

Access Guide

Hamsterley Forest

Last Updated: June 2026



Welcome to Hamsterley Forest

About This Guide

This guide will help you make informed choices and plan your visit in a way that suits your needs, helping you connect with nature, support your wellbeing and enjoy the outdoors. It has been developed with input from people with lived experience of disability who have tested the featured trails.

Alongside this General Access Guide, two additional downloadable guides, with additional detail, are available on the [Hamsterley Know Before You Go webpage](#):

- Viking Play Trail Access Guide
- Blue Cycle Trail Access Guide and Trail Videos

About the Forest Environment

Hamsterley Forest is a managed woodland with paths that include compacted stone surfaces and areas of loose material. Some slopes and surface conditions may be challenging for some visitors. We hope the information in this guide helps you choose the routes and facilities that best meet your needs.

Measurements are presented in metres. Gradients have been given in percentage % throughout and described as either

- Any gradient less than 1:12 or less than 10% is described as **Gentle**
- Any gradient greater than 1:12 or more than 10% is described as **Steep**

Feedback

Forestry England is committed to improving access to Hamsterley Forest over time. If you cannot find the information you need in this guide, or if you notice anything important that is missing or anything is incorrect, please let us know. Your feedback helps us improve our information and resources.

Telephone: 01388 488312

Email: enquiries.hamsterley@forestryengland.uk

We hope you enjoy your visit to Hamsterley Forest.

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Arrival information

There is a range of signage that will provide you information during your visit- some are shown below:



Coloured sign posts and arrows give directions to follow trails



Cycle Trail Map board in the Main Car Park



Trail Maps and information boards at the trail starts and in some car parks



Cycle Trail signage explaining the trail grade and emergency information



Information for all forest users about which paths are shared or for one type of user



Walking Trail Maps and information outside the Visitor Centre Information point

Trail Information boards in the Main Car Park

- **For Cycling Trails** and Trail Grading information go to the Lychgate Structure near the toilet block. Maps are available from outdoor map holders
- **For Walking Trails** the Trail Head map is located at the information point all walking trails follow way marked arrows from the info point over the silver Bridge. Maps are available from outdoor map holders
- **For Running Trails** a Trail Head Map can be found just before the Silver Bridge



Walking Trail Head Map



Running Trailhead map

Arriving by car

- From Durham / Darlington Follow signs from the A68, north of West Auckland.
- From Corbridge Follow signs from A68 South of Castleside.

There are two ways to Enter and Exit the Forest:

- From the East via Bedburn to arrive at the Visitor Centre.
- From the West to arrive at the Grove Car park.

You can drive along the Forest Drive to/from each entrance point.

Postcode and Sat nav

It is not recommended to put the postal postcode DL13 3NL into Satnav as it covers the whole forest, use a place name to locate the main car park i.e “Bedburn, County Durham” to enter from the East or “Grove Car Park, Hamsterley Forest” to enter from the West.



Welcome sign when entering the forest
from the Bedburn/East direction



Main Car Park- straight ahead
Forest Drive Car Parks - turn right



Arrival into the Forest via Windy Bank Road
Turn Right for Forest Drive to Visitor Centre
Turn Left for Grove Car Park

Car Parks

Near the Visitor Centre

Main Car Park

- [///sweeter.alcove.downcast](#)

The main car park is a next to the Visitor Centre and is accessed by car from the main road via Bedburn near Hamsterley. Follow the sign for “Visitor Centre” after arriving the forest - straight ahead.

Windy Bank Car Park

- [///frost.anguished.grants](#)
- 250m west of the main car park on the Forest Drive.

- Turn Right at the sign following “Forest Drive” after arriving the forest from Bedburn/Easterly direction.

The surface of this car park is compacted stone and it is directly next to the Viking Play Trail.

There are no toilets or facilities at this car park. The Toilet block is 300m away from this car park either following a flat compacted stone path along the riverside trail, or by following the tarmac road to the Visitor Centre and down to the main car park where the Toilet Block is located.

There is one Pay Station in this car park.

Along the Forest Drive

There are multiple grass car parks long the Forest Drive between the Visitors Centre and Grove Car Park. Many grass car parks have picnic benches in them. Cars are parked on grass and there is no hard standing.

Visitors are requested not to park on grass verges or in front of driveways and signage is in place to make clear where parking is allowed.

Cypress Car Park

- ///soggy.spreading.vibrates
- 1.5km west of the Visitors Centre along the Forest Drive
- 1.6km East of the Grove Car Park along the Forest Drive
- Turn Right at the sign following “Forest Drive” after arriving the forest from Bedburn/Easterly direction.

The car park is in an open grassed space - next to it is in a field -Low Redford picnic area with one picnic bench. Entry to this car park is initially hard standing with loose stone which then becomes a grassed, uneven field.

There are no toilets or facilities at this car park.



Entrance to Cypress Car park from Forest Drive



Entrance to Cypress Car park from Forest Drive



Large open grass area for parking in Cypress Car Park

Oak Tree Car Park

- [///dishing.laugh.zapped](#)
- 2km west of the Visitors Centre along the Forest Drive
- 1.2km East of the Grove Car park along the Forest Drive

Oak Tree car park has a hard stone track covered with loose stone that runs around the back of the field returning you to the forest drive. The stone offers a more compact grassed surface just off the track edge (see image). There are no toilets or facilities at this car park. There are four picnic benches, with one having wheelchair access and one accessible bench in this area.



Entrance to Oak Tree Car Park



Compacted stone road around edge of car park with parking allowed on the grass



Picnic bench with space for wheelchairs situated in Oak Tree Car Park

The Grove Car Park

- [///pies.smaller.trophy](#)
- You can drive directly to the Grove Car Park from the public road network- use Windy Bank Road via the junction at [///times.triangles.printouts](#). This access route into the forest is not suitable for large vehicles or those towing caravans.
- The Grove car park is 3.5km West of the Main car Park along the Forest Drive

The Grove car park has Information Boards on Cycle Trails and Running Trails and all Trails are waymarked from here. There is a mounting block for horse riders.

There are no toilets or facilities at this car park. The nearest Toilets to the Grove Car Park are at the Toilet Block in the main car park- 3.5km along the forest drive.

Occasionally on very busy days when the main car park is full, temporary cubicle toilets are placed in the Grove Car Park.



Bridge at bottom of Windy Bank Road
Turn Left for Grove Car Park
Turn Right for Forest Drive to Visitor Centre



Entrance to Grove Car Park



Map and information boards in Grove Car Park

Paying for your parking

Areas where parking is allowed are clearly marked. Please do not park on grass verges or driveways.



Parking is allowed in areas showing this sign



Parking is not allowed in areas showing this sign



Pay Stations are inside wooden shelters with

Pay for parking when you leave- the machine will read your number plate and calculate how much you owe.

You can pay onsite at any of our 5 Pay Stations:

- 2 in the Main Car park near the Toilet Block
- 1 next to the Visitor Centre Information Point
- 1 in the overflow car park (Windy Bank)
- 1 at the Grove car park

You can only pay by card at Pay Station machines except one machine at the Visitor Centre pay machine which takes cash payments. You can also pay for parking with cash or card in the Info Point at the Visitor Centre.

Blue badge holders are required to pay.

Members Park for free. We currently offer a local membership and a National Membership these can be purchased online before you go [Hamsterley Forest Membership | Forestry England](#)

For further information on parking charges visit the Hamsterley Forest Webpage [Hamsterley Forest | Forestry England](#)

Arriving by public transport

There are currently no public transport services directly serving the site.

Arriving on foot

You can walk to Hamsterley Forest, however there are only a few practical entry points:

Bedburn you can arrive on foot via the quiet lanes leading from Hamsterley Village or Bedburn.

Grove Car Park: Useful if you are walking in from South Bedburn or nearby farms the surrounding forest roads and bridleways, this allows access for longer countryside walks into the forest.

The definitive Public Right of Way map is available here [Definitive Public Rights of Way map online - Durham County Council](#)

Arriving by bicycle

Bedburn / Main Visitor Centre Entrance is the most common approach for cyclists. Quiet country lanes from Hamsterley Village or Bedburn lead directly to the main entrance. Once inside the forest, you're immediately connected to: Skills Loop, Blue, Red, and Black MTB trails, Café and toilets.

Grove Car Park / South Bedburn approaching by rural lanes and bridleways allowing cycle access from the south. This then connects to forest roads and waymarked trails.

Toilet facilities

The toilets are located in the Main Car Park in a separate a block next to blue badge parking spaces and within 50m of the main car parking area.

Toilets are open 24 hours a day.

The accessible toilet is via a 1.5m wide, level concrete path at the left side of the Toilet Block. This facility does not require a RADAR key to enter.

- There is one large accessible toilet, which measures 2.9m x 2.3m. The external door is 900mm wide and opens outward.
- The accessible toilet has a right-hand transfer.
- The accessible toilet has an adult changing table, mat and sanitiser.
- The accessible toilet has an emergency pull cord.
- Lighting levels in the accessible toilet are low.

There is no Changing Places toilet on site.

Access to both the male and female toilets is via two wooden steps which open onto a 1.6m wide wooden deck with handrail. Both doors to male and female toilets are 740mm wide and open inwards.

- The male toilet has three cubicles, three waterless urinals and a baby change table.
- The female toilet has five cubicles and a baby change table.
- There is no hot water provision in the toilet block.
- Hand drying facilities are provided via electric hand driers.

The baby change room is accessed via a short concrete ramp (1.6m wide).

- This is in a self-contained room.

There are 2 additional toilets in the cafe for cafe customers during cafe opening hours. These toilets are detailed further on in this guide under 'Cafe'.



Public Toilet block



Access to male/female toilets up 2 steps



Step free path to accessible toilet on left side at rear of toilet block



Interior accessible toilet



Accessible toilet - change table

Visitor centre

The Visitor Centre consists of the Information Point, a Classroom facility (The Pine Room), Cafe and an outdoor courtyard seating area.



Footpath access to main visitor Centre



Entrance to courtyard seating area adjacent to cafe

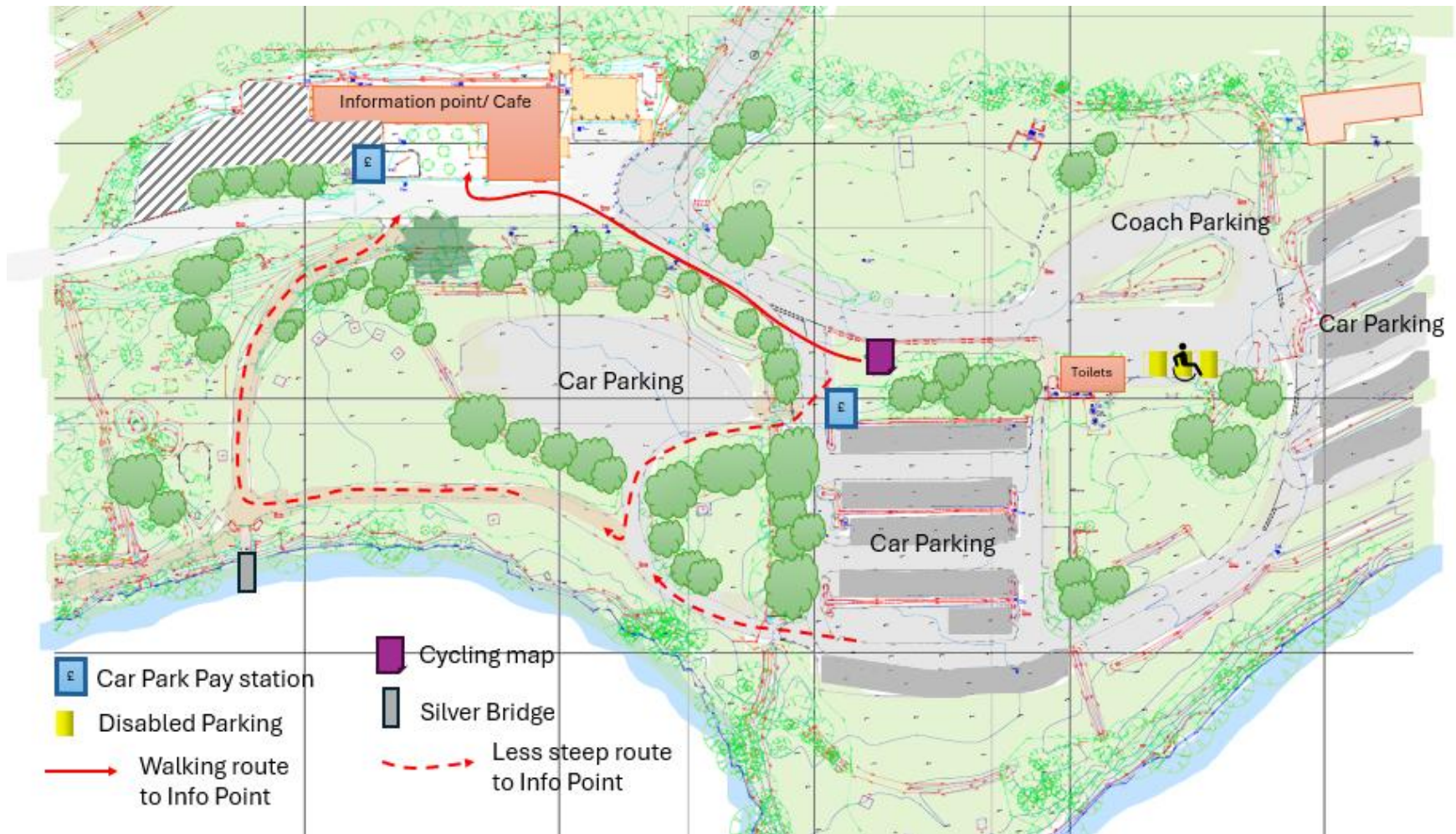


Courtyard seating area showing ramp to info point and cafe

Getting to the Visitor Centre from the Main Car Park

The Information Point and cafe are located approximately 50 meters from the main car park. The incline from Car Park is a Gentle gradient. The direct route to the main visitor and café does involve a **noticeable incline** from the parking area of 7% (1:14).

There is an alternative route to the Information Point and cafe with a lesser gradient along the path adjacent to the river and around an open picnic field. The alternative route can be found in the lower corner of the main car park, next to the beck and Running Trail head map board.





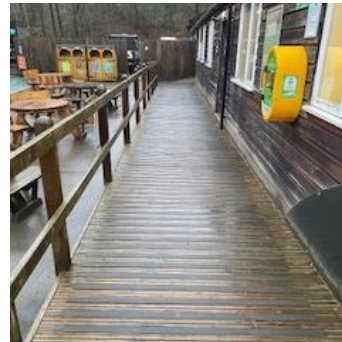
Road leading to Accessible parking



Accessible parking next to toilet block



Direct route from main car park to Visitor Centre



Decked ramp to info point and cafe



Alternate route to visitor Centre

Staff availability

- Forestry England staff are located on site to provide information and support during the opening hours of 8.30am - 4.30pm, 7 days a week.
- Visitor Centre Information Point is staffed on weekends and holidays between 10am - 4pm.

- The site is not staffed on Christmas Day or Boxing Day.
- Forestry England staff wear green uniforms and/ or have green lanyards with ID cards in them.
- Staff are available 7 days a week by phone 01388 488312, e mail enquiries.hamsterley@forestryengland.uk and in person either by appointment or at the Information point on weekends and holidays.

Wifi and Mobile phone signal in the forest

- There is generally poor phone signal in the forest, and around the Visitor Centre. Higher ground on either side of the valley tends to have better signal, with EE currently providing the best coverage within the wider forest.
- Public Wifi is not currently available at the Visitor Centre

Information Point

The Information Point is located inside the courtyard seating area adjacent to the cafe. It is a small room containing maps, information and a small shop area. It is staffed on weekends and school holidays.

- The Information Point has stepped access without a handrail and an access ramp with a handrail. Both the steps and access ramp are accessed through the outdoor courtyard.
- The surface of the access ramp is wooden with anti-slip grip strips which can make the surface bumpy for wheelchair users and pushchairs. The ramp width is 170cm.
- The Information Point has a double door to access. In poor weather typically only one door will be open and the doorway is 70cm in width. In good weather both doors will be open with a gap of 145cm. There is a small lip on the door threshold of 2cm.
- The Information counter is located to the left of the door and is 80cm in height. Paper trail maps are available here.
- There is also a large walking map outside the Information Point, and paper maps, accessed via the ramp or stairs which is available at any time. The map holders are 160cm in height.
- The Information Point does not have a hearing loop installed.
- There are no toilet facilities in the Information Point.
- Guide dogs and assistance animals are welcome throughout this area.

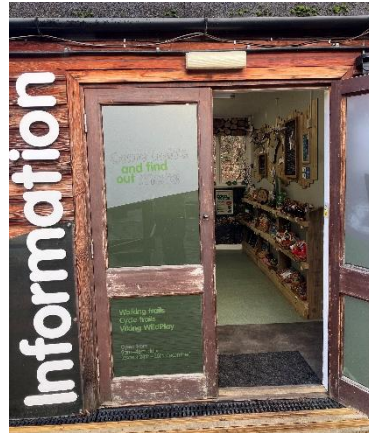
First Aid and Emergencies

- Staff are First Aid trained and available to provide support from the visitor centre information point.

- There is a defibrillator located on the wall beside the Information Point entrance. The cabinet is accessed via a code available from Forestry England Staff or 999 operators.



Ramp entrance from courtyard seating area Information point



Information point shown with one door open



Information point counter to the left of the entrance



Location of defibrillator on the outside of Information point

Cycle Hire

There is currently no Cycle Hire on site.

Cafe

There is one cafe on site adjoining the visitor centre, near to the main car park and play area.

- The cafe has stepped access to the front door and side doors, with an additional access ramp at the side door. There is a handrail on the front steps, there is no handrail on the side steps. The front door has an additional lip of 3cm to step over and the doorway is 78cm in width. Where both doors are open the entrance is 162cm.

- The ramped access is available for visitors with mobility aids and pushchairs, which gives step free access to both the Information Point and Cafe. The surface of the ramp is wooden with anti-slip grip strips which can make the surface bumpy. The ramp width is 170cm.
- Both doors open towards you.
- The first room entered via the ramp is suitable for visitors with non-assistance dogs, there is second door through into the main cafe area. Both doors from the access ramp are 98cm in width.
- Assistance dogs are allowed throughout the cafe. There is drinking water for dogs in the bowls in the courtyard.
- The cafe is counter service; cold drinks and sandwiches are collected from the self-service fridges, and additional hot drinks and food are served by staff. Staff are available to assist where required. The counter height is 90cm.
- The waiting area for the counter has a minimum of 90cm width, and the spaces between the inside tables is 50cm.
- The cafe does not have a hearing loop installed.
- The cafe can become noisy and space limited inside when busy.
- Inside and outside seating is provided. Inside tables are a set height of 75cm with removable chairs.



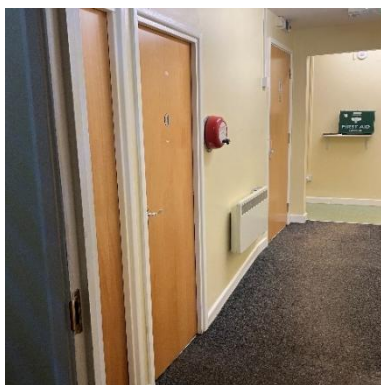
Main Cafe seating area showing food counter and stepped access



Dog Friendly indoor seating area, accessed via the ramp

Café Toilets

- Toilet facilities are provided inside the cafe for the use of Cafe customers. There are two single sex cubicles, and an accessible unisex toilet. They are access via a corridor with slight ramp with a handrail. The narrowest section of this corridor is 75cm.
- The accessible toilet at the Cafe has a right hand transfer. It has an emergency pull cord.
- There is also a baby changing facility within the accessible cubicle. An adult changing facility is located in the main toilet block in the Car Park.
- No RADAR key is required to access this toilet.



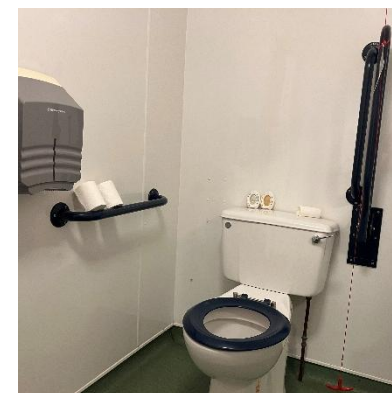
Corridor to cafe toilet facilities



Standard Cafe Toilet



Accessible Cafe Toilet



Accessible Cafe Toilet

Outdoor Courtyard Seating Area & Additional Cafe Facilities

- Outside in the Courtyard Seating Area there are a mixture of picnic tables and metal table and chairs. The picnic tables include accessible tables designed for wheelchair access and those with backed seating. All the outside seating is on flat surfaced ground.
- Behind the cafe, near to the main entrance road, there is an ice cream stand, and an additional pop-up Cafe space. The ice cream stand is open during peak times, the access to the front is surfaced, flat and level, the counter is 122cm in height. There is a rubber mat covering some of the front access which may not be accessible to wheelchairs. The additional pop-up Cafe space is open for special events only, the access to the front is surface, flat and level. The counter is 126cm in height, and may not be accessible to all due to its depth.

-

Drinking water tap

An outdoor tap is open 24hrs a day and is located to the side of the pop-up cafe space. There is step free surface access to the tap, and it is 118cm in height.



Ice Cream stand, located alongside large green building between the Cafe and the road to the Main Car Park



Pop-up Cafe space located to the side of the Cafe



Drinking water tap located to the right of the pop-up cafe. The tap is below the blue drinking water sign

Classroom facilities

The **Pine Room Classroom space** is can be hired by external groups for events personal use.

Contact us to make a booking Telephone: 01388 488312

Email: enquiries.hamsterley@forestryengland.uk

The Pine Room is located near the bottom of the ramp in the Courtyard seating area of the Visitor Centre.

- The Pine Room is accessed via a small concrete ramp; the ramp and doorway are 78cm in width. There is a small ramp on the inside of the door, with a height of 30mm. Some users may need assistance for this.

- The Pine Room is a large open space, which can be set up depending on the users. Typically, it will contain tables 68cm in height, and movable plastic chairs.
- For private hires the Pine Room key is accessed via a lock box, which is 140cm in height.
- The Pine Room has overhead lighting which can be dim on darker days, the windows have blinds which can be opened and closed to adjust lighting levels.
- There are no toilet or hand wash facilities in the Pine Room.
- Guide dogs and assistance animals are welcome in the Pine Room.



Entrance to the Courtyard seating area. The Pine Room is located to the far left of this image



Pine room entrance, showing small, ramped access and black lock box

Recreation Facilities

The Viking Play Trail

Key Information

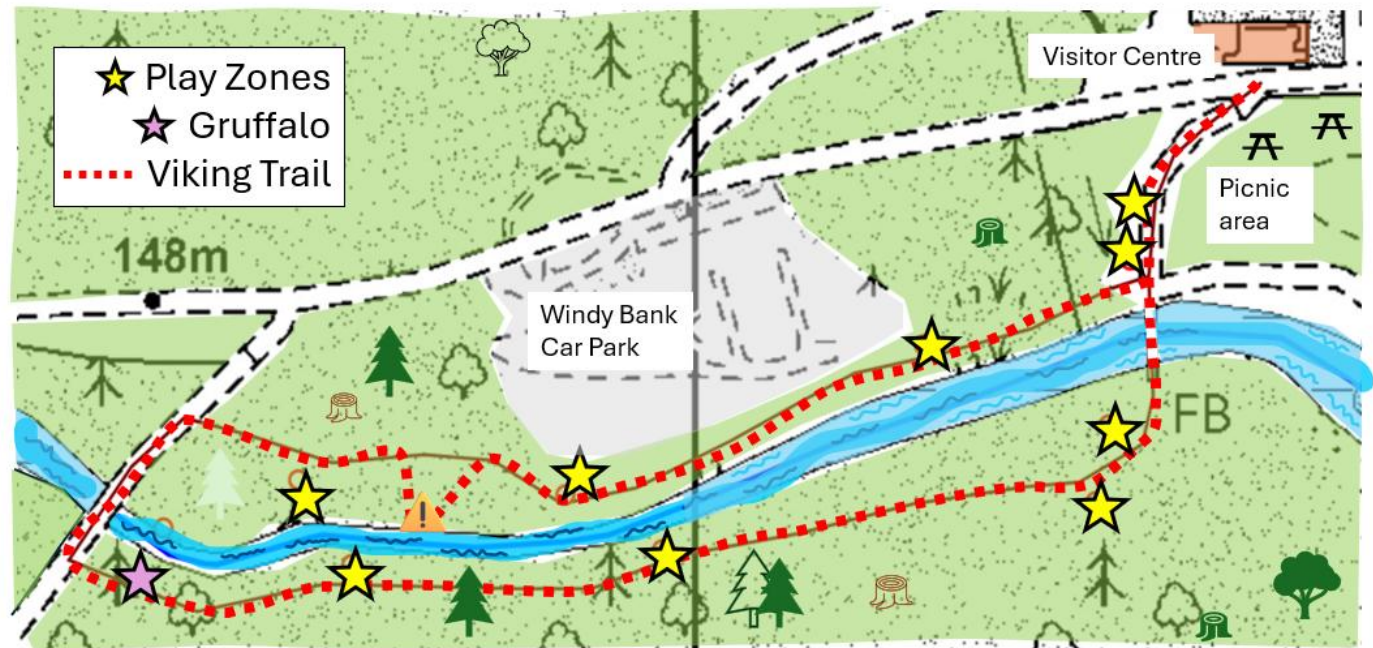
Situated close to the Visitor Centre, the Viking Play Trail is a short family trail featuring ten themed play zones inspired by Norse mythology in a loop along both sides of the scenic Bedburn Beck.

Total Trail length: 0.75 km

Trail Surface: Main path is compacted stone forest track. Play zones are varied surfaces including natural earth with exposed roots and raised enclosures filled with tree bark- see detailed description for each play zone.

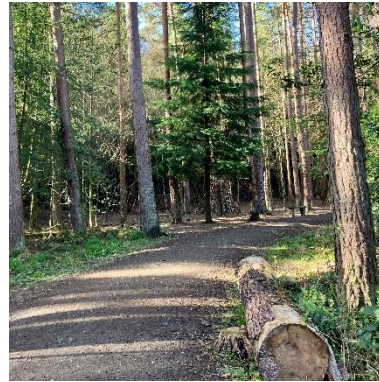
Typical width: Main path 2.5-3m wide, varied widths for access to each play zone.

Trail Gradient: Less than 10% gradient throughout the trail on the main path - some play stations include short and steep climbs, but many are accessible on flat ground.





The Play Trail is signposted with green signs with white writing



Viking Play Trail path connecting all play zones - 2m wide compacted stone



Surface around play stations can have roots and uneven ground



Surface around play stations can have roots and uneven ground

Wheelchair and pushchair suitability

The main trail is generally suitable for robust wheelchairs and all-terrain pushchairs. Some play areas sit on uneven ground, bark, or natural forest floor, which may limit access. Please see the individual play zone descriptions for further information.

Seating along the trail

A variety of formal seating is provided throughout the play area. This includes standard benches without backrests, benches with backrests, and picnic benches. Seating options are positioned close to each piece of play equipment to support rest, supervision, and ease of access.



Bench with backrest



Perch Bench



Picnic Bench

! Water Safety

⚠ The Viking Play Trail runs alongside Bedburn Beck. During periods of heavy rainfall, the beck can become deep and fast-flowing. Visitors are advised to take particular care, and young children should be closely supervised at all times.

At the halfway point of the trail (near the second bridge), there is a small, pebbled beach that provides closer access to the water. In summer months and during extended dry periods, this area may offer a suitable spot for paddling or resting beside the beck. However, any entry into the water must be carefully assessed by accompanying adults to ensure it is safe to do so.

Visitors are encouraged to remain aware of changing weather conditions and water levels throughout their visit

Play Zones

For detailed access information on each of the Play Zones on the Viking Play Trail, visit the [Hamsterley Know Before You Go webpage](#).

Riverside Trail

Route summary

This is a popular waymarked trail which is signposted from the main Bedburn Car Park and Visitor Centre using way markers with blue arrows and a white background. The trail is characterised by wide paths, and does not include any gates, barriers or stiles. The Riverside Trail is used for the family activity trails (typically themed around a Julia Donaldson/Axel Scheffler character).

Distance

2.4km/1.5 miles

Path surfaces

Along most of the route, the ground surface is made up of compact stone with some loose material. The width of the path varies from 3m at the widest point along the Viking Play Trail, down to 1.5m along Low Redford Meadows. At three points, the path has a tarmac surface, including a point where it joins and follows the Forest Drive.

Path Gradients

Two sections of this trail contain a hill, with a 1:10 gradient or more that may be more challenging for some manual wheelchair users to negotiate independently. One of these gradients is an uphill and the second is a downhill.

Seating

Bench seating is provided at regular intervals along the side of the path, approximately every 200m. An example of the seating is provided in the trail photographs (below). Benches on the trail are of two types benches with a back, and simple perch seats without a back. There are also picnic areas along this trail, set on softer ground surfaces (cut grass) that may be difficult for wheelchair users to wheel across. The benches have an overhang to accommodate wheelchairs.

Detailed route description

Starting at either the Visitor Centre or main Bedburn car park, this trail follows a broad, 2.5 - 3m wide compacted stone path past a picnic site and across a bridge with a bound concrete surface (2m width) over the Bedburn Beck. From the start to the Gruffalo sculpture (400m), this path passes play features that are part of the Viking Play Trail.

After passing over a second, 3m wide concrete bridge ('Pooh Stick Bridge'), the trail turns to follow the Bedburn Beck upstream for a further 900m alongside the Low Redford meadows which provide spectacular displays of wildflowers in the early summer.

At the end of the meadows is Low Redford Picnic site which sits alongside the beck. Here, a decked bridge (1.7m) is crossed.

After the picnic site, the path joins the Forest Drive, which is a multi-user route shared with motorised vehicles. Traffic levels are usually low, and the Forest Drive has a 20mph speed limit and has traffic calming measures along its length. The Riverside Trail shares the Forest Drive for approximately 200m after which it climbs on a tarmac surface for 100m on a gradient of around 10%. At this point, the path passes around a gate with a minimum width of 1.2m. The return route from this point is on a 2.0 - 2.5m wide path with a compact surface and weaves through a mature oak plantation.

The final section of the trail is a descent on a compact stone path back to the Visitor Centre. The gradient is approximately 10% but in two places it is slightly steeper. At the bottom of the descent, the trail crosses the Forest Drive and returns to the Visitor Centre passing Windy Bank Car Park. Where it crosses the drive there is chicane fencing with a minimum distance of 1.5m between the fencing posts.



Trail Start at Visitor Centre



First Bridge Crossing



Trail at Pooh Stick Bridge



Trail starts at Visitor Centre

Cycle Trails

Squirrel Chaser_ Blue (Moderate)



Squirrel Chaser is a 13.3km Blue (moderate) graded cycle trail signposted with white way marker arrows on a bright Blue background. An 8.4km Short Route option is available and signposted.

In line with [Forestry England Trail Grading system](#) riders on Blue Graded Trails can expect a mixture of climbs and descents with moderate gradients, technical features like tree roots and rock steps; jumps and berms; Rollable features at controlled speed; Variable surfaces.

Path widths and gradients

The trail is built with non-standard cycles in mind - the trail is **typically 1.2m wide** and **a minimum width of 1m** and **less than 10% gradient** throughout the trail.

Detailed Trail information

Detailed descriptions and videos of the Blue Cycle Trail are available in a separate downloadable guides from the [Hamsterley Know Before You Go webpage](#).

Wellbeing Trail

Route summary

3.2km (2miles)

The Wellbeing Trail starts at the visitor centre and follows sections of the Three Becks Walk. The trail is signed using way marker arrows with a yellow arrow on a black background. Panels along the trail prompt visitors to stop, notice and connect with the forest. This trail has steeper gradients, uneven terrain and a variety of different surfaces. You are welcome to collect a free Wellbeing Journal from the visitor centre (during office hours) which you can complete whilst enjoying your time in the forest.

Path surfaces

The trail is characterised by uneven forest roads and unsurfaced footpaths that are often muddy. Due to the path surfaces, this trail may not be suitable for wheelchair users but may be accessible to some off-road wheelchair or mobility scooter users who are able to manage steeper slopes and uneven terrain.



First ascent from the Gruffalo (1:8).
Rough, uneven surface.



Rough, uneven terrain



Rough, uneven terrain

Path Gradients

There are some steep gradients on this trail ranging from 1:8-1:10. Locations are described in the route description.

Seating

Bench seating is provided along the route and becomes more infrequent as you make your way around the trail.



Perch Bench on trail Start



Standard bench with a back



Perch benches and picnic spot



Entry into picnic area



Boulders just after the green barrier which could be used as resting point



Bench midway down the public footpath

Detailed route description

- From the main car park, walk towards the visitor centre; directly opposite it you'll find a way marker post with the first Wellbeing Trail sign.
- Take the downhill path to cross Bedburn Beck via the silver bridge. Continue to follow this well surfaced path for 400m with the beck to your right.
- Turn left at the Gruffalo onto a wide forest track, then follow it uphill for 260m through mixed woodland, over rough and uneven ground (1:8 gradient).

- At the T-junction (with a bench on your right), turn left towards the 'Trail Start' panel, the first of ten panels along the two-mile trail. Here, the track begins to level out for a short while and while still uneven in places, the terrain is less demanding.
- The forest road then curves to the right and begins an uphill climb (1:8 gradient). Continue along the road, passing beside a green barrier which is 1m wide.
- Once past the barrier there are some large boulders which could be used as a perch, should you need.
- From here, you begin the descent back into the valley (1:8 gradient). Take the right-hand turn onto a public footpath. The path is natural and unsurfaced and can often be muddy. Part way down there is a bench where you can pause, recharge and connect.
- This footpath crosses a mountain bike trail, where a chicane is in place and is 75cm-150cm wide.
- The footpath then rejoins the forest road, which is rough and uneven. You'll begin a short but steep ascent (1:10 gradient) along the road. Once at the top, enjoy the gradual downhill stretch that leads to the 'Trail Finish' panel and a familiar spot, with the bench now on your left.
- After the final panel, turn left and begin the final descent back towards the visitor centre.

Note:

There are picnic benches at the start of the trail on grass.

There are play areas at the start of the trail for family members to enjoy.

You may come in to contact with bikes or horses on forest roads.



Vehicular barrier that is locked but has a passing place to the right.

Chicane: space between fences 150cm and 75cm.
Uneven terrain with tree roots

Forest Drive

Route Summary

The Forest Drive connects the main car park (via Bedburn) with the Grove car park (via Windy Bank Road), guiding you through the heart of the beautiful Bedburn Valley. Whether you're wheeling, walking, or driving, it's an easy and enjoyable way to explore the forest at your own pace. Facilities are available at the main car park, including toilets, a café, and an information point.

Path surfaces and gradient

The Forest Drive is tarmac and has a gentle gradient shallower than 1:12.

There are speed bumps and speed humps along the route.



Vehicle Barriers

The Forest Drive have two vehicular barriers, one at Low Redford and the other at the Grove car park.

The barriers are open between 9:00am-4:00pm November - March and 9:00am-5:00pm April - October.

When the barriers are locked outside these times, there are unsurfaced paths around the barriers for cycles and walkers. These may be difficult to manoeuvre a wheelchair or mobility scooter around because of the trail surface and the space is only 55cm wide at the Low Redford Barrier. At the Grove Barrier it is 1m wide.



Low Redford Barrier- path around barrier when closed (55cm wide)



The Grove Barrier - Open



The Grove Barrier - path around barrier when closed (1m wide)

Detailed route description

Forest Drive by car

When entering the forest via Bedburn turn right, just after the Hamsterley Forest sign. At the junction, turn right again and you are now on the Forest Drive.

Follow the road through the Bedburn Valley with options to stop at any of the suggested areas below and you will eventually arrive at the Grove car park or, turn left over a stone bridge and follow the road up and out of the forest out on to Windy Bank Road.

Please remember facilities are at the main car park and to visit a pay station before you leave.

Forest Drive by wheels or foot

When parking in the main car park, head towards the café and visitor centre. There is a tarmac path with an incline of 1:11.

With the café and visitor centre on your right walk straight ahead along the road. This area is pedestrianised other than authorised vehicles. Once through the silver barrier you are now on the Forest Drive, heading towards the Grove car park.

Forest Drive including some of the Riverside Trail

For part of the route, there is an option to reach Low Redford picnic area via the Riverside Trail. This trail is waymarked with blue arrows on a white background and begins opposite the visitor centre. This is an accessible trail suitable for wheelchairs.

Once you reach the picnic area, turn left to continue towards the Wellbeing Wood and the Grove Car Park, or turn right to return to the Visitor Centre via the Forest Drive.

Picnic and rest points on the Forest Drive

Ayhope Beck Path 1.2km from the visitor centre on the right-hand side is a grassed area which contains two benches. This area can be wet and boggy after rainfall.



Loose stone when leaving the tarmac road and grass which is often wet and boggy to access perch benches.

Low Redford Picnic Area

0.20km further from the Visitor Centre is Low Redford picnic area. There are three picnic benches all situated on grass.



Entry into Low Redford picnic area hard path, which is uneven in places with loose stone.

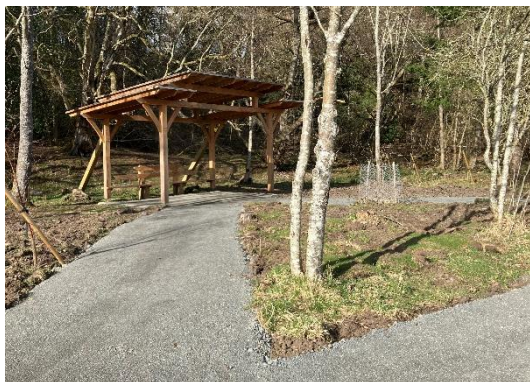
Grass trail to access the picnic tables.

Wellbeing Wood

Oak Tree car park or this small area is the closest place to park to access the Wellbeing Wood which, is 2km away from the visitor centre.



There are four benches accessible and a shelter with seating underneath. This area is presently an open grassed field, with a surfaced path yet to be constructed.



Path to Shelter



Accessible bench next to path



Shelter with seating



Accessible bench near path

Look out for:

Notable trees

The Forest Drive is home to a variety of trees that you may want to look out for whilst exploring the forest. These include Holm Oak, Corsican Pine, Wellingtonia, Californian Redwood, Beech, Cypress, Elm, Willow and Snowy Mespilus.

Low Redford Meadows SSSI site

Low Redford Meadows comprises six fields nestled within the Bedburn Beck valley. These floodplain and valley side meadows support an exceptional diversity of flora, with more than 300 plant species recorded. The meadows are managed year-round by an agricultural tenant, using a balanced approach that combines traditional hay cutting with carefully timed grazing. These can be viewed from the roadside with the prime viewing time being Spring and Summer.

Wellbeing Wood

The Wellbeing Wood was created in March 2024. It is home to around 100 new trees, including 66 English oak and other native and exotic species.

100 Years of Forestry England

Not long after the Wellbeing Wood you will pass a small outbuilding housing chickens on the right and a bridge to your left. As you continue straight on, with fields either side, you will notice some relatively young Oak trees that were planted in 2019 to celebrate 100 years of The Forestry Commission.

Grand Fir

Around 2.3 km from the Visitor Centre, you'll cross a stone bridge having passed between two fields. Pause for a moment and this is where you're suddenly surrounded by towering Grand Fir trees. Don't forget to look up!

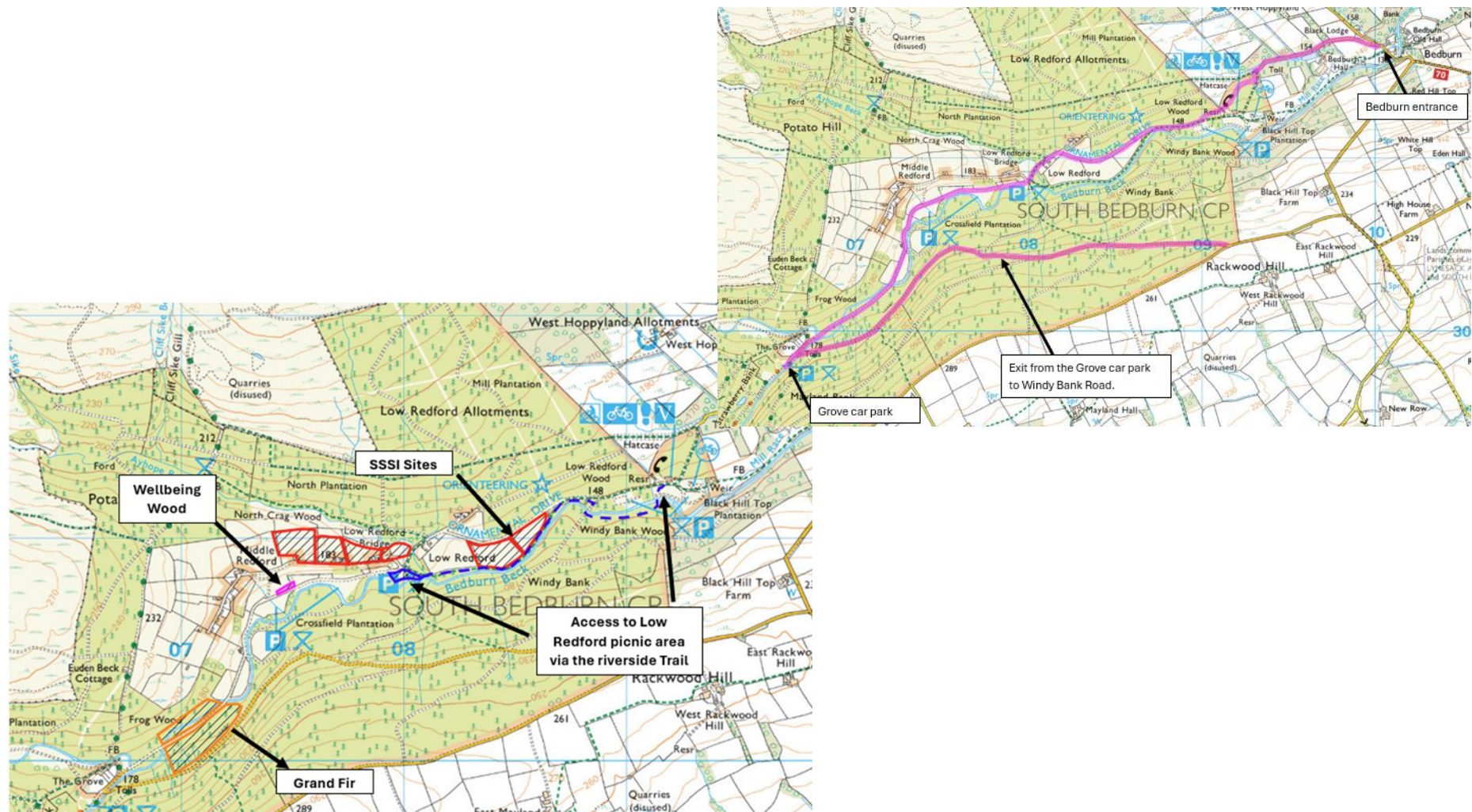


Figure 1 Forest Drive Map