

Access Statement

For

Beechenhurst

Forest of Dean

Access statement – Beechenhurst 2016

Introduction

Situated in the heart of the Forest of Dean, Beechenhurst was previously home to the Speech House Colliery (a deep level coal mine.)

Beechenhurst was converted to a picnic site in the 1960s and is now a popular tourist attraction with forest trails, a café, play area, Go Ape (Tree top junior) and climbing tower.

The Lodge is situated just off the B4226 Speech House Road between the towns of Coleford and Cinderford.

Pre-Arrival

Brown tourist signs lead to Beechenhurst from the main roads within the Forest, unfortunately there is no specific postcode available for the site, the nearest landmark is the Speech House Hotel, postcode GL16 7EL.

The site is well signposted on arrival with large Forestry Commission signs and flag banners at the roadside.



The number 30 bus from Coleford to Cinderford passes Beechenhurst, however, the nearest stop is Cannop Crossroads or Speech House Hotel which are both some distance from the main visitor centre. Access from the cross roads is uphill by a busy road with no designated footpath. From the Speech House Hotel there is a marked link path down to the Beechenhurst but this path is unsurfaced and does have some steep gradients.

The nearest train station is Lydney, which is 8.2 miles away. Taxis are available at the station and accessible taxis can be booked in advance. A helpline is available Mon – Sun 08:00 – 20:00 on 08453 003 005. There are no staff available at the station, however there is a ramp for train access. The Newport bound platform is accessible via a ramp with a gradient of 1:12.

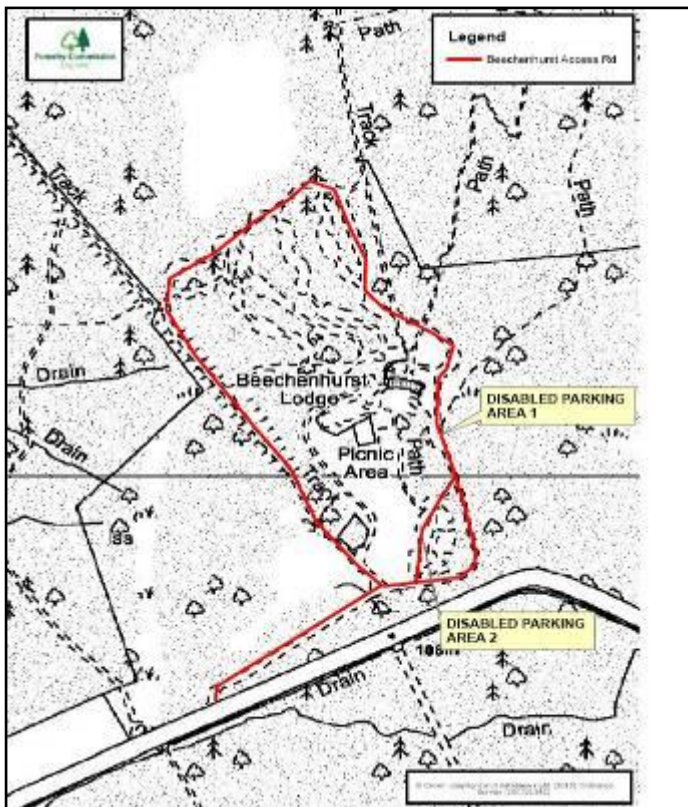
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Car Parking

There is sufficient parking on site for over 250 cars. The car parks are accessed via a one way system.

The main access road is tarmac and the parking bays are on a loose gravel surface. The majority of parking spaces are at the rear of lodge, access to the lodge is via an inclining path. There are additional parking spaces at the front of the lodge.

There are two marked designated disabled parking areas. Area 1, closest to the café and toilets, has 5 designated spaces for blue badge holders; Area 2 has 6 designated spaces.



Access to the lodge from Area 1 can be gained using a DDA compliant (Equality Act 2010) tarmac ramp, which has a handrail to one side (halfway)

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Access from Area 2 is to the side of a wooden pole barrier and along a levelled gravel pathway leading to the front of the lodge. The lodge is approximately 200m away from this area.



The Pay and Display machine closest to both allocated disabled parking areas is situated to the front of the lodge, tickets can also be purchased at the café where a credit card machine is available. Annual discovery passes which give year round parking across the whole of the Forest of Dean can be purchased from the Café every day from 8.30am. Discovery passes can also be purchased at the Forestry Commission Bank House offices, Cannop Cycle Centre and Symonds Yat Rock Log Cabin.

Please note that parking charges apply to all customers, including blue badge holders.

The lodge is split over two levels with the lower levels all accessed via DDA (Equality Act 2010) compliant paths. This includes access to the disabled toilets.

The Café

The Café is at the heart of the site, and is open from 8.30am daily.

The café has over 100 covers inside, which are access via the central atrium. There is further outdoor seating, most of which is suitable for disabled access. There is a canopy outside the front of the café and a separate shelter covering tables for rainy days or for keeping out of the sun.



The serving container is raised but staff are happy to come out and assist visitors when requested. The café comprises of 2 distinct sections, both of which have wooden flooring. There is ample natural light and further low level lighting in both sections.

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The main atrium doors are automatic opening. There are no lips to the doors other than on the exit from the smaller café seating area, known as 'The Snug'. The snug has bright and comfy seating by a woodburner.



Food served in the café is locally sourced where possible. There is a wide selection of hot and cold food and provision for baby food heating. The café does its best to cater for dietary requirements with vegetarian, vegan and dairy or gluten free options.

For further information on the menu or specific requirements please contact the café direct 01594 824662.

The upper level of Beechenhurst is used for functions and events and can be hired out from the café. The loft is accessible via a wooden access ramp located to the rear of the building. The access ramp is approximately 38.5m in length and is 1.2m wide with hand rails and an anti-slip surface.



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Information Boards

Interpretation boards are all in clear, easy to read text and have pictorial representation where applicable.

Toilets

Public toilets are located at the end of the building close to disabled parking area 1. They are clearly signed. There are separate male and female facilities and a disabled toilet which includes baby changing facilities.

The disabled toilet door is 0.85m x 1.95m the door has a hand rail on the inside and is set at 0.95m from ground height. The room is approximately 2.8m x 1.97m. There are two handrails by the toilet itself which can be folded down. When down these are 0.68m from ground height.

There is also an extra disabled toilet in the ladies toilets which has grab rails however access to this is limited by a number of access doors. These are 1.41m x 1.98m then 0.755m x 1.95m. The toilet door is 0.92m x 1.94m and there is a handrail which at it's lowest point is 0.56m from the floor the room is approximately 1.33m x 1.70m.



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BBQ Hire

There are three BBQ's available for hire at Beechenhurst. The Glade, a picnic area with a covered gas BBQ, is pictured.



Whilst there is no DDA (Equality Act 2010) access to the BBQ's; in good weather permission can be given for vehicles to drive close to the BBQ's for drop off however vehicles must then return to the parking spaces provided. Please be aware that in poor weather permission may be refused for vehicular access to help preserve the site. BBQ's can be hired via the Forestry Commission 0300 067 4800 Mon – Fri 9am – 3pm please discuss any special requirements when booking.

Play Area

There is a toddler and children's play area. One piece of furniture (a basket swing) is DDA (Equality Act 2010) compliant however at this point the access to the swing is on a surface comprising of loose bark chippings. The Forestry Commission are currently reviewing the play area safety surface and are planning to make more of the play equipment accessible by installing a different surface. Any new installations will be designed for access to all in mind.



Trails

There are a number of waymarked walking trails at Beechenhurst all of which pass through the woodland areas in the Cannop Valley.

The topography of the area means that the paths around the site have some steep slopes making the walks unsuitable for most pushchairs and wheelchairs.

Some trails can be accessed using mobility scooters but it is advised that you contact the main forestry office at Coleford westengland@forestry.gsi.gov.uk Tel: 0300 067 4800 between 9am-3pm Monday to Friday for further advice.

There is a walks information board at the lodge and a specific trail start board for the Sculpture Trail. Leaflets on the walks are available at the café.

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Sculpture Trail

The internationally renowned Sculpture Trail features pieces by artists set in the beautiful woodland surroundings of the Forest of Dean. The route uses a mixture of wide surfaced (loose stone) tracks and narrow unsurfaced paths. There are steep gradients along the route making it unsuitable for most wheelchairs and pushchairs. 2 shortcuts are marked for those not wishing to complete the whole 4.5 mile route. Many of the artworks are accessible to touch.



Beechenhurst to Speech House Link Path

An unsurfaced path linking Beechenhurst to Speech House Woodlands car park, there is a steep incline on this path.

Beechenhurst Trail

The Beechenhurst Trail is a waymarked 8 mile circular ramblers route that predominantly uses unsurfaced Public Rights of Way.

Alternatively you may wish to try one of the following trails which have level surfaced paths and can be accessed with pushchairs and wheelchairs:

Cyril Hart Arboretum
Mallards Pike
Wenchford
Symonds Yat Rock
Soudley Ponds

Further information about your visit can be found at www.forestry.gov.uk/beechenhurst where you will find information on directions to the site, amenities, opening hours, parking charges etc or you can contact the Forestry Commission office at Coleford on 0300 067 4800 during office hours Mon – Fri 9am – 3pm.