

## High Flyers

Fieldfare was recently engaged by Hertfordshire and Middlesex Wildlife Trust among other things to review access at Amwell Nature Reserve in the Lee Valley. We were asked to look at the redevelopment plans for paths and bird hides around the wetland site.

Included in the plans was a proposal to rebuild one of the hides with a large ground level viewing area and a tower reached by steps from which views would be available across the reed beds. In discussion with reserve managers it was agreed that to see across the top of the reeds and perhaps catch sight of a bittern in flight and other more distant wildlife would be a key experience. There is another existing double decker hide that has steps to the top level.



The reed bed and existing double decker hide at Amwell Nature Reserve, Hertfordshire

The plans have been revised so that the new hide will be a single storey but at a higher level. The hide will be reached by a ramp so that all visitors can have the improved views across the top of the reeds and the wider reserve. Good physical access is essential to equal opportunity provision but it is only a means to an end. Identifying the key experiences a site has to offer and finding ways of making them available to everyone is the way to move forward. The Herts & Middlesex Wildlife Trust are to be congratulated on their positive approach.

<http://www.wildlifetrust.org.uk/herts/reserves/amwell.htm>