



5. Permanent Site Facilities

If you are intending to offer longer-term, regular visits to your woodland site, it may be useful to think about a more permanent site along with some structural work. This takes more investment of time, energy and money but can pay off in the long term and provide a solid base for year-round access.

Ground conditions

Sites in year-round use, with high visitor numbers or prone to staying water logged may benefit from the creation of stoned paths or the use of grass or mud mats to provide safer access out of the mud.

This can be useful for access as well as reducing damage to the underlying substrate.

Seating



Credit Cambium Sustainable Ltd

Permanent seating can range from a simple log circle or more elaborate seating arrangements. As with temporary sites, you'll need to think about the size of the group and how much seating they'll need. A typical class of 30 children, plus adults will require a log circle around 5m diameter. Logs should be staked into the ground to prevent them rolling and causing injury.



Developing a woodland space for educational access

Integrated seating can also be built into shelters and structures, providing a more permanent solution.

If you intend to have a fire in the centre of your seating area in the future, ensure there is adequate space to move around the seating area without tripping over people tending the fire or from the feet of the people sitting.

Shelters and Storage

Many sites operate year-round without a permanent structure for shelter. They're a nice to have but shouldn't be considered a barrier to opening your woodland for educational access if you don't have one.

Considerations when designing permanent shelters:

- Will planning permission be required? Consult your local authorities
- What is the prevailing wind and rain direction? Roof structures that overhang the seating are much better for keeping visitors and benches dry. There's no point building a permanent structure if the rain comes in the side and half the group are still getting wet. What is the maximum size of group that you want to cater for?
- What style of groups are you wanting to host? Forest education sessions typically take place in a circle with children sat around the outside whereas performances or lectures may choose more amphitheatre style seating.
- Can you use your own timber to build the structure, or have it sourced from a local supplier? Using a wooden structure for teaching in a forest is a great opportunity to engage visitors with the relevance of sustainable timber production.



Credit Cambium Sustainable Ltd



Developing a woodland space for educational access

If you are considering a very heavy use site, or a permanent provision such as an outdoor nursery, you could create displays showcasing renewable energy sources, such as solar panels or wind turbines if you have these on site and explain their environmental benefits. It could also be helpful to consider planning in an area for the storage and drying of clothing. Wet waterproofs dry best with plenty of air circulation and not in a pile in the corner!

Water

It is important to consider whether users of your site will need to access water for both drinking and handwashing while they are there.

For a permanent site you may want to think about running piped water to the site for ease of access. If you decide to do this, water will need to be safety checked periodically to make sure it is suitable for drinking. You can do this with a water testing kit which is sent away for assessment or have a specialist come to your site to take samples.

Your local authority will provide advice on any testing and arrange for this to be carried out on your behalf.

[Water Testing - Drinking Water Inspectorate \(dwi.gov.uk\)](https://www.dwi.gov.uk)

<https://www.dwrcymru.com/en/help-advice/drinking-water-quality>



Developing a woodland space for educational access

Toilets

Composting toilets are the most sustainable, straightforward and low impact approach here if you do not have access to running water. They can be as simple as a small structure offering some protection from the elements with a hole in the ground for the waste to much more elaborate systems with multiple chambers used in rotation or removable waste compartments. You should make sure that any waste is kept as far as possible from all water courses. Follow local planning guidance on this.

Temporary portaloos may be an option if you are carrying out all your site visits within a short period of time.

Compost toilets

<https://www.waterlesstoilets.co.uk/compost-toilets/?v=79cba1185463>



Credit Cambium Sustainable Ltd

Food and Hygiene

Some groups may want to provide their own food in the woodland, but it can also be useful to provide cooking facilities for groups to use. This can range from a simple fire-pit in the middle of your log seating area, to a more elaborate outdoor kitchen. To design an outdoor kitchen, think about the type of cooking that the group might want to do. You could think about food preparation surfaces, storage, pizza ovens and more. You may need to get professional guidance on this to help with the design and build.

Think about how you will keep food cool in the woodland. This could range from cool boxes to a fridge kept in an outbuilding. Make sure you think about how to keep food safe in between sessions, it's not recommended to leave any food on site as it could end up attracting rodents. Hand washing can be achieved with a simple tip-tap system, or by purchasing a more elaborate outdoor hand washing station. Best practice is to provide warm running water. Whatever you choose, it will be important to think about food hygiene. It is recommended that you gain the Basic Food Hygiene certificate and follow all guidance by your training provider. If you are providing food on a regular basis, you may be required to register with the Food Standards Agency. Check their website for more detailed guidance



FOREST
EDUCATION
NETWORK
ENGLAND

Developing a woodland space for educational access

Food hygiene

<https://www.food.gov.uk/business-guidance/food-hygiene-for-your-business>



Credit Cambium Sustainable Ltd