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BROCKWELL PARK

Brockwell Park 23-05-17.Docx

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01 June 2023

TAL



1 CONDITIONS

The site was visited on 17 May 2023. A plan of the site is provided in Figure 1-1 for reference.



Figure 1-1 Plan of the site

At the time of the visit an event was being installed and approximately 50% of the perimeter fencing had been put in place. A good deal of trackway had also been incorporated.



Figure 1-2 Trackway, installations and fencing being installed in Red Gate area

Grass growth across the park at the time of the visit was generally vigorous. This was indicated in part by the profusion of grass clumps in the surface following a recent mowing operation and the generally taller and dense vegetation in particular around trees and in the perimeters.



Figure 1-3 Vigorous growth in perimeters and an area of profuse grass clippings

On the football pitch in the southern field (white outline in Figure 1-1) only the goalmouth and the football pitch showed significant ground cover losses with typical patches of bare ground about 1 metre across.



Figure 1-4 Eastern and western goal mouth areas of football pitch

The trackway being laid down obscured the condition of the ground beneath but, on revisiting those locations noted during my last visit on 5 July 2022, it was apparent that a very substantial recovery had been achieved.



Figure 1-5 Area affected by trackway installation in July 2022 (left) and May 2023

Over such a large area and diversity of species is inevitable, but the main grass component of the sward was typically perennial ryegrass. This grew in a dense and vigorous fashion in almost all areas. Sward height at the time the visit in areas obviously subject to mowing was around 75 to 100 mm. Few other grass species were noted amongst the perennial ryegrass. Broadleaf species included plantain and dandelion which were frequent.



Figure 1-6 Typical appearance of the sward in un-renovated area

2 DISCUSSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Brockwell Park would appear to be established on a deeper and more mature soil profile than many other London parks, including Clapham Common, which tend to have shallower and less fertile soils. The soils at Brockwell are significantly more fertile and water retentive. This has encouraged vigorous grass growth and also the development of the splendid assemblage of mature trees. It is not unlikely that the soil profile is that of the original landscape prior to urbanisation.

Even considering these favourable ground conditions, I was extremely surprised at the degree of recovery that has been achieved following what appeared to be the devastation of the event last July. I'm not sure what renovation methods were used but even if much of the area had been restored with much more costly turf, the success of the reinstatement has been considerable. Recovery from seed only to the extent noted would have been spectacular and congratulations are due in some direction.

If the recovery was achieved with turf this will have necessitated the laying of the material much later in the season, perhaps in October, so that the significant damage noted in July 2022 will have remained visible for several months afterwards. From seed, areas would not have begun to recover until late September at the earliest. The perception of these processes and their implications amongst the users of the Park would be of interest.

Unlike Clapham common which has a generally low nutrient status on which enhanced biodiversity might more easily be achieved, the fertile conditions at Brockwell suggest that a more monocultural community of species may be expected. Accordingly, renovation work in the aftermath of events and using either turf or seed should consist of the use, predominantly, of perennial ryegrass. This is the most rapidly and readily germinating of the grasses and it is very tolerant of wear. Areas established with this species would also be more compatible with those not requiring treatment and so the uniformity and consistency of the surfaces overall may be continued. Conversely, in areas where greater biodiversity may be aspired to, the removal of topsoil would be one of the most rapid and effective means of achieving this.

It was noted that the football pitch had been verti-drained at some point during the early spring. This will be beneficial and will further increase its resilience in relation to usage. However, the pitch is sloping across the direction of play by a substantial degree. Its development as anything other than a casual playing surface would therefore require much more substantial earthworks to be undertaken.

The land as a whole should, therefore, be maintained in the manner of pasture, the mower replicating as far as possible the grazing of animals such as sheep and deer. This contrasts with the circumstances at Clapham Common where a meadow vegetation should be aspired to.

Signed:

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Tim Lodge', with a long, sweeping horizontal stroke extending to the right.

Dr Tim Lodge
Consultant



1 June 2023