

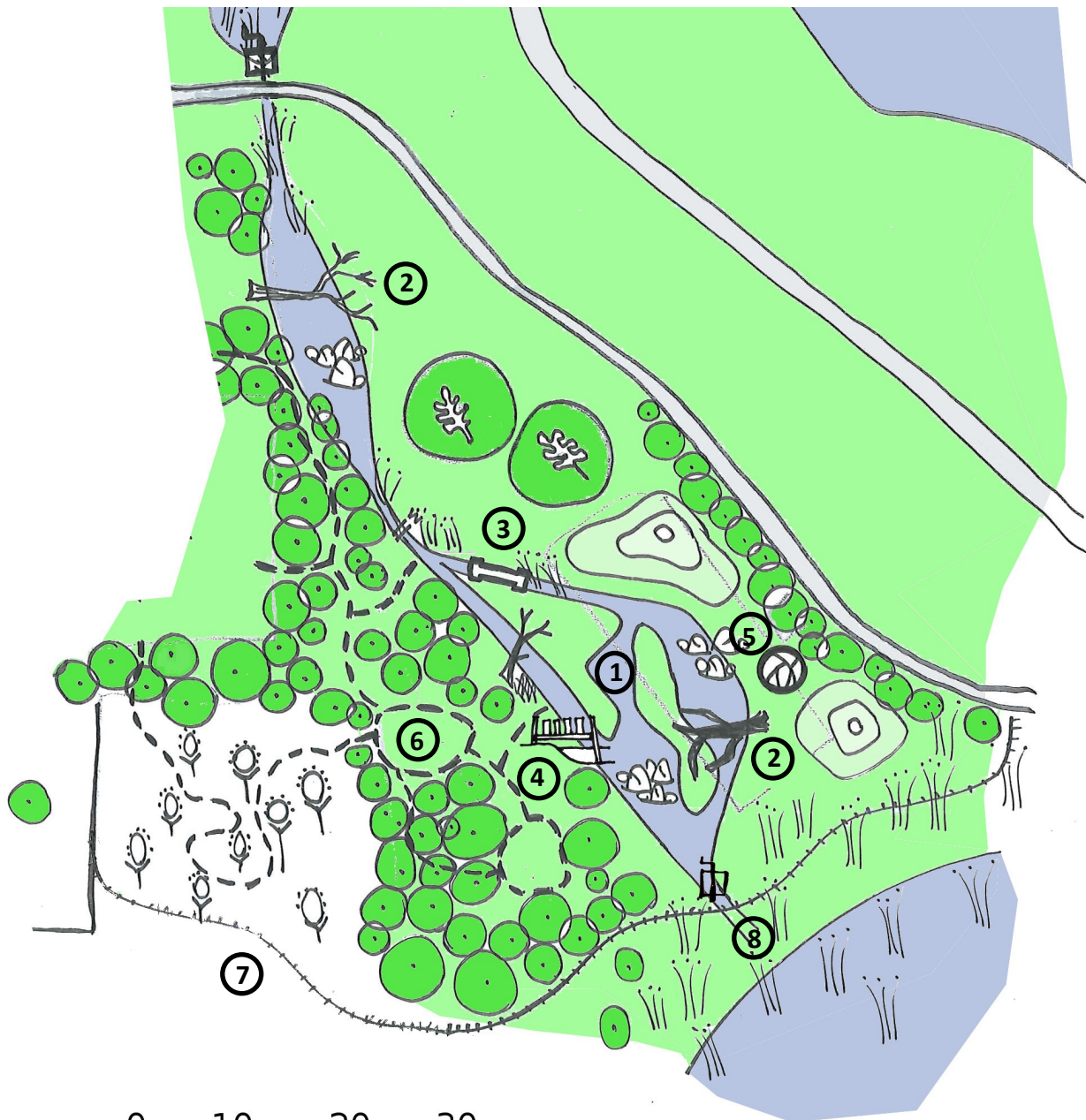
Old Moor: Secret Water Zone

The current site and future vision

The site here is currently a flat area of rough grassland. Features include a small ditch edging the thicket that borders the current play area and two mature oak trees. The vision is to create a watery playable landscape—mirroring those on the continent—but a first for the UK. Channels with 400mm of water will weave round islands, reached by scrambling through tunnels or along fallen tree trunks. A willow dwelling will be found in the hillocky area, and excitement added by a jetty-like treehouse reached through ribbons of paths through the thickets.

Play elements

- Play element 1: Secret water area
- Play element 2: Tree-trunk bridge and boulders
- Play element 3: Tunnel
- Play element 4: Jetty treehouse
- Play element 5: Willow dwellings
- Play element 6: Clearings and pathways
- Play element 7: Brush fence
- Play element 8: Sluice to control depth of water.



0 10 20 30

Scale (m)

Old Moor Secret Water Zone

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Old Moor: Secret Water Zone



Construction overview

Create water and mud play, by repurposing the existing overflow channel between the large pond to the north and the smaller pond at far south of the site. Fit penfold sluice at top to allow filling with water and at the and bottom to control depth.

Water play area will be sculpted by excavator to create a network of mounds, pools and channels with a concrete tunnel, two tree trunk bridge crossings, boulders and stepping stones. Base of channels to be compacted hardcore base, lined with pond-lining layer topped with 200mm pea gravel to create firm base for channel bottom. Sides defined by variety of natural edgings, timber, boulders, sawn posts.

On western bank entry points will be defined by gaps created in trees and shrubs. A jetty treehouse will be created to give another entrance to the channels. The woodland here will be managed to create network of paths and clearings. The timber and wire fence between the formal play area and the woodland to be removed by RSPB. Openings created through to the teasel field.

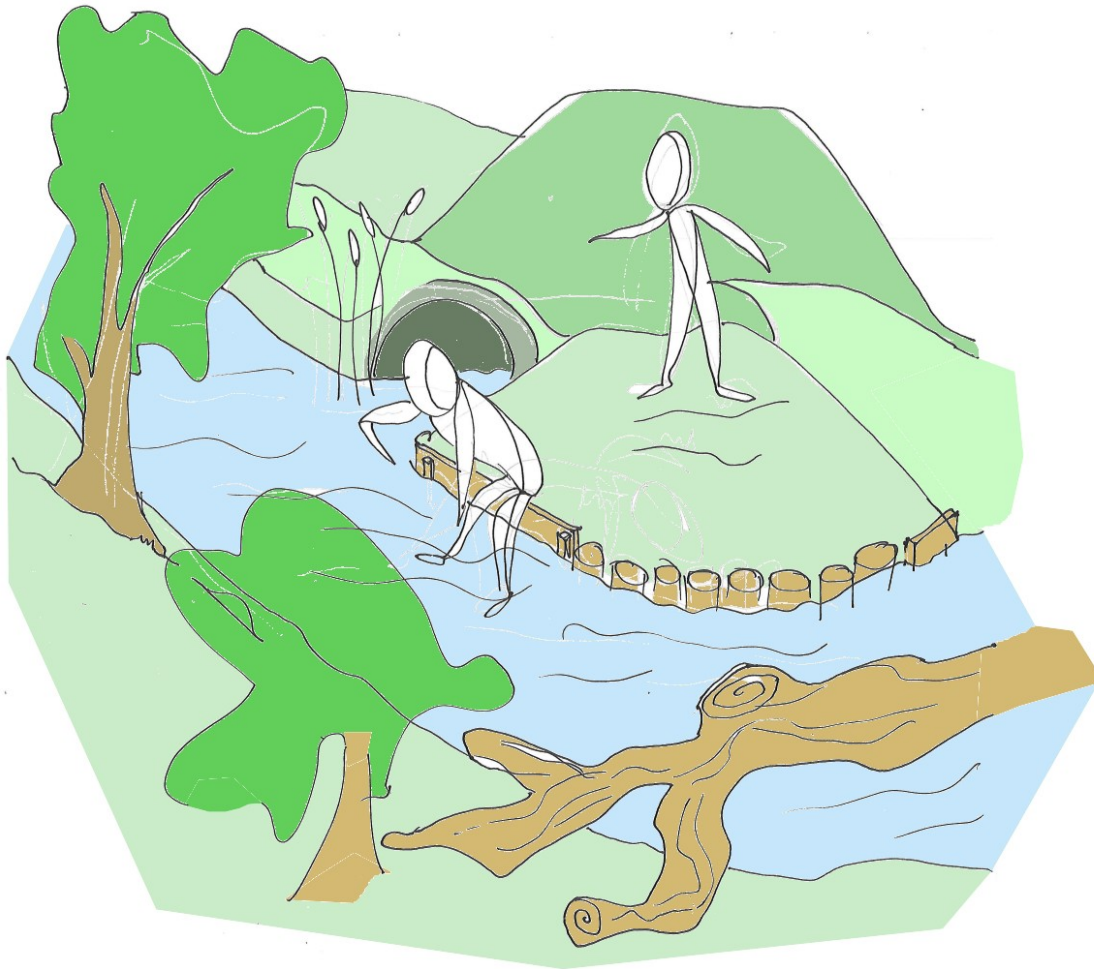
A brash fence to be created to edge Secret Water to ensure children do not enter the pond at the sought of the site here. The brash fence to run from the teasel field and orchard corner, through the teasel field, along the southern pond and connecting to the main path on western edge of Secret Water

A willow dwelling created between the new mounds and hillocks on the eastern side.

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Play element 1: **Secret water**

Concept

On the eastern side of the current playground, we will create a sinuous loop of channels of shallow water, ringed by mounds and fringed with reeds. Using an existing sluice gate at the head and a new sluice gate (play element 7) installed bottom of this system, the water will be able to be topped up and regulated to a maximum depth of 400mm. Tree trunk bridges, boulders and tunnels will create routes across and along the channels. A jetty treehouse will give views over the water.

Construction

The outline and contours of the channels and mounds, will be formed and profiled to smooth running curves by excavator, and the swamp channels will be created to naturally hold ground-water. The base of the channels will have 100mm compacted hardcore, then covered with Flexiliner pond liner and 150mm pea gravel mixed with topsoil from site. Fill material produced will be used on-site to create mounds. Fallen tree bridges and boulders will be installed. The Secret Water perimeter will be reseeded. The edges of the channels will be reinforced in places with a variety of timber edgings, timber rounds driven into the ground, planks retained by driven pegs etc. and replanted with reeds and willows.

Play value

Inspired by wild play areas in the Netherlands and Ireland (eg: those designed by Sigrun Lobst), we feel it is essential that children are enabled to play safely with watery, muddy areas at Old Moor. Key to this idea is to enable children to connect in an immersive way with nature—rather than viewing it from afar. Conversations with adults over the age of 40 demonstrate that this type of experience was a common feature of their childhoods, but has been lost for children today.

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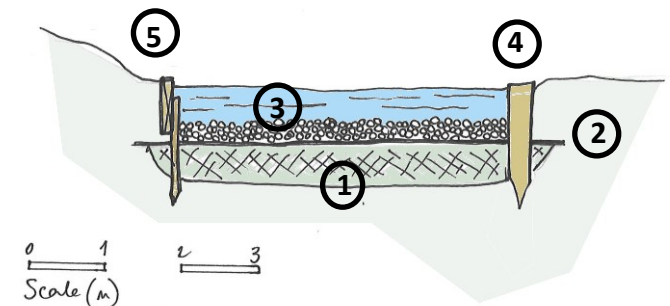
Play element 1: secret water

Construction notes for secret water

Item	Material	Workmanship/Assembly	Quantity / notes
1.	Hardcore/MOT	Into channel bottom, compacted	30m3
2.	Flexiliner	3 ply Flexiliner pondliner https://www.pondkeeper.co.uk/15yr-pondliner-18x15/18x15+pondliner	300m2
3.	Pea gravel	10mm low grade pea gravel	100 tonnes
4.	Timber rounds	150mm tanalised fenceposts 1.2m	100 no.
3.	Timber planking	200x21 3m lengths	60m running

Management and maintenance notes for cargo net:

Item	Action	Method/ Frequency	Quantity / notes
A.	Channels	Visual check daily and remove litter. Monitor levels of mud at the bottom of channel and keep accident book to note frequency of any problematic 'stuck in the mud' incidents.	
B.	Mounds and surrounding area	Check turf condition. Annually for wear/ erosion. Re-patching with turf / seeding in autumn as required	
C.	Water	Drain water channels of all standing water, rake organic matter from base and remove any litter and allow to channel to refill. Monthly Monitor (and explore testing) the lake water in high use seasons for notifiable pathogens / levels of pollution. May and July.	



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Play element 2: tree trunk bridges

Concept

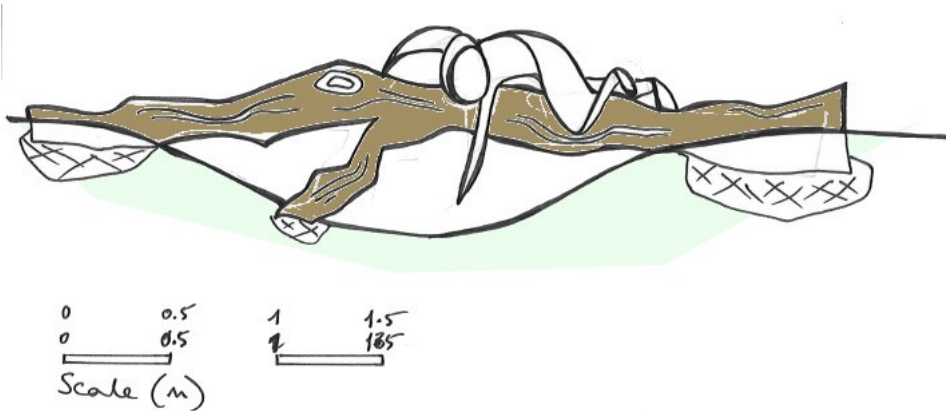
Spanning the channels in the Secret Water will be three tree trunk bridges, creating adventurous routes across the channels.

Construction

3-5m long tree trunks, preferably with one branch in order to rest on 3 points, set onto 300mm compacted hardcore base or (1:3:6) concrete haunch where necessary. At no point will the tallest fall height from the structure be higher than 1.5m from ground. The end / edges of remaining branches are to be 45 degree chamfered and bark removed where this is loose/peeling. Upright side branches shall be removed.

Play value

The fallen tree bridges will serve as one of the most exciting features of the Secret Water Zone. These are crucial for allowing imaginative and real crossings into new worlds on the site. Children's physical skills will be safely stretched as they grip, balance, crawl, shuffle and perch. Above the mud and shallow water they can reach into the sky and feel part of the landscape like the birds above them. They will also act as markers on an exploratory journey around the Secret Water – creating destinations and adventures. We imagine stories here of outlaws, hiding in the reeds, fishermen catching treasure and admirals in charge if their ships



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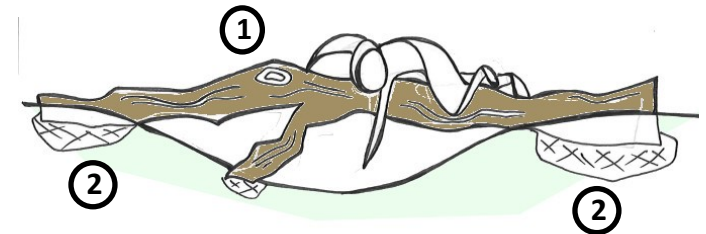
Play element 2: tree trunk bridges

Construction notes for tree trunk bridges:

Item	Material	Workmanship/Assembly	Quantity / notes
1.	Tree trunks	3-5m long. Ensure side branches below 100mm in diameter are removed. All branch ends should be cut square and the cut edges chamfered to 45 degrees to 10mm minimum depth. When the tree trunk has been set in final location/ position ensure that any upward pointing branches are cut off at the trunk. Ensure that angles between branches and stem are not more acute than 45 degrees and so avoid the potential for limb trapping accidents.	3
2.	Compacted hardcore and / or lean mix concrete base 300mm	Topsoil beneath intended support point excavated and subsoil compacted to create stable formation. MoT Type 1 / 803 subbase material to be compacted onto formation to a depth of 300mm. If deemed necessary a concrete haunch will be created: (1:3:6 x 100mm deep) to be used where anchorage on a slope is required.	

Maintenance and management notes for tree trunk bridges:

Item	Description	Method/ Frequency	Quantity / notes
A.	Tree trunks	Check for peeling bark and splits/ snags and remove. Monthly Check for rotting and other damage . Annually	
B.	Compacted hardcore and / or lean mix concrete base 300mm	Check tree trunk is solidly set in foundations. Monthly	



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Play element 3: tunnel

Concept

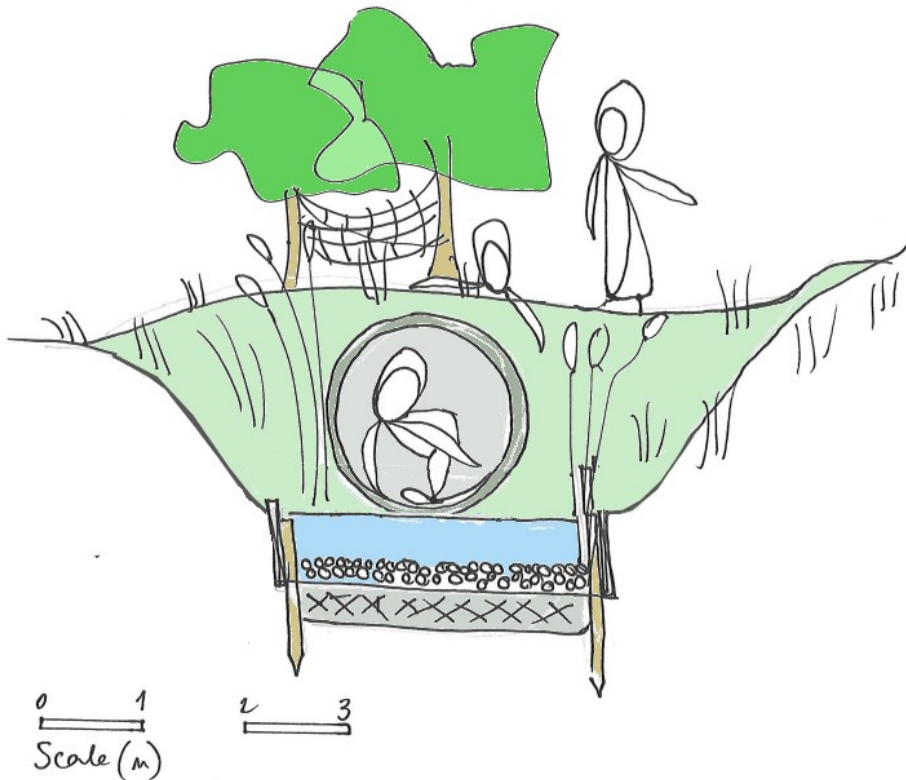
Adding a further layer of interest to the Secret Water area, one channel routeway can only be navigated by clambering up through a tunnel. Lying just above the waterline, the tunnel joins two channels and gives a chance for children to crawl and scramble into new territory.

Construction

Two 1.2m diameter 1m long concrete pipe laid together to create 2m long tunnel, laid on a base of (1:2:4) concrete below.

Play value

Tunnels in play areas act as gateways to new areas - however they also give children the opportunity to gain the specific benefits realised from crawling. Playing in tunnels allows children to exercise their bodies in a unique way. Crawling builds up the foundation of reflex strength and the motion of moving one's hips and shoulders in coordination improves walking gait. Crawling, along with other types of outdoor play, increases stamina and endurance. Crawling has sensory as well as physical benefits; it's stimulating for a child's whole sensory system and as such 'resets' their nervous system and reduces the impact of stress.



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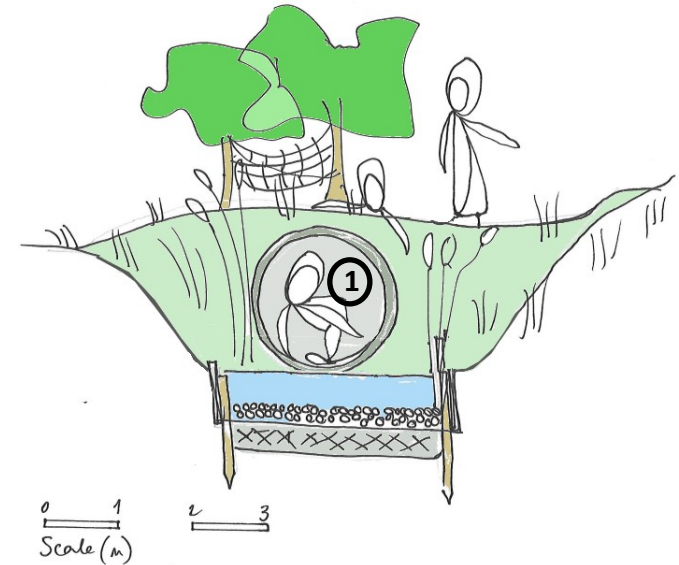
Play element 1: tunnel

Construction notes for tunnel:

Item	Material	Workmanship/Assembly	Quantity / notes
1.	Precast concrete pipe	https://www.drainagesuperstore.co.uk/product/marshalls-concrete-chamber-ring-1200mm-x-1000mm.html . Buried in soil above water level.	2 no.

Management and maintenance notes for tunnel:

Item	Action	Method/ Frequency	Quantity / notes
A.	Concrete pipe	Check for slime and detritus and remove. Monthly.	



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Play element 5: jetty treehouse

Concept

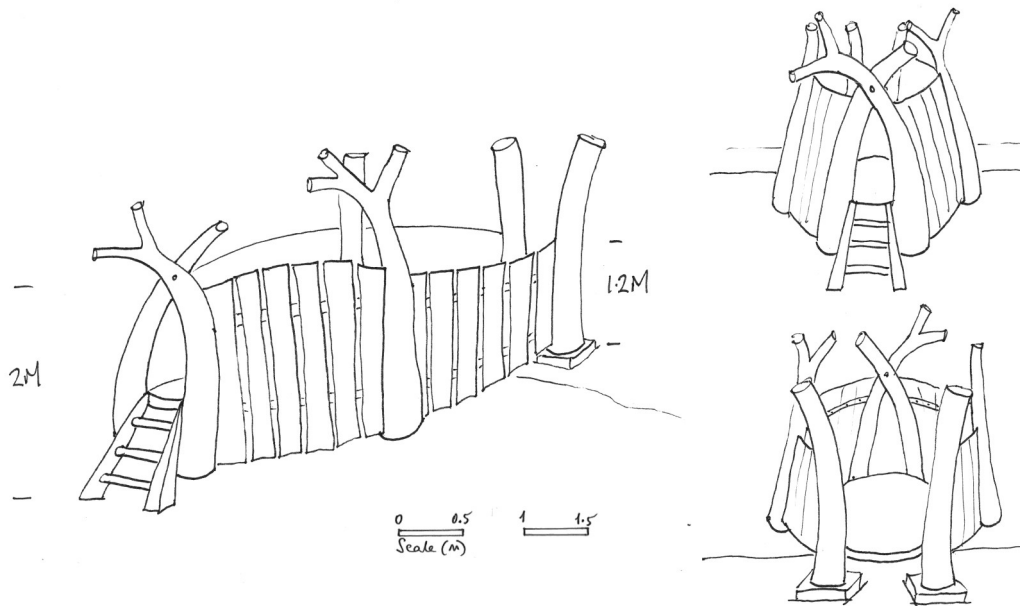
As children explore the thicket by the formal play area they might catch a glimpse of a wooden dwelling. A tiny stairway leading to doorway made from the arch of great branches. Once inside they find an oval 'room' edged with wooden palings, which opens at the far end to views to Secret Water. In this way the treehouse reveals itself as a jetty—with two supporting leg posts planted in the channel. Children can sit here with feet dangling in the water, use a bucket to fish or launch themselves off in the shallows to play.

Construction

The treehouse will be made from traditional greenwood working techniques by coppice worker and craftsmen Mike Carswell. His technique uses the natural forms and strengths of the wood. Components will be cleft from the log and hand finished. The height of the top of the steps and platform will be no greater than 600mm, ensuring there is no need for a safety surface. Gaps between palings will be made to exclude potential finger / limb entrapment.—An addition of a secured play bucket will be added to the platform at the waters edge.

Play value

In a watery landscape, structures that reach over the water add wonder and excitement. Children can enjoy the sensory experience of being near to the water and the excitement of being able to access it easily. This jetty treehouse also serves as a waterside hideaway and the perfect place to play pirates!



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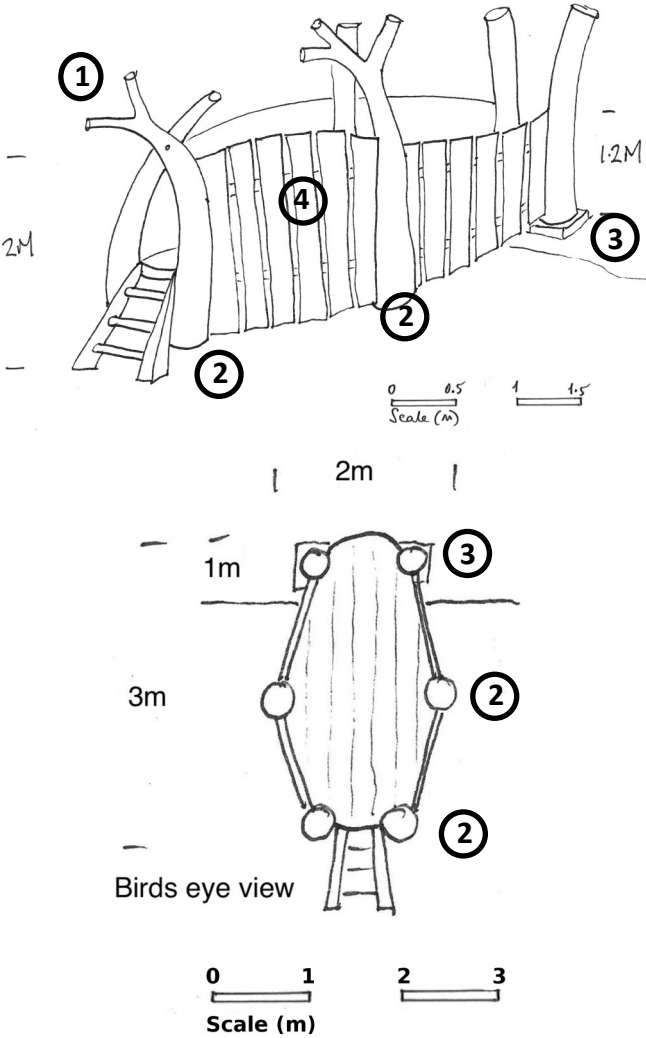
Play element 5: jetty treehouse

Construction notes for jetty treehouse:

Item	Material	Workmanship/Assembly	Quantity / notes
1.	The entire structure will be made from either Oak or Sweet Chestnut or a combination of both.	Traditional timber-framing techniques will ensure stability and durability, with appropriate bracing, joints and stainless steel fixings used throughout. All gaps between components and within Rospa guidelines. Rough-sawn floorboards provide grip where necessary and all other surfaces will be smooth and snag-free.	
2.	Four main posts	The posts will sunk into the ground and tamped in with natural stone to a depth of approximately 1m and are expected to last well beyond 20 years.	4
3.	Two posts at channel edge	Two posts rat the edge of the channel erst on natural stone, just above the water surface.	2
3.	Safety features	The height of the top of the platform will be no greater than 600mm, ensuring there is no need for a safety surface.	
4.	Sides	The sides are enclosed with cleft palings, gaps between each paling allow for light and viewing at from both floors.	

Maintenance and management jetty treehouse:

Item	Description	Method/ Frequency	Quantity / notes
A.	Check for loose timbers	Monthly. Repair or replace as necessary.	
B.	Check for slip, poke and trip hazards	Seasonal—Spring and Autumn. Check for leaf deposits (slips) or tree growth that might trip	



Old Moor Secret Water Zone

Play element 6: **willow dwelling**

Concept

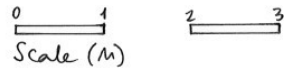
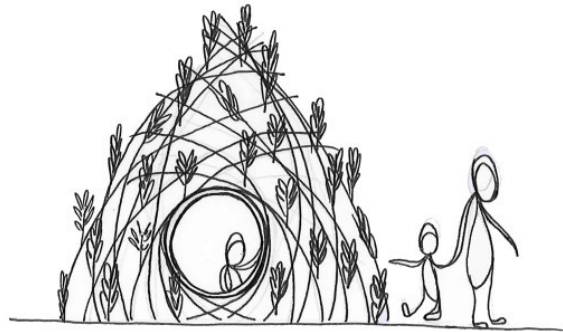
Nestled in mounds on the western shore of Secret Water, a skilled willow weaver, Joe Gregory from Creative with Nature, will create a willow dwelling. Echoing the surrounding watery landscape, the dwelling will also draw inspiration from the organic shapes of the weaver bird nests. This dwelling will allow children to inhabit this part of the reserve, feeling as though they belong amongst the thickets and reeds here.

Construction

One live willow 'dwelling' will be woven, ready to be discovered in the Secret Water zone. Viminalis and Flanders Red willow will be used—giving variety through their graduated colourings of yellow, green and burnished red. Both species are robust and grow very long. This will be a complex willow structure with organic round shapes, two openings and two different chambers.

Play value

Structures that work as play houses give a clear play invitation to children around imaginative games and give chances to gain height, views, hide and to 'nest'. In conjunction with other play features, they act as markers on an exploratory journey around the site – creating as they go maps and routes to retrace again and again. They stimulate games and storytelling: homemaking, hideaway, reed dwellers, pixies.



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Play element 6: willow dwellings

Construction notes for willow dwellings:

Item	Material	Workmanship/Assembly	Quantity / notes
1.	Viminalis and Flanders Red willow 	The living individual willow rods will be pushed into the ground to a depth of 1ft - 2ft and carefully woven together so as not to kink and kill the rods. To make sure the structure can cope with heavy usage and to stop the willow coming undone, ties will be used to securely bind the structures at key points. These will need removing and possibly new ones adding as the willow grows. Special tree planting spades will be used to plant the willow.	300 willow rods

Maintenance and management notes for willow dwellings:

Item	Description	Method/ Frequency	Quantity / notes
A.	Willow is a tree and without regular management it will revert to a tree again fairly quickly.	The living willow structure will need pruning and re-weaving every winter or every two winters. Very long, thick rods will need pruning, some or all of the others can be woven into the structures, taking care not to kink the willow! The structure will really come alive with a couple of years retraining new growth. It will become more enclosed and hidden as the willow fills out.	
B.	Ties holding willow together	Consider taking ties off to let the willow expand as it matures and adding new ones at key points of structural integrity.	



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Play element 7: clearings and pathways

Concept

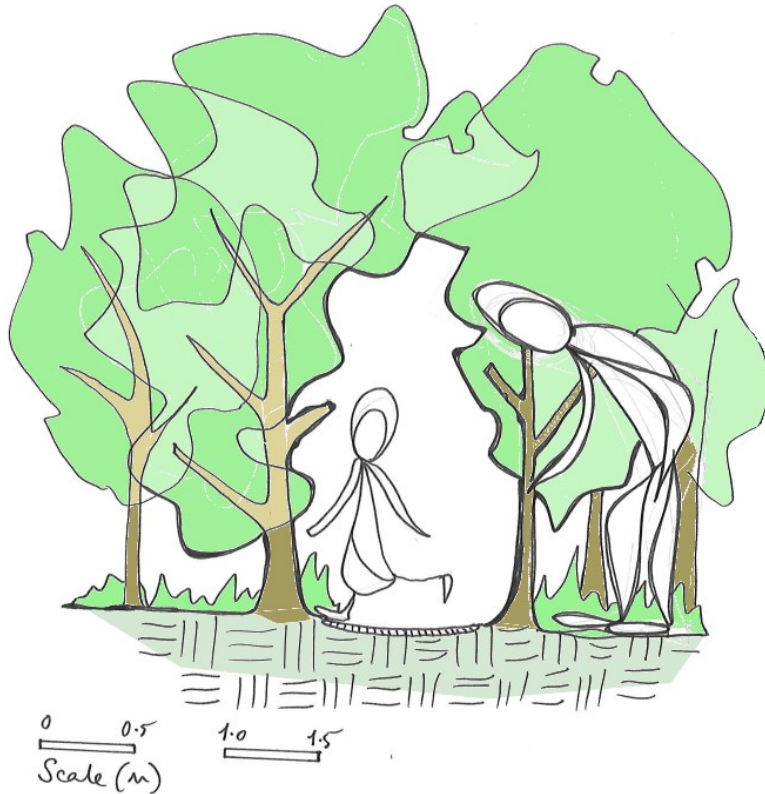
In key areas across the Secret Water Zone we would work to open up existing thickets to become rich playscapes. Currently thickets are dense and prickly – making them inhospitable. We shall create ribbons of child-sized informal paths through them, that end in secret glades. Trees will be thinned to enable children to adventure through and openings and glades created for den building.

Construction

Remove saplings and young trees where required to form a narrow (approx 0.8m wide) pathway through the thickets. Trim back overhanging branches at a height of approx 1.5m. Pathway surface to be compacted and tamped manually where trees have been removed, the intent is for the path to be formed naturally by footfall rather than laying artificial surface. Create clearing by removing 4m diameter of scrub for den building.

Play value

Woodlands are a rich landscape. Woodland 'litter' provides the materials for imaginative shops and cafes. The changing foliage helps children to explore colours and textures. Their rich eco-systems allow children direct access wildlife. Fallen logs and branches stimulate jumping, clambering, running – all essential in the development of gross motor skills. In these wooded areas children will be able to play hide and seek, find quiet places to be alone, and wild areas in which to build dens.



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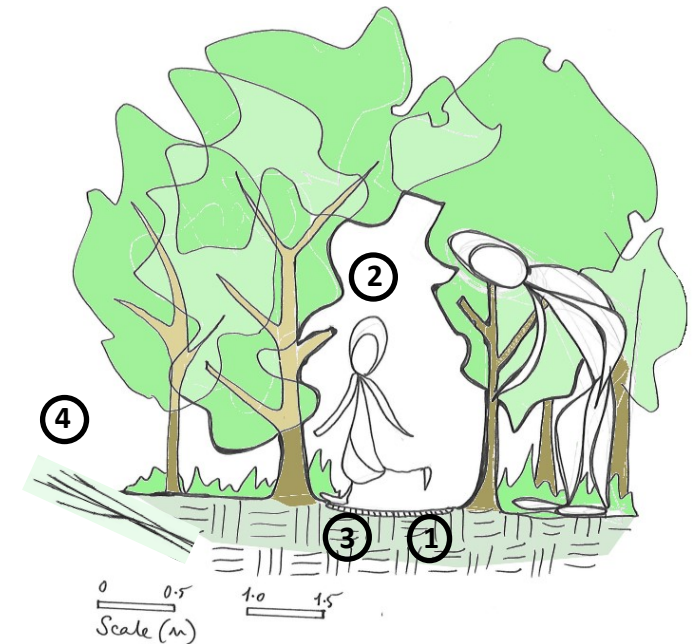
Play element 7: clearings and pathways

Construction notes for clearings and pathways:

Item	Material	Workmanship/Assembly	Quantity / notes
1.	Pathways through thickets	Remove saplings and young trees where required to form a narrow (approx 0.8m wide) pathway through the thickets. Create a clearing by removing 4m diameter of scrub.	
2.	Overhanging branches	Trim back overhanging branches at a height of approx 1.5m.	
3.	Pathways surface	Pathway surface to be compacted and tamped manually where trees have been removed	
4.	Den building materials	Coppiced sticks to be 'sown' in clearing areas to enable den building. Sticks removed of thorns and sharp points.	From site

Management and maintenance notes for clearings and pathways:

Item	Action	Method/ Frequency	Quantity / notes
A.	Clear pathway	Clear pathways manually of new growth, overhanging branches, litter, newly grown trip hazards. Monthly	
B.	Restock den building materials	Check den material are plentiful and restock as needed. Monthly	



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Play element 8: brash fence

Concept

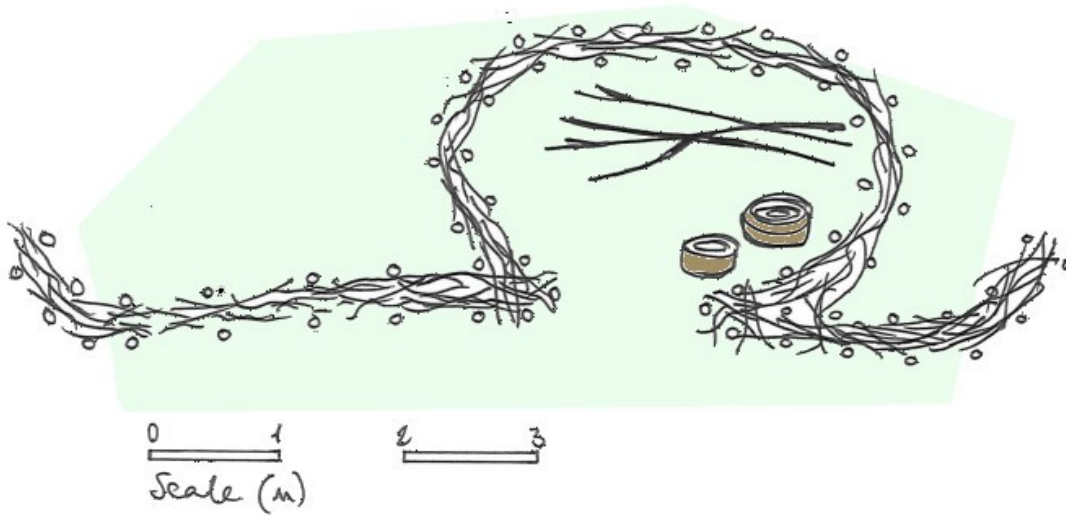
A natural brash fence will be used to ensure children do not unwittingly enter deep water at Old Moor. As we seek to open up the Secret Water Zone with pathways and clearings we will build a brash fence running from the Secret Water Zone to the teasel field—preventing access to a large pond on this side the site.

Construction

1.8m round tanalised fenceposts rammed 750mm into the ground, in pairs (300mm apart) at 1m intervals to create a parallel framework for brash infill. RSPB volunteers to build. 80m of fencing.

Play value

Natural play is all about balancing risks and benefits. As we open up new and adventurous ways of playing at Old Moor we seek at all times to ensure the site is safe to allow this play. The brash fences will be key in creating a sense of enclosure and safety that can help parents relax and allow their children to drop into play.



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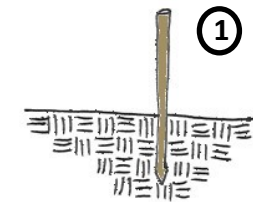
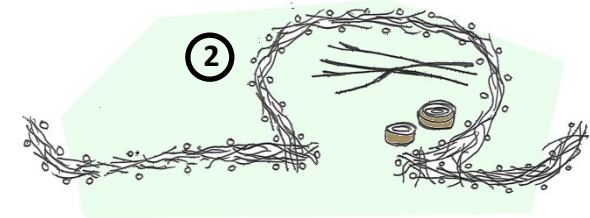
Play element 8: brash fences

Construction notes for brash fences:

Item	Material	Workmanship/Assembly	Quantity / notes
1.	1.8m 75mm round tanalised fence posts	Driven 750mm into ground, in pairs 400mm apart, at 1m spacings. Posts pairs staggered in their rows.	160
2.	Infilled with brash by RSPB team and volunteers	Brash from site	

Maintenance and management notes for brash fences:

Item	Description	Method/ Frequency	Quantity / notes
A.	Refill with brash	Monthly	
B.	Restock loose play materials	Monthly check if brash for den building needs restocking—and stock as needed.	



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Play element 9: sluice

Concept

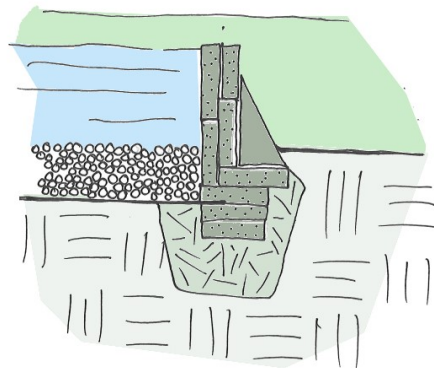
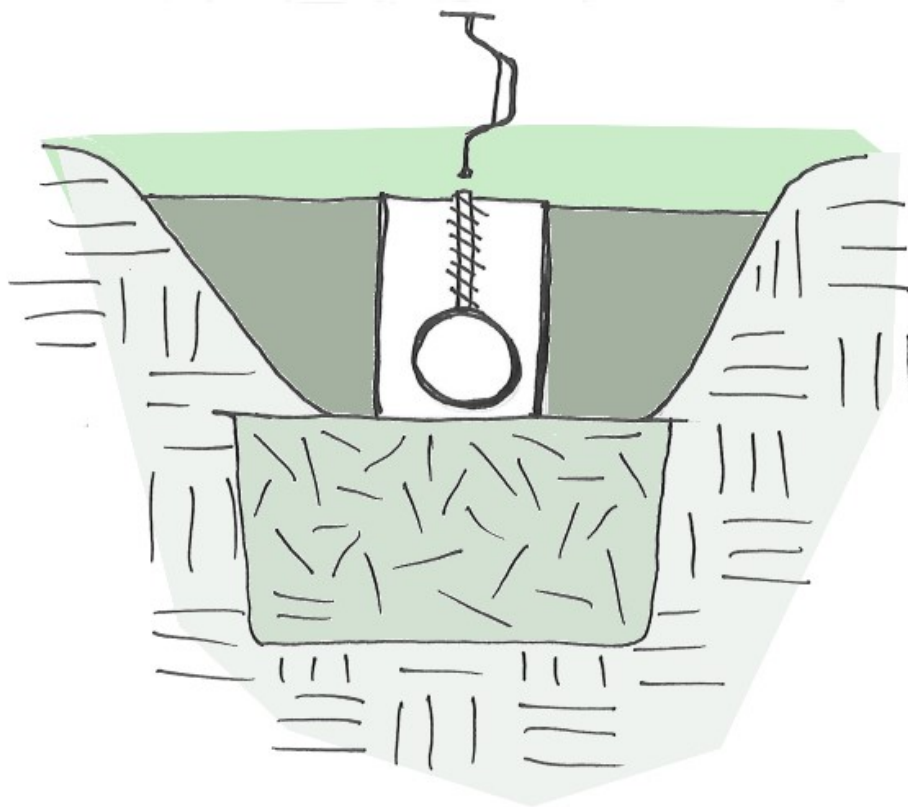
To manage the depth of water in the basin of the Secret Water channels and to ensure the area can be drained if needed, we will install a pencil sluice at the lowest point of the channels, leading to the pool beyond. The outfall invert level of the sluice will be set so as to allow the natural groundwater level within the channels to maintain a depth of up to 400mm, or to drain the channels entirely of water when such maintenance or different type of community use is required.

Construction

At the lowest point of the channels, a concrete blockwork chamber, housing the outfall sluice equipment will be formed on a base of (1:2:4) concrete below. Prior to the concrete chamber construction, a 100mm poly pipe running from sluice outfall point to pool, buried 200mm below eventual water level, will be installed up through the concrete base for linking to the sluice. A proprietary Penstock sluice will be fitted within the concrete block chamber and a lockable hinged steel lid fitted to the blockwork structure to allow sluice operation. From the pool side of the sluice chamber a 100mm waste pipe will run into the pool.

Play value

The Sluice has no inherent play value in itself but is essential in helping to maintain the correct playable depth of water in the channels and ensuring that the Secret water area can be drained when needed. Natural play areas featuring adventurous water play are common and widely enjoyed in Europe—for example the incredibly successful natural play area at Speelnatuur Tiengemeten (a project run by the Dutch equivalent of the National Trust). Protocols gathered from these and other European projects, show that keeping the water to a maximum depth of 400mm facilitates all the benefits of adventurous play for older children whilst appropriately managing the risks around water.



0 0.2 0.4 0.6
Scale (m)

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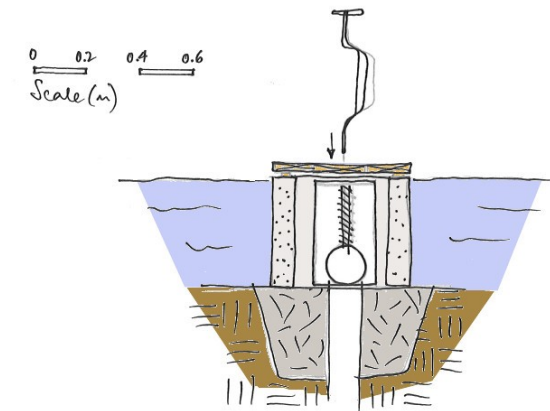
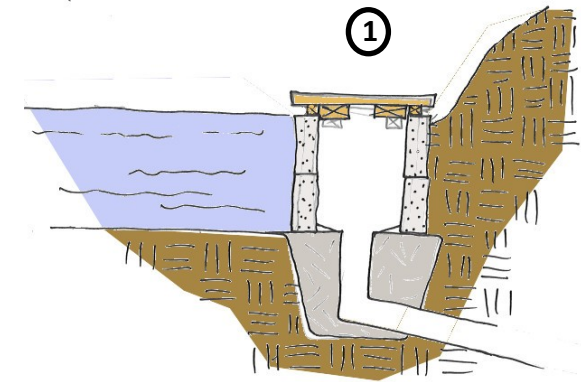
Play element 9: sluice

Construction notes for sluice:

Item	Material	Workmanship/Assembly	Quantity / notes
1.	Penstock Sluice gate and housing.	At the lowest point of the Secret Water channels, a concrete blockwork chamber, housing the outfall sluice equipment will be formed on a base of (1:2:4) concrete below. Prior to the concrete chamber construction, a 100mm poly pipe running from sluice outfall point to pond, buried 200mm below ground level will be installed up through the concrete base for linking to the sluice. A proprietary Penstock sluice will be fitted within the concrete block chamber and a lockable hinged steel lid fitted to the blockwork structure to allow sluice operation. From the pond side of the sluice chamber a 100mm PVC waste pipe will run underneath the path to the pond.	1

Management and maintenance notes for sluice:

Item	Description	Method/ Frequency	Quantity / notes
A.	Penstock Sluice gate and housing.	Lubricate Penstock sluice mechanism and check working parts to manufacturers recommendations / instructions. Check housing and cover for signs of wear. Monthly	



Old Moor Secret Water Zone

Client: RSPB Old Moor Date: 06/11/2018 Drawing No: XXX
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