



# Sustainability Report

## 1. Introduction

The Tree Tops high ropes course covers the north eastern quarter of Summerhouse Plantation and has been designed to work aesthetically within the woodland environment.

Our aim during the location search, course design and build was to have minimal impact on the environment. The woodland has been protected as we have used non-invasive construction methods, and in fact our ecological approach has shown that there should be a positive impact on the woodland ecology.

Furthermore, as there is no mains electric or water at the course, it is a carbon neutral operation.

Prior to construction, plans were submitted to Natural England, English Heritage and North Somerset Council who approved the ropes course at Ashton Court.

## 2. Impact on Ashton Court visitor numbers

Sessions at the course must be pre-booked, and there is a limited number of spaces available for each session. On this basis, there is a limited impact on the overall number of visitors to the Ashton Court Estate.

## 3. Location within Ashton Court



During the design process, Summerhouse Plantation was identified as an ideal location for the course, due to the maturity of the woodland and minimum impact on flora, fauna and invertebrates.

Furthermore, Bristol City Council has designated the area around the golf course as an activity hub area and Summerhouse Plantation is located only a short walk away.

The course is located over 300 m away from Ashton Court Mansion and is not visible or audible to Mansion house visitors.

#### 4. Access to the course

Ashton Court has an established network of paths and we have used these to provide access to the course. This has prevented us from creating new routes to the course, which may be detrimental to the environment.

A tree root protection has been added onto the existing path at the top of Summerhouse Plantation. This aims to spread the pedestrian load and helps reduce soil compaction. The path has also been wood chipped and dead 'hedged' to discourage visitors from trampling the wider vegetation & flora.

#### 5. Transport to Ashton Court

Ashton Court is perfectly located on the edge of the city, and is easily accessible to both Bristol residents and visitors to the city.

We encourage sustainable travel by promoting the use of bicycles and public transport to reach the site on our website. Our ethos is about low impact, sustainable usage and we will encourage our customers to act similarly. We also work closely with Pedal Progression and Bristol City council to encourage bike use.

##### By foot

The course is within walking distance from Bristol, over the iconic Bristol Suspension Bridge and through the Clifton Lodge entrance. It is also close to the Long Ashton Park & Ride and is only a short walk from the Bower Ashton UWE campus.

##### By bike

The Festival Way - National Cycle Route 33 - links central Bristol to the lower part of Ashton Court. There are also cycle paths from Portishead following the river Avon and there is a cycle lane on the majority of the B3129 from Clifton.

##### By bus

The X3, X3a and X4 from First, all stop on the boundary to Ashton Court Estate, from which we are a short walk.

##### By car

We use the existing parking infrastructure on the Ashton Court Estate at the Golf Course, the Mansion House and Church Lodge. Due to the limited number of visitors, there has been no requirement for any additional parking facilities. Furthermore, the course is primarily used by groups - whether they be families, friends or more organised groups such as Guides and Scouts. On this basis, transport is often shared, further reducing the environmental impact.

Our transport plans were assessed and approved by North Somerset Highway and Planning authority.

#### 6. Course design and construction

##### 6.1 Design

We have worked closely with Bristol City Council's Arborist and Tree Office, as well as our own specialist to ensure that course was designed and built with minimal impact - working with rather than removing trees.

Bruce Hatton of BHA Trees Ltd, who specialises in assessing trees for ropes courses, proposed a non-invasive construction method, which we adopted for the build. No bolts, screws or nails were used in the trees, to avoid tree damage and potential for fungal infections. Instead, obstacle and platforms are attached with adjustable ratch straps and claps, which can be adjusted to allow for tree growth.

## 6.2 Construction approach

The wires for the ropes course were attached to the trees in a non-invasive manner (wrapped around the tree trunk) with the tree being protected by wooden batons. These keep the wire off the bark. Elements (obstacles) which are hung between the trees utilise the same approach. This is an established method for installing high ropes courses and is shown to have negligible effect on the trees over time. As the tree grows, the bindings can be adjusted and loosened to allow for tree growth.

The images below show the process of the non-intrusive attachment of a platform to a tree, with timber battens used so as not to restrict the capillary action of the tree when the two longer wooden supports are clamped around it, with two more above at 90 degrees. This gives a firm base for the platform to be attached to. The supports are held in place by a steel threaded bar with washer and nuts on each end. This allows the supports to be adjusted as the tree grows to minimise any impact on it.



Further information:

[Video- Construction of a non-invasive ropes course platform](#)

Bruce Hatton now carries out annual inspections of the course.

### 6.3 Construction materials

The course was constructed using natural materials that are appropriate to the woodland setting. All elements were built with sustainable European Larch, certified FSC. Where possible materials were sourced locally from companies such as Fountain Timber (BS48 3DF) and Bristol Rope & Twine (BS2 0TQ), to keep transport emissions to a minimum, as well as to support the local economy. The cabin (office and store) is a recycled shipping container from Easter Compton, which will be clad in timber.

### 6.4 Ecology

We instructed an Ecological appraisal which concluded that the course will have negligible impact on the environment. Bat, newt, tree and habitat assessments also showed that the course would have minimal impact on the woodland. In fact, with the installation of bird and bat boxes, tree planting and removal of invasive species in the woodland, the course should have a positive impact on the woodland ecology.