough for mammals to squeeze in and out but to exclude the youths who vandalise the site.

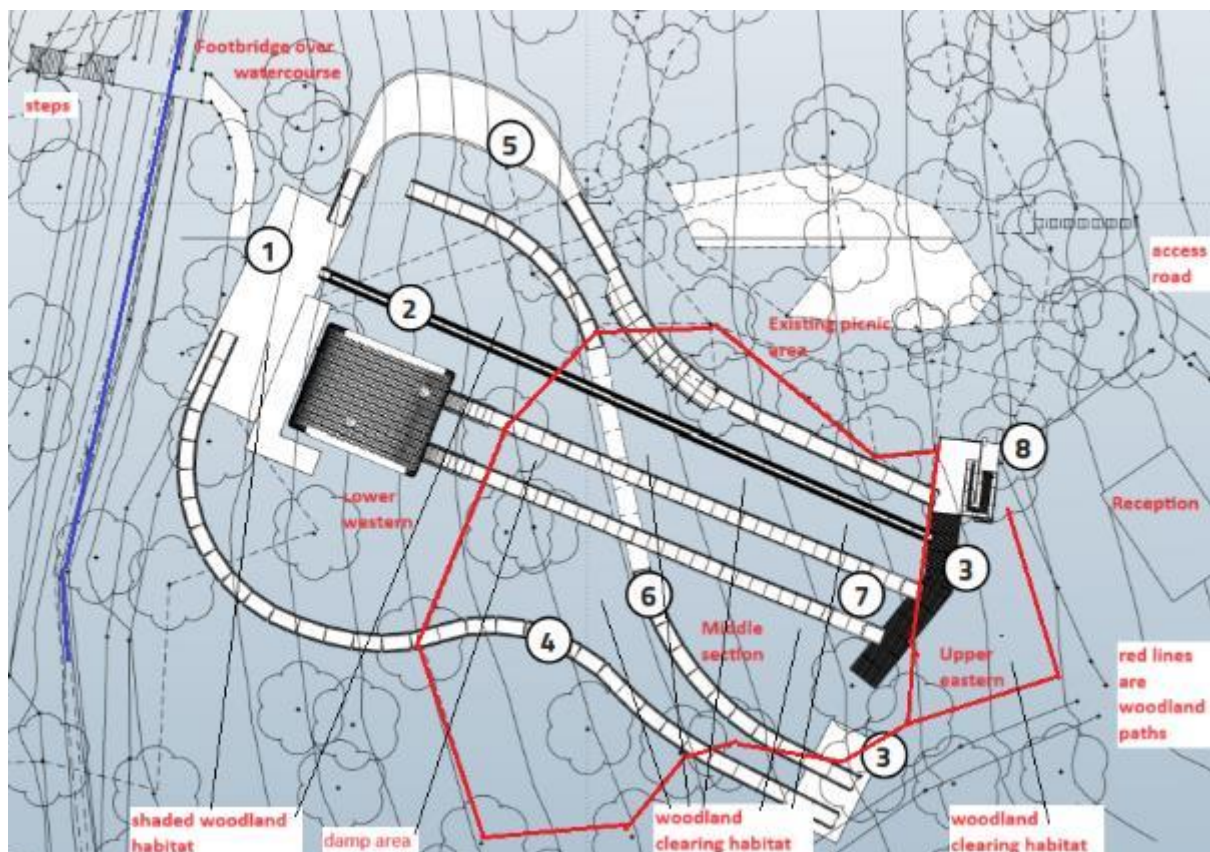
- 4.11 **Himalayan Balsam is a Schedule 9 alien invasive** plant species which is being managed by site staff. It is throughout the project area and some has been pulled so cannot be mapped. Contractors working on the scheme need to have biosecurity precautions in place to ensure no Himalayan Balsam seeds leave the site, and no other invasive aliens arrive on dirty boots and machines.
- 4.12 **Spanish Bluebell** can hybridise with native Bluebell so it is best to dig out the bulbs and burn the plant and its seed pods. This will need repeating.
- 4.13 It is important to dig out and burn the **alien invasive Snowberry**. This will need repeating.

5 DEVELOPMENT CONSTRAINTS

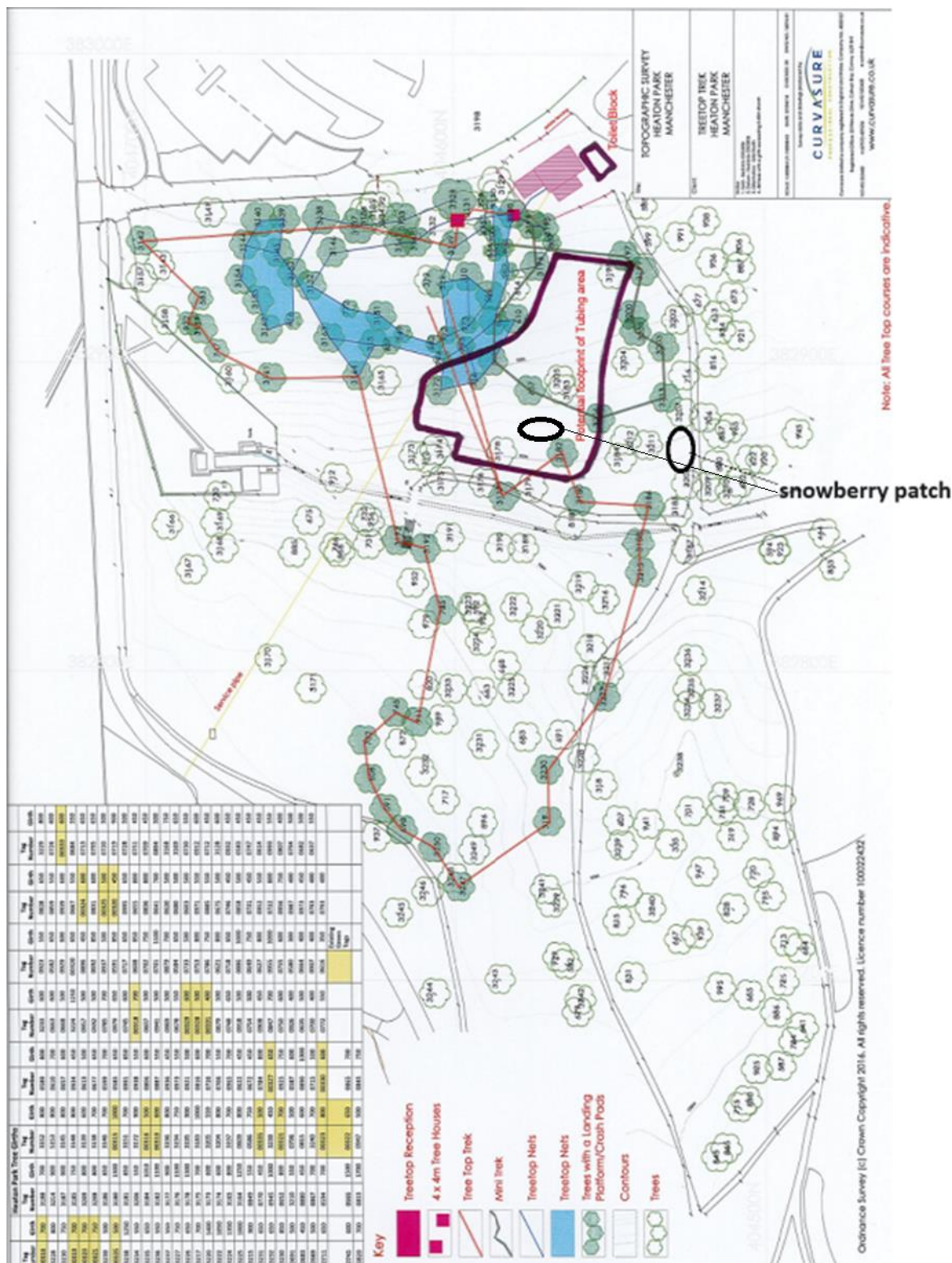
- 5.1 The site and Zip World woodland is UKhab W1f7 Other Lowland Mixed Deciduous Woodland. It is not a natural English woodland given the presence of Beech. It has already been identified by Natural England as a Priority Habitat and thus its conservation is required by the Local Authority as planning authority and site owner.
- 5.2 If the site is to be developed for the project then there needs to be a solution for Biodiversity Net Gain. This largely includes the loss and deterioration of the woodland clearing habitat, and also some more shaded woodland floor. There is a planned impact on one tree of “small size” - a prone Elder tree pushed over by a falling large tree. Whilst a sort of degraded woodland floor habitat may continue to exist under the tubing experience slide netting we need to accept that the impact area needs a BNG solution. Whether or not the new paths are to be built paths or soil paths may affect the BNG calculation. The full BNG metric needs to be used as this is a Priority habitat. Some of this is discussed from 5.6 onwards.
- 5.3 A suitable planning condition needs to be applied in relation to clearing any of the vegetation on site or the logs and tree bases in respect of nesting birds. Birds do not just nest in trees and shrubs.
- 5.4 Clearing the site also poses a potential danger to Hedgehogs. Therefore a suitable search must be designed by an ecologist in order to ensure the site is cleared with full regards to the safety of Priority Species Hedgehogs (and amphibians including Priority Species Common Toad) immediately prior to or alongside the clearance outlined above.
- 5.5 There is no reason to remove any of the scraped surface off site. The logs and tree bases, habitat for nesting birds, fungi and mosses, can be placed elsewhere on site (not in any flush, seepage area or buttercup hollow), preferably where there is sunlight reaching the woodland floor in the summer months. This may mean taking it to the northern part of the site. Ferns and sedges could be moved by spade and wheelbarrow.
- 5.6 In order to improve the condition of the woodland within the fenced area the following should be removed – Sycamore seedlings and young trees removed , Norway Maple saplings removed, Scots Pines saplings removed, Snowberry scrub removed and attacked until

regrowth ceases, Spanish Bluebells removed and new plants appearing removed, Himalayan Balsam removed and similarly fought.

- 5.7 It may be appropriate to create a barrier of mixed native and thorny shrubs (not Blackthorn which suckers) inside the boundary fence once the new fencing from the other scheme is in place.
- 5.8 Planting native woodland wildflowers which grow and flower before canopies open should improve the condition of this woodland.
- 5.9 Given there are seepage lines in the north of the site the diversity of the woodland habitat could be improved with the addition of a woodland pond.
- 5.10 At the far west of Zip World, beyond the barrier fence and stream but in the vicinity of the treetop trail there are alien Rhododendrons. An agreement should be sought to secure their removal (outside the bird breeding season).
- 5.11 The Pale Willowherb by the western boundary fence should be translocated out of danger from the fence renewal project so a safe damp, shady spot.



Habitats within the project (above)





A similar project (above)



Eastern Upper Section (above)



Eastern Upper Section (above)



Path dividing Eastern Upper Section and Middle Section, showing Middle Section (above)



Middle Section (above)



Middle Section, typical of this woodland clearing showing tree base and fallen trunks (above)



Path diving Western Lower Section and Middle Section (above)



Lower Western Section also showing one of two Snowberry patches centre rear (above).



Western Lower Section (North part) Bare ground below the shading canopy (above)



Western Lower Section from beyond the stream (showing Rhododendrons and Balsam (above)



The single tree, an Elder dbh 18cm, requiring removal (above)(Middle Section)



Pale Willowherb by boundary fence (above)

END