

Dunstable Downs & The Whipsnade Estate Access Statement

Chiltern Gateway Centre, Whipsnade Road, Bedfordshire, LU6 2GY

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Sheep in the shade of a Beech tree at Dunstable Downs.

Introduction

- Dunstable Downs & The Whipsnade Estate is open countryside with chalk grassland, wild flower meadows, the Whipsnade Tree Cathedral and a small woodland set within the Chilterns Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB)
- The Downs mark the highest point in Bedfordshire and are a mixture of flat open spaces and very steep hills.
- Mobile phone reception is poor across some parts of the estate.
- Dogs are welcome across the estate on leads and under close control. From March to July please take extra care to not disturb ground nesting skylarks and live stock in fenced loactions.
- All dogs on leads are welcome throught the estate and National Trust shop and café .

Arrival & Parking Facilities

- The site is easy to find, please follow the brown signs from Dunstable, Whipsnade, Kensworth or from the A5.
- There are five accessible parking spaces for blue badge holders in the main visitor centre carpark. These spaces are tarmacked and situated around 10 metres away from the visitor centre reception, toilets and catering hatch.
- The car park surface is firm with a thin layer of loose gravel.
- The surfaces in all overflow carparks are grass or deep gravel.
- The site does not have a transfer vehicle.
- There is a temporary drop off area by the bus stop at the top of the visitor centre car park



Visitors enjoying the view near to the Chiltern Gateway Centre

Visitor Welcome

- The Visitor Welcome Hub is located on the right hand side of the courtyard in close proximity to disabled parking bays.
- The hub is a relatively small room, however it is step free access and there is space to turn a wheelchair.
- Access to the Visitor Welcome Hub is through large glass sliding doors. These doors are manual and will be open during our operating hours, weather permitting.
- The Visitor Welcome Hub is lit with both natural and artificial light.



Catering and Retail

- Both commercial elements are located in the main part of the building.
- The building and courtyard are open plan with large entrances and exits with level flooring throughout and good turning spaces for wheelchairs.
- The entrance is well lit with a large pale brown mat.
- The visitor centre is fitted with a non slip pale green flooring and is level and even.
- The visitor centre doors are automatic doors which can open to a 2m width.
- The height of the reception desk and till points are 1m high.
- Staff are on hand to assist visitors if needed.
- Chairs are available inside the visitor centre and some have arm rests.
- All tills have induction loops available.
- There is a manual wheelchair available, please check availability before you visit.
- The View Café is open plan and visitors can order at the till.
- If visitors need assistance, café staff are happy to help carry trays to tables.
- There is enough space for wheel chairs to manoeuvre in the café. Staff are happy to remove chairs if required.
- Seating without arms are available in the cafe.
- An induction loop system is available at the till point.
- The View Café menu is not available in brail.
- Straws are available in the café.



Visitor Toilets

- There are two sets of toilets available at Dunstable Downs.
- Internal toilets contain mens, womens, disabled and baby change rooms. These are accessed via the main doors and through the café seating area on the right hand side. These toilets are step free throughout.
- External toilets contain mens, womens, disabled and baby change rooms. These are accessed from the main car park. The toilets are step free throughout.
- There are no adult changing facilities.
- There is an accessible toilet in both blocks. *(These toilets do not require a radar key to access the facility)*
- The accessible toilet is 1.5m x 2.2m and has an emergency alarm fitted.
- The accessible toilet is right hand transfer and has hand rails attached to the wall on the left and right side of the toilet. The area is brightly lit with artificial light.
- There is no adult changing facility or hoist.



Mobility Vehicle Service

- Two Trampers, one mountain trike wheelchair and one standard wheelchair are available to borrow daily throughout the year.
- Due to limited availability, we do advise you book in advance by calling the visitor centre on 01582500920. We cannot take bookings on the day.
- Vehicles can be collected from the Visitor Welcome Hub located next to the disabled parking bays in the main car park.
- There is no charge, but we rely heavily on donations to keep the service running.

Second-hand Bookshop

- Access to the second-hand bookshop is via the main catering/retail entrance.
- It is located on the left hand side as you pass through the shop and into the café seating area.
- The bookshop is lit by natural and artificial light.

The Countryside

- There is a map of the estate with walking routes located in each carpark and next to the visitor centre courtyard.
- A map and walking routes is available on our website.
- There are three permanent marked routes available
- There is a hard surfaced, multiuser path.



View across the valley to Ivinghoe Beacon- The red walking route

- **Red Route – Hilly Walk**

- The red route starts on the multiuser path, which provides a good walking surface for all users.
- The route continues along:
 - several narrow footpaths with a steep gradient
 - A bridal way at the base of the hillside
 - A large set of steep steps that can be very muddy. The steps do not have any handrails.
 - There are several gates along this route
 - There are sheep grazing.
 - There is currently no audio tour available.
 - There are some benches along the multiuser path and back along the hedgerow towards the end of this walk.



View across pascombe pit / red walking route.

- **Blue Route**

- The blue route takes you along a footpaths and bridal ways.
 - Pathways can become muddy and may have loose large flints in the soil.
 - All paths on this route cover the top of the hill and are relatively flat with no steep gradients
 - The path surface may be un even.
 - There are no steps.
 - There are several gates
 - There is some interpretation but no audio tour available.
 - There are a few benches spaced far apart.

- **Purple Route**

- The Purple route takes you along a footpaths and bridal ways.
 - Pathways can become muddy and may have loose large flints in the soil.
 - All paths on this route cover the top of the hill and are relatively flat with no steep gradients
 - The path surface may be un even.
 - There are no steps.
 - There are several gates
 - There is some interpretation but no audio tour available.
 - There are a few benches spaced far apart.



A family enjoying the multiuser path at Dunstable Downs.

- **The Multiuser path**
- The Multi user path is a hard surfaced 1.1m wide path that is suitable for all users.
 - There is a slight decline at the start of the route
 - The path does not provide a circular route.
 - There are no steps or gates
 - There are several benches with good views.
 - The route is exposed and may not be suitable on windy days.

Contact details for more information

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Last Reviewed March 2024