

Gosforth Park Nature Reserve

Advice for Visitors with Disabilities

Gosforth Park Nature Reserve is a 60 hectare site of open water, reedbed, mixed woodland and ditches. The site is managed for wildlife and is therefore kept as natural as possible.

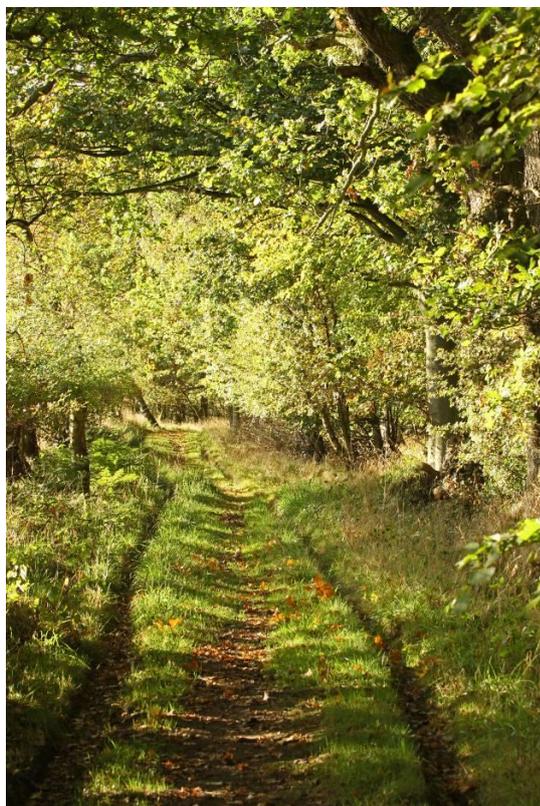
We believe that if assisted by a fit, able-bodied person it may be possible for some wheelchair users to visit parts of the reserve – if they are happy to experience bumpy and uneven conditions.

The following information is designed to give you some idea of the conditions you can expect, so that you can decide whether the reserve is somewhere that you can and want to visit.

Trails & Paths

There are gates to enter the reserve. These will not present a barrier but unfortunately due to the closing mechanisms they are almost impossible to open and close from a wheelchair and you will need assistance with this.

The only surfaced (concrete) path is from the reserve entrance to the feeding station hide (approx. 30 metres). The hide has a window suitable for wheelchair users. Wildlife feeding takes place from Oct-March.



The other path which might be suitable for some wheelchair users (with assistance) or mobility scooters runs from the entrance for approx. ½ mile and leads to a boardwalk (which is wheelchair accessible) and a hide overlooking the main lake, which has a window suitable for wheelchairs. This path (see photo left) runs along the main track and is not surfaced and it is bumpy in places (tree roots, cambers) and after rain becomes muddy – however in summer or after dry periods this path has been used by wheelchair users to reach the hide overlooking the lake. There is a slight downhill on the way there which means a slight uphill on the way back.

Along the boardwalk to the hide is a pond dipping platform that allows a close up view of aquatic life and this can be accessed via wheelchair. Please be aware that none of our boardwalks or pond dipping platforms have edging, so it would be possible for a wheelchair

to fall off into shallow water (for this reason we would advise that wheelchair users are accompanied).

At present the other trails around the reserve do not have any surfacing (they are earth or grass), they are uneven and have natural barriers such as tree roots and animal scrapes and steps. We would not recommend any of these paths for wheelchair use but they are useable for people who can walk with, for example, a stick.

Wooden boardwalks and bridges are provided to access or cross wetland areas. These have been covered with wire to help provide grip but they can still be slippery when wet and care should be taken. There are no handrails on these structures and visitors should take care.



(Matthew Ridley Hide and boardwalk © Jill Tate Photography)

The site is generally flat and there are no hills. The area near the entrance is flat but as you go towards the lake the path slopes very gradually downhill, so that coming back to the entrance is slightly uphill. The circuit walk around the reserve is approximately 1-2 miles depending on the route taken.

During 2016 and 2017 we will be improving the surface of the path from the entrance to the two hides on the south side of the reserve (that overlook the wetland). This should eventually make it easier for wheelchair users and people with restricted mobility to access these areas of the reserve.

Toilets

A new eco-toilet was installed in 2016, this will accommodate wheelchair users. This toilet is approx. 200 metres along the main track from the reserve entrance (ie on unsurfaced path). The nearest other toilets can be found at the Peter Barrat Garden Centre ½ mile north of the reserve along the A189.

Plants & Insects

During summer months stinging plants such as nettle grow alongside some paths and spiky vegetation such as brambles may hang down across paths. Also during summer biting insects such as mosquitoes and deer ticks are present in the wooded areas.

Visitors are advised to wear long trousers and long sleeves and if necessary use insect repellent.

Wooded Areas

The woodland is managed to support as much wildlife as possible. For this reason there are a lot of dead branches in the trees. During high winds or after heavy summer rain there is a risk in the woodland from falling trees or branches. In these conditions we recommend that you only use the South Lakeside Path.

It is also possible that a branch or tree might have fallen across the path and this could prevent further progress in a wheelchair, even with assistance.

Watching Wildlife

There are three viewing hides on the reserve and two of these are designed to enable wheelchair users to see out of.

The hides are kept locked. If you wish to use the hides please arrange in advance to obtain a key

You may be fortunate enough to encounter wildlife close up but using binoculars will greatly enhance your experience.

Parking

There is parking on tarmac next to the reserve entrance and sufficient space and safety to enable a wheelchair or electric buggy to be unloaded.

Dogs & Pets

Dogs and pets are not allowed in the reserve, even on leads, in order to minimise disturbance to wildlife.

In an Emergency

The reserve can be very quiet, especially mid-week during the day. At this time you might be the only person at the site.

The Society has a part-time site warden, Paul Drummond, who lives in the house (Lake Lodge) at the entrance to the reserve. He is First Aid qualified and has a First Aid kit. In an emergency he can be contacted at the house or call 07840 341452. Alternatively call 999. The nearest A&E hospital is Royal Victoria Infirmary, Queen Victoria Road, Newcastle-upon-Tyne, NE1 4LP Tel: 0191 233 6161

Joining the Society

The reserve is normally only open to members of the Natural History Society of Northumbria. You can join the Society via our website: <http://www.nhsn.ncl.ac.uk>

More Information

If you have any questions please contact us:
Tel: 0191 208 2790 Email: nhsn@ncl.ac.uk