



## Higher Moors accessible hide replacement Design & Access Statement

Higher Moors Nature Reserve offers locals and visitors with a rich opportunity to engage with nature through a rich mosaic of habitats and rare wetland species. However, in its current state the reserve is not able to cater for people of all abilities due to physical constraints including path widths, path materials, a lack of passing locations and the inaccessibility of the bird hides. At the Wildlife Trust, we believe nature should be accessible for all, and so are embarking on a (long-term) project to make Higher Moors more accessible to all users for mental and physical wellbeing. This includes (but is not limited to) wheelchair users, parents with push-chairs and users of crutches.

The Stephen Sussex hide is one of two bird hides overlooking Porth Hellick Pool. Porth Hellick Pool is the largest freshwater body on St Mary's and is fringed by common reed, which makes good breeding habitat for species such as gadwall, coot, water rail and sedge warbler and is nationally famous for its rare vagrant birds. In the spring, this is one of the best places to experience Scilly's dawn chorus, including warbler species, crests, tits, finches and thrushes. Rare species are frequently spotted from the bird hides, and as-such the Stephen Sussex hide has become one of the favourite spots for birding on Scilly.

At present, the hide is does not conform to accessibility standards. The width of the entrance door is a mere 730mm, short of the 775mm minimum width required for existing buildings by the *Building Regulations 2010: Access to and use of buildings*<sup>1</sup>, making it difficult – if not impossible – for wheelchair users and those lesser able to enter the hide. Once inside, the lack of knee space on the pool-side wall makes it highly difficult for wheelchair users to move close to the viewing slots, excluding them the same opportunities to see and enjoy wildlife.

Contrastingly, the proposed new Stephen Sussex hide will be much more accessible. The external door width will measure 1030mm, surpassing the minimum requirement for new projects<sup>1</sup>, and making a much more comfortable entrance. Inside, a central designated accessible section allows knee space for wheelchair users, allowing for a much more comfortable use of the viewing slots.

Due to the nature of the height between the boardwalk and viewing platform, it would not be possible to include a slope as the gradient would be far too steep. Therefore, steps will be used to access the viewing platform. These will be designed in a manner to make them as assessable to as many as possible, by following the Paths for All guidance<sup>2</sup>. Non-slip surfaces and contrasting nosing on the steps will be used.

The construction of the hide, screen, and viewing platform will use the most sustainable methods and materials as possible. The required materials and equipment will be driven from the road into an adjacent pasture field, where they will then be carried by hand over to the hide site, resulting in minimal damage to surrounding vegetation. The

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weatherboard planks used for the new hide and screen will be 100% FSC or PEFC certified timber, of a natural wood colour to match the existing hide. The material for the viewing platform will be black recycled plastic planks, identical to the ones used in the existing boardwalk through Higher Moors. The overall design of the hide was chosen due to its similarity to the current hide and the ability to blend into the landscape.

The posts for the hide will be driven into the mud using a post-driver, without requiring any excavations and thus minimising the ground disturbance on the site.

We hope that this proposal for a more accessible replacement hide will be the first stage in a suite of accessibility improvements for Higher Moors, enabling Scilly's outstanding pockets of wildlife to be enjoyed sustainably by as many as possible.



### References

1. HM Government (2020) *The Building Regulations 2010: Access to and use of buildings. Approved Document M: Volume 2 – Buildings other than dwellings*. Available at: [https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/60b0ea89d3bf7f43560e324a/Approved\\_Document\\_M\\_vol\\_2.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/60b0ea89d3bf7f43560e324a/Approved_Document_M_vol_2.pdf) [Accessed 26 June 2024]
2. Paths for All and Sensory Trust (2023) *Outdoor Accessibility Guidance: Supporting inclusive outdoor access in the UK*. Available at: <https://www.pathsforall.org.uk/resources/resource/outdoor-accessibility-guidance-download> [Accessed 18 July 2024]