

Contacts

Hastings Borough Council -
parks@hastings.gov.uk

Groundwork South and the Bale House -
balehouse@groundwork.org.uk

Find us

Groundwork - The Bale House -
📍 @thebalehousenr

Hastings Borough Council -
📍 @HastingsBoroughCouncil
🐦 @hastingsbc
📷 @hastingsboroughcouncil

Hastings Country Park Nature Reserve



Produced by Hastings Borough Council - May 2022.

Photographs by Murray Davidson, Andy Phillips, Darren Reigner.
Map by Fitzpatrick Woolmer.

Map Inside

01424 451066
my.hastings.gov.uk



Welcome...

A picturesque nature reserve of national importance with stunning coastal views within the High Weald Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty.

Hastings Country Park Nature Reserve has 345 hectares (853 acres) of ancient gill woodland, heathland, grassland and farmland together with 5 kilometres of dramatic sandstone cliffs and coastline. Much of the area has been designated a Special Area of Conservation (SAC) and a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) due to the unique wildlife and fossil rich soft rock cliff and slope. The magnificent cliff sections reveal some of the oldest rocks in south-east England which are rich in fossilised plants and animals from 145 million years ago!

Remember:

- follow the Countryside Code
- follow the signs and keep to the footpaths – there is no access to farm fields unless they are signposted
- keep an eye on and pick up after your dog
- keep dogs under control, especially when near the grazing ponies and cattle
- barbecues are only permitted in designated areas on the East Hill and Fairlight Road Picnic site
- the use of metal detectors is prohibited
- cycling is only allowed on designated routes
- take your litter home with you
- do not pick wildflowers, please leave for everyone to enjoy.

Help us protect this extraordinary nature reserve.



Enjoy the outdoors

The outdoors is great for your wellbeing. It is a place for relaxation, quiet contemplation and activity. Whatever you like to do outdoors, you will enjoy it more if you prepare in advance.

Please remember:

- check your route and local conditions
- plan your adventure - know what to expect and what you can do
- care for nature – do not cause damage or disturbance
- bring a bag with you and take your rubbish and food waste home, use public bins or recycle where possible. Dropping litter spoils the beauty of the countryside and can be dangerous to wildlife and livestock.
- wear suitable clothing when you visit – some paths can become muddy and slippery when wet
- finally enjoy your visit, have fun, make a memory.

There are steep sections of cliff throughout the Country Park. These cliffs are unstable due to natural erosion. Please keep to the paths and do not go or allow dogs near to the edge.

Wildlife

Much of Hastings Country Park Nature Reserve is of national and European importance for its special wildlife and habitats. Soft rock cliff, acidic grassland, heathland, freshwater marsh and ancient gill woodlands are all found along this unique area of maritime cliff.



The gill woodlands of Warren, Fairlight and Ecclesbourne Glen are of national importance for rare mosses and liverworts which thrive here. These glens are also outstanding for the stunning display of bluebells, wood anemone and yellow archangel that carpet the woodland floor in spring. These woodlands also support an important population of dormice.

Hastings Country Park Nature Reserve is an outstanding site for birdwatching. Species include peregrine falcon, yellow hammer, raven, snipe and whitethroat. You may





be lucky enough to spot the rare black redstart sitting on a fence post or the bright eyed Dartford warbler perched on top of a gorse stem.

The site is well known for the spring and autumn migration that can be seen here. Look out for the inshore migration of brent geese and common scoter in spring and the

spectacular 'swoops' of swallow and house martin in autumn. Many continental birds and insects use the site on migration and rarer migrants such as wryneck, red-rumped swallow, pallas's warbler, and yellow-browed warbler have been seen in recent years.



The heathland, cliffs, cliff top grassland and woodland are home to many rare and unusual insects, some of which are found in very few other places in the country. The sandy heathland and acidic grassland is home to many different ground nesting bees, wasps and beetles, including bee wolf wasp, minotaur and green tiger beetle. The sandy cliffs are home to a large population of grey-bush crickets, long-horned bees and six-belted clear-wing moths. Glow worms may be seen adorning the woodland and path edges in late June and early July.

Conservation grazing

Exmoor ponies and Belted Galloway cattle can be found roaming within a wide area of the reserve. They are the most effective way to manage large areas of the nature reserve, helping manage the habitats of the reserve sustainably and naturally.

You may well come across a pony or Beltie whilst walking in the reserve. They are not domesticated but live freely in the reserve so please leave them to graze in peace and do not try to feed them. You may get hurt and you could make the animals ill.



Visiting with your dog

Keep your dog under effective control to make sure it stays away from wildlife, livestock, horses and other people unless invited. You should:

- always keep your dog on a lead or in sight
- be confident your dog will return on command
- make sure your dog does not stray from the path or area where you have right of access.

It is good practice wherever you are to keep your dog on a lead around livestock.

Let your dog off the lead if you feel threatened by livestock or horses. Do not risk getting hurt protecting your dog. Releasing your dog will make it easier for you both to reach safety.

WELCOME TO Hastings Country Park Nature Reserve

Explore, discover, enjoy!

Dramatic maritime cliffs, sheltered ancient gill woodland, glorious heathland, cliff top grassland, old sandstone quarries and farmland managed especially for wildlife combine to make this one of the foremost coastal nature reserves in the UK.

The 345 hectare (853 acre) site is a designated Local Nature Reserve and is the only place where the High Weald Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty is exposed to the sea. Its resident rare and endangered wildlife, as well as the fossil-rich maritime cliffs, hold local, national and international importance earning areas of the park the status of Special Area of Conservation (SAC) and Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI).

The site has a rich industrial and archaeological heritage with evidence of human activity dating back to the Middle Stone Age. It has played a strategic role in defending the nation with signal stations, RAF bases and secret bunkers. The landscape and views have also inspired world renowned writers, artists and poets.

What will inspire you today?

**Please remember -
this is a very special place**

*Take nothing but photographs and memories.
Leave nothing but footprints.*

For further information

www.hastings.gov.uk
01424 451999 (out of hours emergencies)



Visit Us

The Bale House

Come and experience our award-winning Visitor Centre which opened in July 2021. Built from more than 500 straw bales with sheep wool insulation, it is a sustainable building that sits lightly on the earth. This innovative and award winning building is managed by Groundwork South and houses a café, outdoor seating area and information centre where you can discover fascinating facts and stories about the Nature Reserve and chat to our friendly volunteers.

Places to see

The Firehills - Next to The Bale House, main carpark and the radar station. Excellent views to France and Dungeness across a panorama of colourful heathland. There are three accessible trails, suitable for wheelchairs, mobility scooters and pushchairs, leading to picnic tables and stunning viewpoints.

Warren Glen - A historically important site, farmed and used by Stone Age inhabitants. Spectacular views towards Ecclesbourne Glen and an impressive show of spring flowers along Brakey Bank (see map). Steep paths into shaded ancient gill woodland of sweet chestnut, birch and oak. The glen is the focus for our conservation grazing.

Fairlight Glen - a magical woodland which is home to the once popular Victorian attraction, The Dripping Well. Explore the paths through ancient gill woodland bursting with spring flowers, ferns and rare mosses and liverworts.

Ecclesbourne Glen - footpaths wind their way through sheltered woodland. In Spring listen out for the song of the chaffinch and breathe in the smell of wild garlic. Look out for peregrine falcons and fulmars along the cliffs. The glen was the landing place and entrance to the Iron Age hill fort which was once located on the East Hill. A place where smugglers brought in their goods, being careful to avoid the gaze of the Coastguard watchtower which was built here in 1819.

North's Seat - Fine views of Wealden Sussex from the highest point in Hastings. Named after Fredrick North, formerly Hastings mayor, local MP and father of botanical illustrator Marianne North. Pleasant walks around a small heathland area and located near the accessible Fairlight Road Picnic site.

Volunteer with us

There are plenty of volunteering opportunities within the park, from being an assistant at The Bale House, getting stuck in with practical conservation tasks or helping with events and activities. Groundwork South organise activities for volunteers all the year round. If you're interested in getting involved or finding out more please ask at the information desk in The Bale House or email Bale.House@groundwork.org.uk

The Friends of Hastings Country Park Nature Reserve

If you have been inspired by your visit to this beautiful Nature Reserve please join the Friends. Information can be found at www.friendsofhastingscountrypark.org.

Access

The park lies to the East of Hastings and can be reached either by car via Fairlight Road, by bus from Hastings or Rye, or by foot via the East Hill (see map). There are three trails that are suitable for wheelchair users, mobility scooters and buggies which can be found at the Firehills near The Bale House Visitor Centre.

The paths are clearly sign posted. Look out for information boards along the way where you can learn about the site's habitats, wildlife, history, geology and archaeology.