



Forestry England

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# Chopwell Wood Accessibility Guide

Updated: 31st January 2025



## Welcome to Chopwell Wood

Welcome to Chopwell Wood. This guide has been created to help you plan your visit and find a route suitable for you and others to engage with nature, focus on wellbeing and enjoy the great outdoors! This document provides detailed information and photographs on the different trails found at Chopwell Wood, including the following:

- The Pines Circular trail
- Chopwell Welcome trail
- Wellbeing trail
- The Old Railway Footpath

Chopwell Wood is a managed woodland site, the ground surfaces and gradients across the site may be challenging for some visitors, including those with accessibility requirements such as mobility aid users.

The Boundary Walk is not included in this accessibility guide due to its challenging terrain. This trail includes forest roads and footpaths which present a level of difficulty for some visitors with access requirements. General information on this trail is provided on the trail map on the Chopwell Wood webpage.

This access guide has been written by and with the support of access consultants with lived experience of disability, including a manual wheelchair user, and wheelchair user with an electric power attachment. We also carried out user testing with people with a range of different accessibility requirements in January 2025.

We hope you enjoy your visit to Chopwell Wood!

## Overview

### Staff availability

There are no Forestry England staff on site at Chopwell Wood.

### Toilet facilities

There are no public toilet facilities at this site.

### Car parking

There is one large public car park, this is accessed from the main vehicle access road into Chopwell. There are two accessible parking spaces.

### Pedestrian access points

- There are 5 pedestrian entrances into Chopwell Wood.
- The three most well used include an access route from High Spen, and two access points linking the wood to Chopwell Village. These are described in the detailed access guide in this document and are shown on the accessibility map.
- There is limited wheelchair access from Chopwell Village into the Wood.

### Trails

- There are four waymarked trails on-site.
- The Pines Circular and Chopwell Wood Welcome trail have been designed to be accessible to a wide range of people including wheelchair users.
- The Wellbeing trail and the Old Railway Footpath, include areas with steep inclines and uneven surfaces.

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- Wooden benches are provided along all trails, further information on these are available in the detailed accessibility guide in the next section of this document.
- There are no gates, barriers or stiles along the Pines Circular trail, Chopwell Wood Welcome trail and the Old Railway Footpath.
- Further information on individual trails can be found in the detailed accessibility guide on the following pages.
- There are no tactile way markers for blind or partially sighted visitors.

## Detailed Accessibility Guide

### Arrival and parking

#### Toilet facilities

There are no public toilet facilities at this site.

#### Staff availability

There are no staff on site.

#### Sat nav postcode

NE39 1LT

#### Directions for vehicle access

The wood is not signposted until the entrance in the village of High Spen (B6315). Access to the B6315 from the south is off the A694 at Rowlands Gill or from the north at the A695 at Greenside.

## Car parking

- There is one large public car park, there are no vehicle barriers to enter this car park, this is accessed from the main forest vehicle road.
- The what3words location for the car park is ///fruitcake.generally.unions.
- There are two accessible parking bays in the main car park, these are situated on level ground in the main car park and have a marked out transfer space on either side of the space.
- The car park is free of charge.

### Images of the car park:



*A view towards the car park with the accessible parking bays in the distance*



*Two accessible parking bays are provided in the main car park*

## Arrival by bus

- Buses operated by 'Go Ahead Northeast' connect the wood with Newcastle City Centre, Newcastle Central Station and the Metrocentre (service number 47). Visitors from Consett (service number 45 or 46) can connect with this bus at Rowlands Gill.
- The nearest bus stop to the main entrance is on Hookergate Lane in High Spen. This bus stop is shown on the map of the site which can be downloaded from the Chopwell Wood webpage.

## Pedestrian access points

There are five pedestrian entrances into Chopwell Wood shown on the map of the site, the three most used are described below.

### 1. Pedestrian route to the car park from High Spen:

- This access route starts at the main vehicle entrance to the wood on Hookergate Lane.
- The route from the top of the access road on High Spen to the car park and start of the trails is 800m.
- There is a path which follows the road into Chopwell Wood, there is a steep uphill section along this route, this then joins a bridleway which avoids the bend in the road.
- There is a short, steep slope onto the bridleway.
- The bridleway is made up of uneven, but firm ground.
- The bridleway joins back onto the road, pedestrians must travel along a section of the road with no footpath for a short distance.
- There is a path just after the 'Welcome to Chopwell Wood' sign leading off the road onto an unsurfaced area which leads to the car park and start of the trails. The path width becomes narrow (less than 80cm in places), making it more challenging for wheelchair users.
- Alternatively it is possible to continue along the road to the car park, there is no formal footpath along the road beyond this point.

- We have created a video of this route, this can be found on the Chopwell Wood webpage.

## **2. Pedestrian access via the Old Railway Footpath:**

- This access route crosses an area of uneven grass from Chopwell Village before joining the Old Railway Footpath trail.
- There are no barriers, steps or gates along this route, however there is some challenging terrain and medium to steep gradients over the section of grass leading to the Old Railway Footpath trail.

## **3. Pedestrian access from Marx Terrace via Coal Tubs Way:**

- There is no dropped kerb from this access point onto the path.
- There is also a steeper gradient along this access route.

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*A lack of step-free access and lowered kerb onto the path from Marx Terrace joining Coal Tubs Way*



*Access route from Chopwell village across a field which joins the Old Railway Footpath*



*Access path on Chopwell Wood Road leading onto the bridleway path, avoiding the bend in the road*

## Arrival by cycle

- There are no formal or marked out cycle routes into the site.
- There is no cycle parking on site.

## Information on arrival

- There is one main information board on arrival adjacent to the car park.
- This is accessed via uneven grass with some areas that can get muddy.
- The ground immediately in front of the information board is paved and level.
- There is a map showing the different trail routes across the site.



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- There is no tactile or braille signage.
- The information board offers some limited weather protection.
- There are benches near the information board on the grass adjacent to the path.



*View towards the information point from the main trail footpath.*



*The information point has a small area of weather protection and is situated on an area of hardstanding*

## Pines Circular trail

### Route summary

**Distance:** 0.5km (0.31miles)

The Pines Circular trail is a short circular route through pine woodland that starts from the main car park near to the information board. This route is marked out using purple waymarkers on wooden posts. The photos below show the start of this trail and the waymarker to look out for. It is suggested that this route could be suitable for a range of different visitors including wheelchair users and families with young children in pushchairs. We have also produced a video of this route which is available to view on the Chopwell Wood webpage.



*The trail starts next to a green sign which says 'this path is shared use'*



*The path is waymarked with a white arrow on a purple square*

## Path

- The path is made up of firm compact stone, with some fallen leaves particularly in autumn and winter months, this can make it more difficult to identify the edges of the trail.
- The path along this route is between 1.5 and 2m wide, there is one narrow section past a tree which is 1m wide.
- The route is mostly level with some gentle gradients. There are no gates, barriers or stiles along this route.
- There is no raised edging to help identify the edge of the path.

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*The path is made up of a natural, compact stone surface*



*Some sections of the path have a ditch to the side*



*There is a tree in the middle of the path part way around this trail which narrows the path*



*Wider sections of the path can comfortably accommodate two wheelchair users*

## Seating

- You will find wooden bench seating positioned regularly along this route. These benches do not have armrests or backrests.
- There are also some picnic benches along this route, some of which are designed to be accessible for wheelchair users.

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*There is a picnic area up a shallow slope within the woodland, off the main path*



*Wooden benches are available along this route*



*Example of a picnic bench along the route, set away from the path on a natural compact stone surface*

## Wellbeing trail

### Route summary

**Distance:** 1.6km (1 mile)

The Wellbeing trail starts at the end of the Chopwell Wood Welcome trail and follows sections of the Pitman's Walk trail. Panels along the trail prompt visitors to stop, notice and connect with the forest. Whilst the trail has some more challenging, steeper gradients in comparison to the Pines Circular and Chopwell Wood Welcome trail, there is a compact stone surface which may be suitable for some off-road wheelchair or mobility scooter users who are able to manage steeper slopes and some uneven terrain. We have produced a video of this route which is available to view on the Chopwell Wood webpage.

### Path surfaces

- The path is made up of compact stone, which follows the forest tracks in sections, this is a natural environment with no paved surfacing along the trail.
- Expect to find some areas of uneven ground and loose stones at various sections of this trail.
- Examples of the different surfaces are provided in the images below.

## Images of the path surface:



*Some paths have a more uneven terrain with larger, loose stones and are covered natural material*



*There are sections of wide paths which follow the Forest track, these have a firm surface*



*Example of an area of loose grey stones on firm earth creates uneven ground*

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## Seating

- Benches can be found along this trail which provide space to rest. These are positioned along the side of the path. There is a mix of different seating types, some with and without armrests.
- Examples of seating types are provided in the images below:



*Example of a bench at the side of the path*



*Example of a picnic bench at the side of the path*



*Example of a new accessible bench with arm rests and a backrest*

## Detailed route description

- From the car park, the path passes through a gap next to a green barrier. The gap is approximately 1.5m wide. This is one of the forest roads shown in white on the map.



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- There is a path on the right where you will find a sign indicating the start of the Wellbeing trail and Pitman's Walk. The path along this section of the route becomes no narrower than 1.6m.
- From this point onwards there are regular waymarkers for the Wellbeing trail and Pitman's Walk which follow the same route.
- As you follow the path along further into the trail you will start to experience multiple uphill and downhill gradients, some of which are as steep as 1:6 and 1:8. There is another particularly steep section just before the Wellbeing trail crosses with the Chopwell Wood Welcome trail (white and black trail) half way around this loop.
- You may also experience some gentle cross falls on the path.
- Expect to find some small ditches or channels to the side of the path, these may be hidden by leaves particularly in autumn months.
- Signage and waymarker posts do not include any tactile text or braille.

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*There are panels along the Wellbeing trail inviting visitors to pause and reflect*



*The Wellbeing trail route is marked out using black and yellow signs on posts*



*Most of this route has wide paths*

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*There are some shallow ditches on either side of the path in some areas.*



*Steeper sections of the trail may be challenging for some wheelchair users*



*There is a section of the trail where a gully runs under the path, this makes the path uneven, sloping down on either side*

## Chopwell Wood Welcome trail

### Route summary

**Distance:** 1.12km (0.7miles)

This new trail introduced in 2024 is a long woodland loop with regular seating along the trail. Whilst this route mostly avoids the steeper gradients found across the Wellbeing trail. This route has been designed to be more suitable for wheelchair users and users with pushchairs. We have also produced a video of this route which is available to view on the Chopwell Wood webpage.

### Path

- The paths are no narrower than 1800mm wide and are often more than 2000mm wide.
- The path is made of firm compact stone with some loose stones, and fine natural topping material.
- There are some tree roots found towards the edges of the path.

### Seating

- There are some wooden benches along this route, these do not have armrests or backrests, new benches are due to be installed in mid-December 2024 which have these features and will offer regular places to stop and rest along the trail.
- There are no covered seating areas to shelter away from poor weather conditions.

## Detailed route description

- The starting point for this route is accessed approximately 20m from the accessible car parking spaces, on the right of the road.
- This path is waymarked with a black arrow in a white square, there is no tactile signage along this route.
- To access the start of this route, you must travel along a very short distance of road within the car park.
- The path is made up of compact stone with some small loose stones and fallen leaves.
- The gradient is gently sloping in the initial section of the trail (past the first bench) with a gradient between 1:20-1:30.
- Part way along the path there is a section with a steeper gradient of 1:10-1:15 which a manual wheelchair user may find challenging.
- You will experience some gentle downward and upward slopes as you continue along the route.
- Following the route anticlockwise there is a downhill gradient which becomes as steep as 1:10-1:15.

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## Images of the Chopwell Wood Welcome trail:



*Route from the accessible parking bays along the road to the start of the trail*



*The access point to this trail is from the road in the car park next to the two accessible parking bays*



*The path is made up of compact stone, in some areas it may be difficult to identify the edge of the path due to fallen leaves*

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*A moderate slope which may be more challenging for some wheelchair users*



*Example of one of the new accessible benches you will find along this trail*



*White and black wayfinding markers signpost this trail route*

## The Old Railway Footpath

### Route summary

**Distance:** 2.2km (1.37 miles)

The Old Railway Footpath is a circular route marked out using blue wayfinding markers. It is possible to turn off part way through the route along a path which leads to Chopwell Village; the route to Chopwell Village is signposted but has poor wheelchair access. There is a steep slope at the beginning and end of this route, leading to and from the car park. The top section of the route along the Old Railway Footpath is generally flat. There are no gates or stiles along this route.

### Path

- The path is made of compact stone, with some loose stones 1-3cm in diameter along the path.
- The paths are wider than 2m along the top section of this route.
- If you are following the route anticlockwise, the last section of the route joins back onto the vehicle access road. There is no designated footpath along this road.
- The access road on the last section of the route is tarmacked and provides a firm surface.



## Images of the Old Railway Footpath:



*The first part of this route includes some loose stones, which may be challenging for some wheelchair users*



*The first part of this route includes some loose stones, which may be challenging for some wheelchair users*



*This route has wide paths with a flat section where the Old Railway Line used to run*

## Seating

- Benches are provided along this route, and these do not have armrests or backrests. The travel distance between each bench is more than 100m.



*A wooden bench along the flat section of the trail*



*A wooden bench on a small mound of earth at the side of the path*



*A junction in the first section of the trail, with a wooden bench part way up the hill*

## Detailed route description

This route description follows the blue waymarked path anticlockwise from the information point. Images of this route are provided after the route description.

- The Old Railway Footpath route starts on the opposite side of the car park from the information point, crossing the Chopwell Wood access road; there is no formal crossing point, or tactile indicators.
- There is an initial, continuous steep slope from the car park at the start of the trail, with no level landings.
- The slope leads up to a junction with some wooden bench seating where the path starts to level off. At this point, follow the blue and white waymarkers to the left.
- The path flattens out at the top of the route along the Old Railway Line for approximately 800m.
- It is possible to leave this trail at a junction at the end of the flatter section and follow a path to Chopwell Village. This is signposted along the route, via two large rocks to leave the trail. Please note this route to Chopwell is via a narrow informal path across a field with uneven ground and steeper inclines.
- There is a slope (with a continuous gradient greater than 1:12) back up the access road back towards the car park; there is no formal footpath along this road.

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*A wheelchair user crosses the car park to get to the start of the Old Railway Footpath*



*The route is well signposted. At the start of the route the path passes next to a green barrier.*



*A wide path covered in leaves with some softer areas of path*

## Sensory Guide

### What to expect

Chopwell Wood provides a variety of different woodland walks, which differ in terms of distance and terrain. The routes provide plenty of naturally shaded areas under trees, with benches along the side of the trails to stop and rest. There are some quiet areas with picnic benches set away from the main path on the Pines Circular trail and Wellbeing trail.

### Different forest users

Many of the paths at Chopwell Wood are mixed use trails. Expect to cross paths with dog walkers, runners and sometimes cyclists along the trails. There is a bridlepath which runs through and then alongside part of the Old Railway Footpath, so you may cross paths with the occasional horse rider along the first section of this route from the car park.

### Sensory experiences

**Textures-** In autumn, fallen leaves may cover the path to create different ground textures. In wetter weather, areas covered in leaves may become slippery. Some areas of the forest may get muddy in wetter weather conditions, and icy when the temperature drops below freezing.

**Sounds-** Expect to hear a variety of different natural sounds along all of the trails, including birdsong and wind through the trees. There is a stream that runs along a short section of the Wellbeing trail. You may hear the sound of running, and falling water along this section of the trail. The site is located directly on the flightpath of Newcastle Airport, so you may hear noises of planes overhead.

**Smell-** Forest smells include natural scents of pine leaves.

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**Light-** The forest trees can create shaded areas, with natural light shining through on a sunny day. There is no artificial lighting in this forest.

**Shelter-** Please note there is no covered seating to escape from poor weather conditions.

# Chopwell Wood

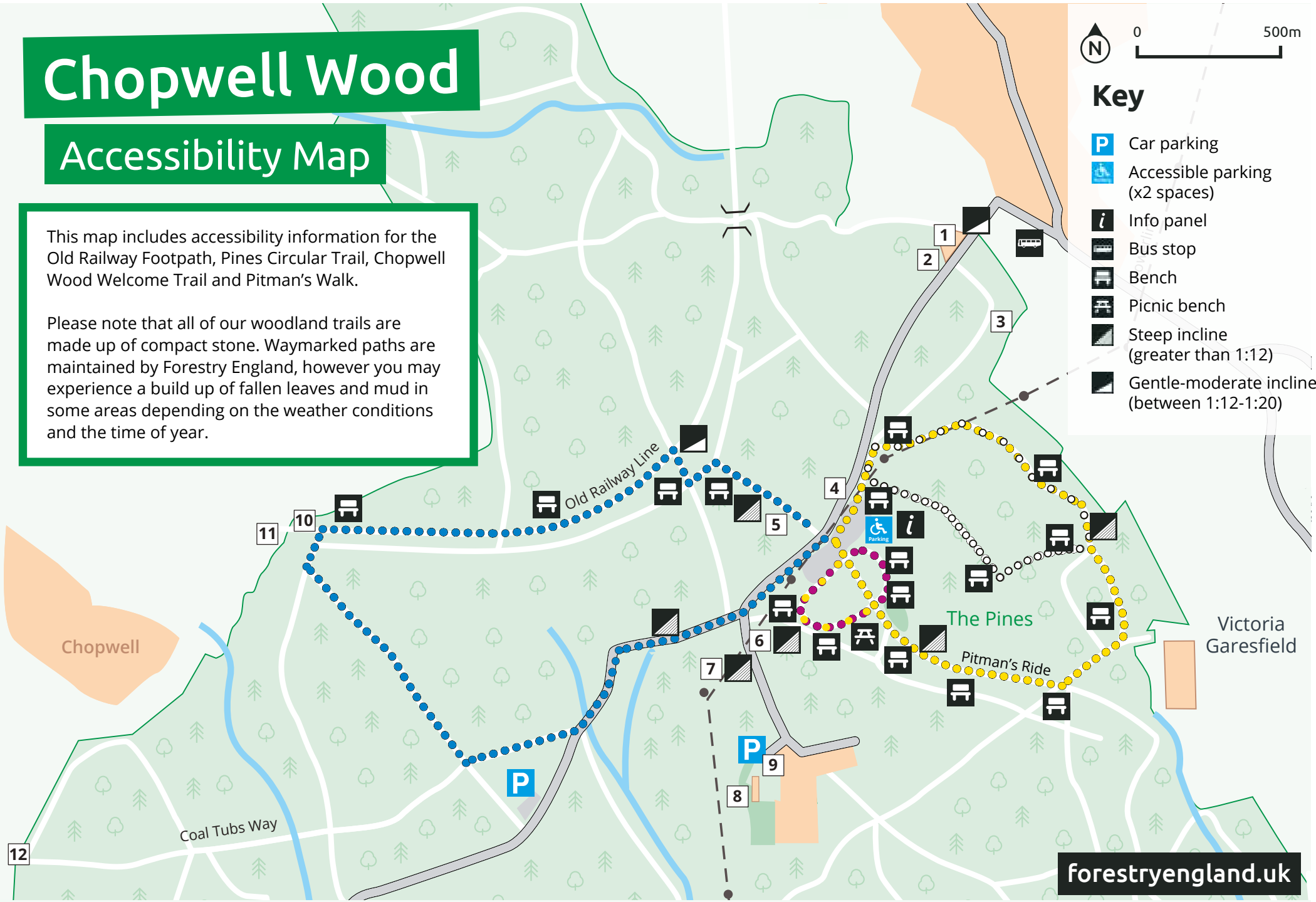
## Accessibility Map

This map includes accessibility information for the Old Railway Footpath, Pines Circular Trail, Chopwell Wood Welcome Trail and Pitman's Walk.

Please note that all of our woodland trails are made up of compact stone. Waymarked paths are maintained by Forestry England, however you may experience a build up of fallen leaves and mud in some areas depending on the weather conditions and the time of year.



- ### Key
- Car parking
  - Accessible parking (x2 spaces)
  - Info panel
  - Bus stop
  - Bench
  - Picnic bench
  - Steep incline (greater than 1:12)
  - Gentle-moderate incline (between 1:12-1:20)



[forestryengland.uk](http://forestryengland.uk)

# Chopwell Wood

## Trail Information

### Pines Circular Trail ●●●

0.5km (0.3 miles)

A circular trail through the pine woodland adjacent to the main car park. This trail has a good surface with no inclines, making it ideal for access by wheelchair users.

### Pitman's Walk ●●●

1.6km (1 mile)

A tranquil circular walk through the mixture of pines and broad leaves showcasing the vast variety the Wood has to offer. The trail has a good surface with few hills, making it accessible to most.

### Old Railway Footpath ●●●

2.2km (1.37 miles)

This trail is perfect for those looking for a gentle stroll along the old colliery railway line. The trail offers a good surface with few hills.

### Chopwell Wood Welcome Trail ○○○

1.1km (0.7 miles)

A trail that starts and ends near to the two accessible parking bays in the main car park, following some of the flatter sections of Pittman's Walk. The trail route has a good surface with few inclines.

There is also a signposted Wellbeing Trail which follows sections of the of the Pines Circular Trail and Pitman's Walk. You can find more detailed information about each trail in our trail videos and access guide.

## Emergency info

### Name of key location:

Chopwell Wood, Rowlands Gill,  
Gateshead, NE39 1LT

Grid Ref: NZ 136580

Nearest access road: B6315

### Nearest A&E hospital facilities:

Queen Elizabeth Hospital, Queen  
Elizabeth Avenue, Gateshead, NE9 6SX  
T: 0191 482 0000

In case of an emergency call 999.

Inform Forestry England, 0300 067 4200

- 1 Pedestrians must travel along a small section of road with no footpath.
- 2 Pedestrian and vehicular entrance from High Spen.
- 3 Path becomes narrow in places with overhanging branches.
- 4 Accessible parking spaces x2.
- 5 Steep continuous incline uphill at start of this trail.
- 6 Steep incline downhill towards the classroom.
- 7 Steep incline following the road to the classroom.
- 8 Forest classroom.
- 9 Car parking for the Forest classroom only.
- 10 Access via a grass field, with some steep inclines and no formal path until the Old Railway Line.
- 11 Pedestrian entrance from Chopwell.
- 12 Pedestrian entrance from Chopwell, no step-free access.