

Red Kite Trail

the Detailed Guide

A circular walking route through the scenic lower Derwent Valley in Gateshead and County Durham with opportunities to see magnificent red kites and a host of other wildlife.



Introducing the Red Kite Trail

The Red Kite Trail meanders through the beautiful Derwent valley in Gateshead and County Durham. This is ideal red kite country with a mixture of mature woodlands, wetlands and open countryside. The Trail, at just over 18 km (11 miles), is a circular route that can be walked in two stages over two days, or as a longer walk in one day. It provides many opportunities to see red kites and a variety of other wildlife as well as passing areas of important historical and heritage interest. The route is marked in both directions by Red Kite Trail waymarkers with arrows indicating the recommended Trail direction.



Kites can be seen anywhere along the route however, key 'Red Kite Viewpoints' are identified where superb views of the valley can provide the ideal vantage point for watching kites. Opportunities to view some well-known features of Tyneside, the Tyne Bridge and SAGE Gateshead, are available on clear days from the Trail's higher reaches.

Red Kites and their Return to Northeast England



The red kite is one of the most beautiful birds of prey. They eat mainly carrion but will also take some live prey, such as worms and beetles, as well as occasional small mammals and birds. They are easy to spot in flight as they are large with a wingspan of a little under two metres, have a distinctive forked tail and fly in a buoyant, elegant manner with few wing flaps and much twisting of their tail. They can be seen throughout the Derwent Valley and exploring areas further afield in the northeast region.

Red kites disappeared across much of the UK because of human persecution but a national programme of reintroduction projects, commencing in 1989, has seen the species return to a number of areas in England, Scotland and Ireland.

Northern Kites was the project that returned red kites to northeast England, after an absence of over 170 years. It was a partnership between the lead partners Natural England and the RSPB, alongside Gateshead Council, Northumbrian Water, the National Trust and the Forestry Commission, with additional funding from the Heritage Lottery Fund and SITA Trust

The Project was the UK's seventh red kite project, but unlike the others, the setting was urban fringe, with a focus on Gateshead's section of the Derwent valley, just minutes away from the heart of urban Tyneside. It is a world first in re-introducing kites into a semi-urban environment.

Ninety-four young kites were released into the valley between 2004 and 2006. It was in the final year of the release programme that the first red kites began to breed in the northeast region.



Local Wildlife

Red kites can be seen throughout the lower Derwent Valley along with many other beautiful, and sometimes rare, wildlife. Kingfisher, heron, dipper, mute swans and sometime the elusive otter can be seen while walking past the lake in Derwenthaugh Park and along by the River Derwent.

The Trail passes through several woodlands that are full of spring flowers, such as bluebells and wood anemone, and numerous fungi in the autumn. Bird life is also abundant with regular sightings of great spotted woodpecker and nuthatch. In summer, many butterflies, such as common blue, large skipper and meadow brown, can be seen in the valley's wildlife-rich grasslands and meadows.

Local History and Heritage

The lower Derwent Valley has a varied and interesting past of which some evidence remains. Much of the valley has been dominated by the mining industry often in the form of drift mines. This industry was supported by the construction of the Derwent Valley railway taking coal from collieries further up the valley down to the staithes on the River Tyne. The line opened in 1867 and carried up to half a million passengers until it closed in 1962. The railway crossed the river Derwent on several bridges, or viaducts, of which one of the most magnificent is the Nine Arches Viaduct. This is now a central feature of the Derwent Walk Country Park.

One of the valley's other defining features is the forty-metre tall 'Column of Liberty' in the Gibside Estate. This was the ancestral home of the Bowes Lyons family built by George Bowes in 1750. The National Trust now manages the Estate.

Local Visitor Facilities



Derwent Valley Country Park

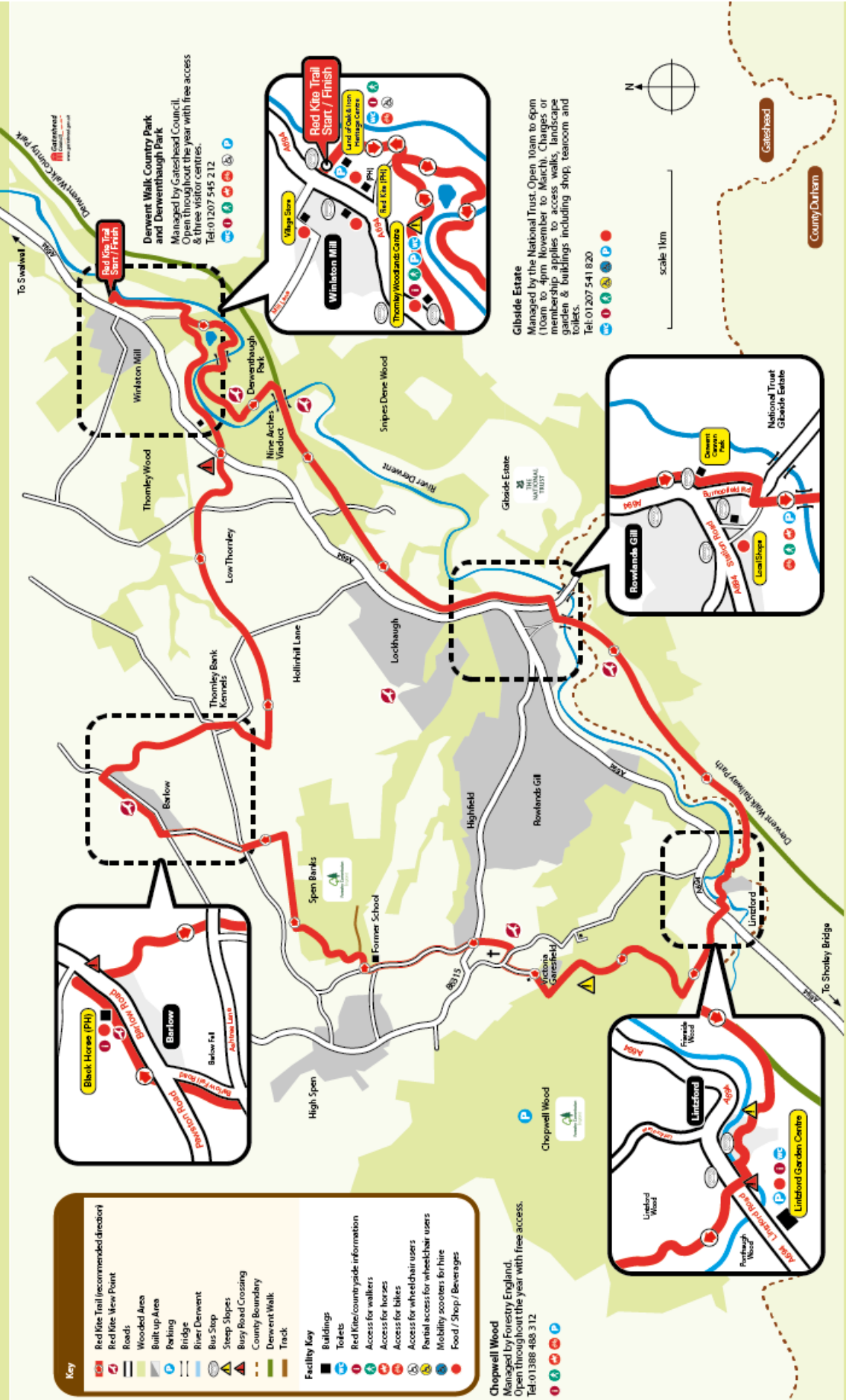
The Trail passes through, or close to, a range of countryside sites including Derwenthaugh Park, the Derwent Walk Country Park, The National Trust's Gibside Estate and Chopwell Woodland Park. The remainder of the Trail route follows public footpaths, bridleways, and farm tracks, with some roadside walking and through some villages. Other visitor facilities are also located along the route and are listed in the Trail Stage Fact Files below.

The whole of the Red Kite Trail is summarised below.

Red Kite Trail Fact File

Start/Finish	Derwenthaugh Park car park at Winlaton Mill, Gateshead. (OS grid ref: NZ186609).
Distance	18 kilometres (11 miles)
Terrain and Accessibility	Winlaton Mill to Lintz Green, via Rowlands Gill – Level, well-surfaced paths. Suitable for wheelchair and pushchair users. Lintz Green to Winlaton Mill, via Barlow – Some steep, uneven paths, with some steps and stiles. Unsuitable for wheelchair and pushchair users.
Transport Links	By road... Take the A694 from the A1 just west of Metrocentre on the outskirts of Gateshead. By public transport... Catch Go North East's 'Red Kite' bus (services X45, X46, & X47) from Newcastle's Eldon Square Interchange, Central Station (for mainline rail connections) or from the Metrocentre Interchange (nearest local train station) <i>For bus information</i> visit https://www.gonortheast.co.uk/ or telephone Traveline 0871 2002233. <i>For train information</i> visit https://www.nationalrail.co.uk/ or telephone 08457 484950 or visit https://www.traveline.info/ . By bike... The Red Kite Trail through the Derwent Walk Country Park is part of Sustrans' C2C long distance cycle route. This connects with: Keelman's Way, Consett and Sunderland Railway Path, Derwent Walk Railway Path, Waskerley Way Railway Path and Lanchester Valley Railway Path.
Parking	Land of Oak and Iron car park at Winlaton Mill (the start and finish of the Trail). Other car parks are located along the Trail route.
Local Facilities	A range of countryside and visitor facilities, such as toilets, pubs and information centres are located along the Trail. Individual facilities are listed in the Trail Stage Fact Files below.
What you need	Binoculars, walking boots, outdoor/wet weather gear.
OS Maps	Landranger 88, scale 1:50000 and Explorer 307 & 316, scale 1:25000.
Caution!	Several road crossings, some extremely busy. Wet conditions underfoot in inclement weather. Steep slopes and uneven surfaces.

Red Kite Trail



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This detailed guide provides directional information along the two stages of the Trail. Each stage is further divided into named sections and includes additional local wildlife, historical and heritage information

Watching for Kites

Kites can be seen along both stages of the Trail. They can be seen soaring over fields searching for food, chasing each other in flight or perched on fence posts or in trees. They could be directly overhead, where their deeply red feathers contrast greatly with white patches under their wings to make them easily identifiable or they could be in the distance surveying the landscape. Coloured wing tags may also be visible on some of the birds.



Stage One - Winlaton Mill to Lintzford, via Rowlands Gill

Stage One of the Red Kite Trail is summarised below.

Red Kite Trail - Stage One Fact File

Start/Finish	Winlaton Mill to Lintzford, via Rowlands Gill.
Distance	7.5 kilometres (4 miles).
Terrain and Accessibility	<p>Winlaton Mill to Rowlands Gill – Level, well-surfaced paths through Derwenthaugh Park and the Derwent Walk Country Park. Multi-user route, suitable for wheelchair and pushchair users.</p> <p>Through Rowlands Gill – level, well surfaced pavements along the A694 and the B6314 with one road crossing point. Access to bus stops suitable for wheelchair and pushchair users to return to Winlaton Mill car park.</p> <p>Rowlands Gill to Lintz Green – Level, well-surfaced paths along the Derwent Walk Railway Path. Multi-user route, suitable for wheelchair and pushchair users. Lintz Green to Lintzford – Steep, uneven footpath through woodland to Lintzford. Public footpath, unsuitable for wheelchair and pushchair users. Access to bus stops for walkers to return to Winlaton Mill car park.</p>
Transport Links	<p>By road... Take the A694 from the A1 just west of Metrocentre on the outskirts of Gateshead.</p> <p>By public transport... Catch Go North East's 'Red Kite' bus (services X45, X46 & X47) with stops to access the Trail at Winlaton Mill, Rowlands Gill and Lintzford.</p>
Parking	Winlaton Mill and Lintzford lay-by.
Local Facilities	<p>At Winlaton Mill:</p> <p>Derwenthaugh Park & Derwent Walk Country Park - managed by Gateshead Council. Tel: 01207 545212. Further details below.</p> <p>Land of Oak and Iron Heritage Centre Café. Tel: 01207 524898.</p> <p>The Red Kite pub – Facilities: parking, food, toilets. Tel: 0191 4145840.</p> <p>Convenience store: Shop, beverages, Tel: 0191 4142561.</p> <p>At Rowlands Gill:</p> <p>Gibside Estate - managed by the National Trust. Tel: 01207 541820 Further details below.</p> <p>The Happiest Sandwich Shop in the World - food. Tel: 01207 542361.</p> <p>Derwent Park and Caravan Park - parking, shop, toilets, food. Tel: 01207 543383.</p> <p>At Lintzford:</p> <p>Lintzford Garden Centre – parking, food, shop, red kite information. Tel: 01207 549777.</p>
Caution!	Road crossing point on the B6314 in Rowlands Gill. Steep slope, uneven surfaces from Lintz Green to Lintzford.

Stage One Start Point – Land of Oak and Iron Heritage Centre car park at Winlaton Mill on the A694 (OS grid ref: NZ186609).

Section One - Derwenthaugh Park

At the back of the car park, enter Derwenthaugh Park through the access point. Follow the surfaced path towards the river Derwent. At the T-junction, turn right onto the main multi-user route, which runs parallel to the river.

The Development of Derwenthaugh Park

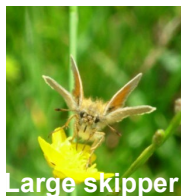
Until 1986, Derwenthaugh Park was the site of Derwenthaugh Coke Works (opened 1928). The original Winlaton Mill village was also located here, on your right-hand side when first entering the Park. It was moved up the hill after the First World War, to allow for the development of the coke works. In the 1800's and 1900's, Crowley's Ironworks dominated the site. These were the largest ironworks in Europe at the time.

After a straight stretch following the river, the Trail curves to the right. (Off to your left is a footpath leading to a footbridge known as the Butterfly Bridge and a ford located at the bottom of Clockburn Lonnen that has been used for centuries to cross the river Derwent.) Back on the Trail, it curves to the left where it crosses a track (where the Trail reconnects to Derwenthaugh Park on its return route) and then passes through wildflower meadows and developing woodland.

The History of Clockburn Lonnen

A historic highway that once connected Durham to Newburn.

On 16th July 1650, Cromwell's army of 16,000 men passed this way main en-route to the Battle of Dunbar.



Large skipper

On sunny summer days, a range of common grassland butterflies such as meadow brown, and large and small skippers, can be seen in the wildflower meadows feeding on the nectar produced by flowers such as birds-foot trefoil, hay rattle, red and white clover.

Around the lake in summer, you may see nesting mute swans, black and white tufted ducks and grey heron and listen for the high-pitched call of little grebes. Swallows, sand martin and house martin sweep low over the water to feed on the abundant insect life emerging from the water.

While crossing and walking alongside the river, watch out for otter, which is often noted here, and the beautiful, banded demoiselle damselfly. Dipper, grey wagtail, cormorant and kingfisher can also be seen in this area.

On your approach to Clockburn Lake, on your right, cross over a small stone bridge, which spans the Lake's outlet to the river. Follow the curving route, around the eastern shore of the lake and come to the river crossing, a broad bridge with stone parapets. Turn left to cross the bridge, and then head right to follow the Trail alongside the river.

Follow the main path, sweeping around a meander in the River Derwent with the slopes of Goodshields Haugh (Kite Hill) up to your left and continues uphill giving the first views of the Nine Arches Viaduct.

At the top of the slope is a sculpture on your left known as 'The Stone Garden' (made for the former Cokeworks by Portuguese sculptor, Alberto Carneiro in 1996). Path access to Goodshields Haugh lies behind the sculpture. Follow this path to visit the summit, which, as a Red Kite Viewpoint, offers excellent all round views and a great chance to see soaring red kites.

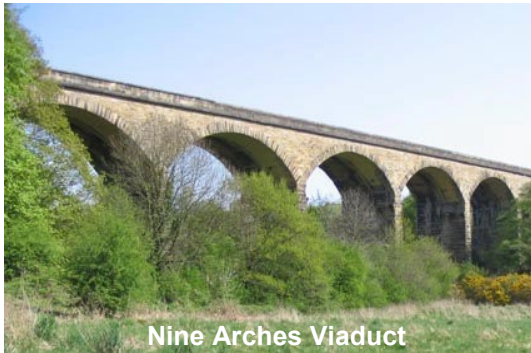
Return to the Stone Garden sculpture and, back on the Trail, continue straight ahead onto the Derwent Walk and turn right.



Mute swans on Clockburn Lake

Section Two - Derwent Walk Country Park

Stay on the main path, crossing over the magnificent Nine Arches Viaduct. This is another Red Kite Viewpoint as views from the viaduct head back across Goodshields Haugh and the direction you walked along the Trail and to the east, over Owlett Hill and Lockhaugh meadows. Watch out for kites as they could be seen in any direction!



Nine Arches Viaduct

Red Kite View Points

Opportunities for great views of red kites are available from the top of Goodshields Haugh, Kite Hill and the Nine Arches Viaduct.

Kites may be seen soaring, feeding or perching in nearby woodland. This area is also the location of where the first kites nested after their return to the region.



Red kite on nest

The History of the Derwent Walk

The Derwent Walk opened in the late 1960's following the closure of the Derwent Railway line in 1962 and is now managed by Gateshead Council.

The viaducts, station platforms and the 800-metre long Lockhaugh cutting remain as evidence of the line today. (Clay removed in the construction of the cutting was used in making the pale, yellow-toned Lilley bricks that in the late 1800s and early 1900s, were used to construct many of the local terraced houses).

The remains of Hollinside Manor, a thirteenth century manor house, also lie within the Country Park. The Manor is located to the north of the Nine Arches Viaduct, perched on the hill to the east and was the home of the Harding family for two hundred years!

A short distance on from the viaduct, the Trail passes through Lockhaugh cutting (originally created for the railway) beyond which views open out and, on your left, offer extensive views of the Gibside Estate.

The Trail follows a straight route for almost two kilometres, giving you the chance to concentrate on taking in the surroundings and local wildlife. Along this stretch, there are opportunities to veer from the main path and head downhill to meadows and Far Pasture bird hide.

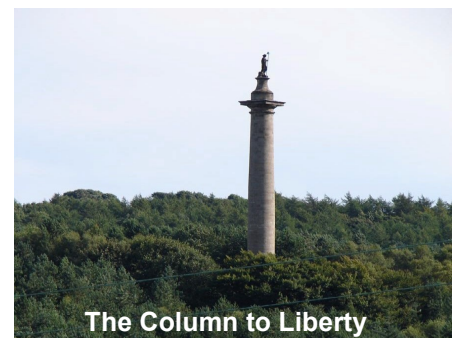
Continue on, until the gently rising slope of the Trail brings you to the exit of the Derwent Walk on to the roadside pavement at the A694. At this point, turn left.

Section Three—Through Rowlands Gill

After exiting the Derwent Walk, continue along the pavement of the A694 (Station Road) towards Rowlands Gill. Pass the car showroom to your left, and reach the junction with Burnopfield Road. Do not cross the road, unless you wish to enter the village itself or access the bus stops to catch the Red Kite bus to return to the start of the Trail or other destinations.

Turn left down the B6314 (Burnopfield Road) passing the access to the Derwent Park Caravan Site (public toilets are available at this site). Continue, down the gently sloping pavement along the left-hand side of the road, almost to the point where the road curves left over Derwent Bridge and the river. (The entrance to the National Trust's Gibside Estate is located around this bend and over the river).

At this point cross Burnopfield Road and then, almost immediately, cross over the road directly in front (Stirling Lane). Continue straight ahead up the gently rising slope, to the surfaced path that takes the Trail on to the Derwent Walk Railway Path and into County Durham.



The Column to Liberty

Gibside Estate

Gibside Estate was essentially the work of George Bowes, a member of the Bowes-Lyon Family. He transformed the eastern slopes of the valley to make a landscape garden between 1729 and 1760. The Estate encompasses the Column to Liberty, the Banqueting Hall, Stables and Chapel. It is now owned and managed by the National Trust and is open to the public.

Almost immediately on accessing the Railway Path, you will cross the river over the Rowlands Gill viaduct, an excellent viewpoint for seeing kites over the village and up the valley. Cross over the viaduct and continue along the Trail. Views of Friarside Chapel are available through the trees to your right, approximately 400m from the southern end of the viaduct. Another 400m on and views of the valley towards Rowlands Gill and Highfield open up. This Red Kite Viewpoint provides an excellent spot to sit and scan the skies for kites.



Friarside Chapel

Friarside Chapel

Beyond the embankments of the old railway line, towards the riverside fields lies the remains of one of the valley's hidden gems, Friarside Chapel.

Located on private land, this is the remnant of an old plague hospital, located on the monk's pilgrim route between the Venerable Bede's monastery at Jarrow and the facilities at Blanchland, at the top of the Derwent valley.

The Trail continues along a long straight section, eventually swerving around the gardens of a terrace of old railway cottages. At the end of the terrace, and before the platforms of the old Lintz Green Station, the Kite Trail leaves the main Derwent Walk path and exits diagonally off to the right passing the old Station House.

Section Five - Lintz Green to Lintzford

This first 30 metres of this section of the Trail from the Derwent Walk is a permissive path only, and right of public way should not be inferred by the landowner's willingness to allow passage across this land. It connects walkers to a public footpath, which descends quite steeply down the valley sides. This path is distinctly more rugged under foot and can be muddy in winter or after wet weather.

Proceed down the curved path and as it sweeps away. Note the site of a major landslip to your left, known as Sliding Braes. The Trail continues downhill past pastures and woodlands and old cottages associated with the Lintzford Ink works. Just after passing a rocky outcrop to the left of the path, the Trail enters the small settlement of Lintzford. Pass between the buildings and cross the beautiful Lintzford Bridge, before reaching the A694.

At the A694, walkers have the option to either continue on the Trail (a further 10.5 kms or 7 miles) or catch the Red Kite bus to return to the Trail's starting point at the car park at Winlaton Mill or their selected destination. Take care crossing this very busy road; national speed limits apply here. This is also a good vantage point to watch for kites in this part of the valley.

Facilities are available at nearby Lintzford Garden Centre.

Lintzford

Lintzford is a small settlement based around the old mill and ink works that drew water from the Derwent and worked on this site for over 100 years. The works closed in the late 1980s and has since been re-developed into houses. It is a beautiful spot to look for wildlife on the river such as dipper and goosander.



River Derwent from Lintzford

Stage Two—Lintzford to Winlaton Mill, via Barlow

Stage Two of the Red Kite Trail is summarised below.

Red Kite Trail—Stage Two Fact File

Start/Finish	Lintzford to Winlaton Mill, via Barlow.
Distance	10.5 kilometres (7 miles).
Terrain and Accessibility	<p>The majority of Stage Two is unsuitable for wheelchair and pushchair users due to steep slopes, uneven surfaces, steps, stiles and gates.</p> <p>Lintzford to Chopwell Woodland Park – One major road crossing of A694 gated access to public bridleway with some uneven surfaces and slight incline.</p> <p>Through Chopwell Woodland Park – Gated access to the Woodland Park with mostly well-surfaced paths. Some paths accessible to horse riders and cyclists. Some very steep inclines.</p> <p>Chopwell Woodland Park to Spen Banks Wood – Gated exit from the Woodland Park. Includes public roadway and pavements with two road crossings (at B6315 and Lintzford Lane) and public footpath through agricultural grasslands. Two stiles and rough surfaces. Some slight inclines.</p> <p>Spen Banks to Thornley Kennels, via Barlow – Varied surfaces along rough forest track, unsurfaced woodland walks, farm tracks and roadside pavement. Six road crossings (Ashtree Lane, Barlow Fell Road, Pawston Road (twice), Garesfield Lane & Hollinhill Lane), some steep inclines, steps and several stiles. Trail passes through the farmyards of South Farm in Barlow.</p> <p>Thornley Kennels to A694 – Varied surfaces along farm tracks and public footpath through agricultural arable land. Trail passes through the farmyards at Low Thornley. Some steep slopes. Two Road crossings (Thornley Land and A694).</p> <p>A694 to Derwenthaugh Park, via the Thornley Woodlands Centre – Gated access to public footpath through woodland and farm track. Some uneven surfaces and boardwalk. Some steep slopes.</p> <p>Derwenthaugh Park to Winlaton Mill - Level, well-surfaced paths through Derwenthaugh Park. Multi-user route, suitable for wheelchair and pushchair users.</p>
Transport Links	<p>By road... Take the A694 from the A1 just west of Metrocentre on the outskirts of Gateshead.</p> <p>By public transport... Catch Go North East's 'Red Kite' bus (services X45, X46 & X49) from Newcastle's Eldon Square Interchange, Central Station (for mainline rail connections) or from the Metrocentre Interchange (nearest local train station) <i>For bus information</i> visit https://www.gonortheast.co.uk/ or telephone Traveline 0870 6082608 <i>For train information</i> https://www.nationalrail.co.uk/ or telephone 08457 484950 or visit https://www.traveline.info/</p>
Parking	Lintzford lay-by, Chopwell Woodland Park, Black Horse pub, Thornley Woodlands Centre, Winlaton Mill.
Local Facilities	<p>At Lintzford:</p> <p>Lintzford Garden Centre – parking, food, shop, red kite information. Tel: 01207 549777.</p> <p>At High Spen:</p> <p><i>Chopwell Woodland Park</i> - managed by the Forestry Commission - parking, countryside information, access for walkers, horses, and bikes. Tel: 01388 488312 Further details below.</p> <p>At Barlow:</p> <p>Black Horse pub – (Limited opening hours) parking, food, red kite information and toilets. Tel: 01207 542808.</p> <p>At A694:</p> <p>Thornley Woodland Centre - parking, café, toilets, red kite & countryside information, access for walkers only. Tel: 01207 545212 Further details below.</p> <p>At Winlaton Mill:</p> <p>Land of Oak & Iron Heritage Centre and Café. Tel: 01207 524898.</p> <p>Derwenthaugh Park & Derwent Walk Country Park - managed by Gateshead Council. Tel: 01207 545212. Further details below.</p> <p>The Red Kite pub – Facilities: parking, food, toilets. Tel: 0191 4145840.</p>
Caution!	<p>Many road crossings some over very busy roads.</p> <p>Wet conditions underfoot in inclement weather.</p> <p>Steep slopes and bank sides, some in proximity to river.</p>

Stage Two Start Point – Lintzford on the A694 (OS grid ref: NZ148572) Section Six – Lintzford to Chopwell Woodland Park



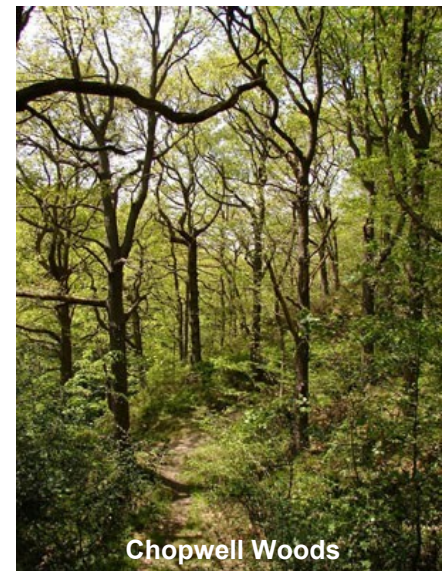
The Red Kite Trail heads west from the A694 at Lintzford via a gated track on the roadside opposite and left of Lintzford bridge, where Stage One of the Trail joins the main road. (Please take care crossing this busy road).

The track is bordered on either side by arable fields and pasture that are sometimes inhabited by Highland cattle. Ahead, there are views up to the largely coniferous woodlands of Chopwell where the Trail is heading. As the track approaches the woodland, the path slope begins to rise passing a number of tanks or reservoirs that were once used to hold water for Lintzford Mill and Inkworks. The Trail then enters Chopwell Woodland Park.

Forestry Commission signs indicate the Trail's arrival into Chopwell Woodland Park. Enter the woodland through the gate and follow the waymarkers straight ahead where the Trail meanders up the steep hill of the central path. Pass picnic tables that are an ideal rest point on the uphill journey and for views back across the valley before turning right at the path junction.

After a short distance, the Trail curves left at the sand quarry following another long ascent passing an oak-leaf seat sculpture on your left within the woods. At the T-junction, turn right to follow the Red Kite Trail along a track that dips and levels out before climbing up to the left. At this point, there is the opportunity to visit the Chopwell Bird of Prey Watch Point that lies to the right of the Trail. Views may include kites as well as more common species such as sparrowhawk and kestrel and sometimes buzzard and peregrine falcon.

Back on the Trail, continue uphill between the plantations of mainly Scots pines and Douglas firs passing a bench on your right. At the top of the hill, follow the Trail turning right at the next junction where the carved seat is located. Here, the Trail passes through a mature beech plantation following the path to the right which heads downhill and out of the wood through a gate next to the terraced housing of Victoria Garesfield.



History of Chopwell Woodland Park

Thousands of years ago, Chopwell Woodland Park was once part of an extensive forest area full of deciduous trees, mainly oak and hazel that covered the countryside from just south of the River Tyne to Allenheads. By the 1500's, the woods underwent centuries of management when timber was required for castle and bridge repairs and later, ship construction.

Forestry England now own and manage the woods. Their role started in 1919 when they began replanting. Following the designation as a woodland park in 1993, a much greater emphasis was placed upon conservation and recreation.

Section Eight - Victoria Garesfield to Spen Banks Wood

After the gate, turn left and head away from the terraced houses. At the T-junction at the end of the road, turn left and follow the road (please be aware of traffic). The views to the left along the woodland edge and across open land offer potential kite sightings. Continue to the road junction, turn right and walk along the road (Lintzford Lane), as there is no footpath and into the traffic for approximately 40 meters. Please take care, as this is one of the few sections of the Red Kite Trail requiring walkers to travel on the road rather than pavement or footpath. Cross the road to access a public footpath located below the churchyard to continue on the Trail.

Mature hedgerows bound this path that allow glimpses to the right towards a pond and woodlands over which kites are seen on a daily basis. At the end of the hedgerow, climb over the stile; turn left and head up over the hill. At this point, look around for some great views across the valley. This is a Red Kite Viewpoint as views extend east across to Burnopfield and Gibside and north towards Barlow Fell and Spen Banks wood all regularly frequented by kites.

From the top of the hill, continue over the rise following the hedge line, before descending to the road to exit the field at the stile. Cross over the road (Hookergate Lane) on to the pavement and turn into the side street (Spen Lane). For safety reasons, please walk on the right-hand side of the road along the pavement. At the end of the houses, the pavement ends, and walkers will need to travel along the road for a distance of approximately 400 meters as the Trail passes Hookergate School, now called Charles Thorp Comprehensive School, on your right. After the school, turn right onto Spen Lane, at the junction with School Lane, continue downhill and at the bottom turn right into Spen Banks wood.

Section Nine - Spen Banks to Barlow

Head along the forest track through the metal access barrier, passing a field on the left before shortly after, turning left on to a forest path and head up the slope into the woods (managed by the Forestry Commission). This section of the Trail follows informal woodland paths that have variations in surface and levels and may become very wet and muddy in winter or in extremely wet weather conditions.

Continue on a long ascent along the old sunken path, passing holly and larch plantations. The Trail continues up the slope and at the top emerges onto the line of an old wagon way. Turn right and follow the Trail along the boundary between woodland and farmland but please be aware that this section may become wet and muddy in winter or in extremely wet weather conditions.



Wildlife to Watch for in Farmland

Hedgerows border many of the fields that the Trail passes through. They are great refuges for wildlife hiding amongst the more common shrub species of hawthorn, blackthorn and dog rose. Willow trees, such as goat and crack willow, break up the linear features. This declining habitat hosts a variety of bird life such as bullfinches, sparrows and yellowhammer.

Several species of mammal can sometimes be spotted in the meadows such as fox and rabbit.

From the old line, the Trail turns left up the second set of steps, out of the woods and onto a farm track across the open farmland of Barlow Fell. This area is extensively used for foraging by kites as they pass between the Derwent valley and Barlow Burn which is located on the west side of the Fell. As the track continues up slope there are distant views to the right of some of Tyneside's well-known features including the Tyne Bridge, Millennium Bridge and Sage Gateshead. At this point, you are approximately 11 km (7 mile) from the city centre of Newcastle.

At the end of the farm track, climb over a stile before crossing Ashfield Lane and continue straight ahead along Barlow Fell Road to Barlow village. This section of the Trail requires you to walk along the road for approximately 120 meters before pavement starts on the left-hand side, adjacent to the houses of the Crescent in Barlow village. Please take extreme care over this section of the Trail.

Section Ten - Barlow to Thornley Bank Kennels

Continue along the pavement to the end of Barlow Fell Road where the Trail crosses Pawston Road. Head right and walk along the road (which changes to Barlow Road) into the village. Views of Barlow Burn can be seen to your left, with particularly good views from the back of the Black Horse pub car park, an ideal vantage point for watching red kites across the valley. For this reason, the car park is identified as a Red Kite Viewpoint.

From the pub, turn left along Barlow Road until the pavement ends. At this point, walkers are required to cross the road with extreme caution, as there is poor visibility to see oncoming traffic. The public footpath enters the farmyard of South Farm and heads right before the buildings. Once past the buildings the Trail continues along a farm track into open farmland and back across Barlow Fell. Views of the Millennium Bridge and the Sage etc are also visible at this point.



At the end of the track, the Trail emerges onto Garesfield Lane. Turn right at the field gate and continue along the road towards the white buildings of Thornley Bank Kennels. Opposite the entrance to the kennels, the Trail turns right past a metal barrier along another track.

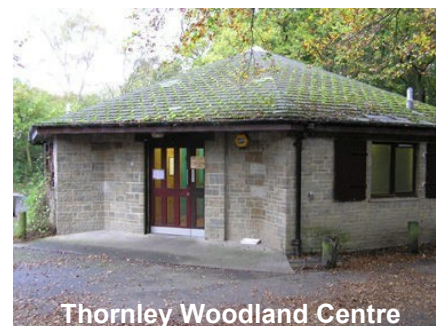
Section Eleven - Low Thornley

The Trail heads along the track back towards Spen Banks wood. This short section of the Trail is a permissive path only and any right of public way should not be inferred by the landowner's willingness to allow the Red Kite Trail to cross their land. Approximately 200 meters along the track turn left onto public footpath along the line of the old wagon way. The Trail follows this line through a strip of woodland that fades into hedgerows crossing farmland. The Trail then crosses Hollinhill Lane and heads left following the hedgerow of the field before heading down slope and skirting a wooded dene. It then continues past the old railway bridge towards Low Thornley Stables. At the stables, turn left onto a gated footpath for a short distance before crossing the road (Thornley Lane). Take care here.

Section Twelve - Thornley Woodland Centre to Derwenthaugh Park

After crossing the road, the Trail follows a public footpath passing between two converted farm buildings. Travel along the top edge of the field before turning to the left and down along a sunken track that is bounded by hedgerows on either side. At the end of the track is the A694. This section of road is very busy and extreme caution must be taken when crossing the road.

After crossing the A694, the Trail enters Paddock Hill woods, part of the Derwent Walk Country Park. At this point, the Trail passes one of the visitor centres in the country park, the Thornley Woodlands Centre. The Trail guides walkers along a boardwalk behind the Centre car park before heading on the footpath through the woods. (Walkers may wish to make a short detour to visit the Thornley Bird Hide, a feeding station in the woods across the road from the centre. Keys are available from the centre.)



Wildlife to Watch for in the Woodlands

Bird life is abundant in the woodlands around the route of the Trail. Areas dominated by larch plantations are favoured by siskin and redpoll and in some years, crossbill. Other species preferring coniferous woodlands are coal tit, goldcrest, chaffinch and brambling.

Many of these birds can be seen from the Thornley bird hide often being chased by the sparrowhawk. Other wildlife seen includes nuthatch, great spotted woodpecker and on occasion roe deer.

The woods are full of wildflowers with bluebells, wood anemone, lesser celandine and greater stitchwort providing a variety of colour in spring.

As the Trail emerges from the woodland, it passes fields on the left and steep wooded slopes on the right (locally known as Scarry Heights). Walk through a kissing gate at the top of the slope and head down the path to a stable yard.

Pass through another kissing gate and turn left through the yard and along a surfaced track. When the track reaches a gate and a junction, the Trail turns right and re-enters Derwenthaugh Park. Take the path to the left and follow the river back to the junction for the car park at Winlaton Mill, to return to the Trail starting point.

Countryside Sites in the Lower Derwent Valley

The Red Kite Trail passes through or close to the following countryside sites:

Derwent Walk Country Park and Derwenthaugh Park

Managed by	Gateshead Council.
Location	Swalwell to Rowlands Gill.
Features	Waymarked trails for walkers, horse riders and cyclists through woodlands, meadows, wetlands, riverside and reclaimed industrial sites; all linked by the Derwent Walk (the line of the old Derwent Valley Railway).
Visitor Facilities	Two visitor centres: Thornley Woodland Centre , Tel: 01207 545212. Location: on A694, Rowlands Gill. Opening: 10am until 4pm daily. Facilities: parking, café, toilets and red kite & countryside information. Land of Oak & Iron Heritage Centre , Tel: 01207 524898. Location: On A694, Winlaton Mill. Opening: 9am to 5pm (varies seasonally). Facilities: Parking, café, toilet and red kite & countryside information. https://landofoakandiron.org.uk Swalwell Visitor Centre Location: Swalwell. Opening: 9am to 5pm daily, closed weekends and Bank Holiday Mondays.
Opening	Free access throughout the year.
Access	Pedestrian access only from the Thornley Woodland Centre. Access for walkers, horses, bikes and wheelchair users from other access points.
Kite Viewing	From anywhere in the Parks.
Contact	Telephone 01207 545212 https://www.gateshead.gov.uk/

The Derwent Walk continues from Rowlands Gill to Consett as the Derwent Walk Railway Path, managed by Durham County Council. Tel: 0191 3833594.

Gibside Estate

Managed by	National Trust.
Location	Rowlands Gill.
Features	An 18th century landscaped garden with woodland and riverside walks and historic buildings.
Visitor Facilities	Tearoom, larder, historic buildings (Banqueting Hall, Chapel and Column to Liberty) and toilets. Facilities: parking, toilets, food, shop, red kite and countryside information.
Opening	10am to 6pm (10am to 4pm November to March). Charges or membership applies to access walks, landscape garden & historic buildings. Free access to the public to tearoom, larder and toilets.
Access	Access for walkers, partial access for wheelchair users, mobility scooters for hire.
Kite Viewing	From anywhere around the Estate.
Contact	Telephone 01207 541820. www.nationaltrust.org.uk .

Chopwell Woodland Park

Managed by	Forestry England
Location	High Spen.
Features	Waymarked trails for walkers, horse riders and cyclists through woodlands managed for recreation, conservation and timber.
Visitor Facilities	Parking and countryside information.
Opening	Free access throughout the year.
Access	Access for walkers, horses, bikes and partial access for wheelchair users.
Kite Viewing	From the bird of prey watch point.
Contact	Telephone 01388 488312. https://www.forestryengland.uk/

Public Rights of Way

The Red Kite Trail travels along many paths that form part of an extensive network of public rights of way throughout the lower Derwent Valley. There are several different rights of way classifications that allow access to different users. These are:

Footpath: Pedestrians only. Cycles, horses and motor vehicles are not allowed.

Bridleway: Pedestrians, horses and cycles only. No motor vehicles allowed.

Byway: Pedestrians, horses and cycles but may have some motor vehicle rights.

Permissive path: Access granted by the landowner who decides the type of use allowed. Does not carry the same legal rights as public rights of way.

The Trail follows a combination of these classifications. Please follow any access designations and obey the Countryside Code:

- Show consideration and respect for other users of the countryside.
- Keep dogs under close control at all times and take particular care near livestock.
- Leave gates and property as you find them or follow instructions on the sign.
- Follow paths and use gates, stiles or gaps in field boundaries when provided.
- Cyclists slow down and give way to walkers and horse riders.
- Horse riders give way to walkers.
- Protect plants and animals and take your litter home.



Photo Acknowledgements:

Red kite (front cover) courtesy of Ray Wilby

Red kite (page 2) courtesy of Ray Wilby

Red kite on nest (page 7) courtesy of Doug McCutcheon

Visitor Facilities in the lower Derwent Valley

There are numerous facilities located around the lower Derwent Valley. Some of them are listed below. However, please do not consider the provision of this information by Northern Kites as a recommendation or endorsement, they are collated here as a point of information.

Shops and Resteraunts

Accomodation

<p>Land of Oak & Iron Heritage Centre Location: Winlaton Mill. Facilities: Parking, toilet, café, information, kite viewing from the park.</p>	
<p>Winlaton Mill Convenience Store Location: Winlaton Mill. Facilities: shop, beverages. Tel: 0191 4142561.</p>	<p>Derwent Park and Caravan Park Location: Rowlands Gill. Facilities: Camping, parking, shop, toilets, food. Kite Viewing: from the Park. Tel: 01207 543383.</p>
<p>The Red Kite Pub Location: Winlaton Mill. Facilities: parking, food, toilets. Kite Viewing: from beer garden. Tel: 0191 4145840.</p>	<p>Cut Thorn Caravan Site Location: Rowlands Gill. Facilities: Camping, toilets (and many more for camping purposes). Kite Viewing: from the site. Tel: 01207 270230.</p>
<p>The Happiest Sandwich Shop in the World Location: Rowlands Gill. Facilities: food. Kite viewing in the village. Tel: 01207 542361.</p>	<p>Wensley Guest House Location: Rowlands Gill. Facilities: Bed & Breakfast. Tel: 01207 534884.</p>
<p>Lintzford Garden Centre Location: Lintzford. Facilities: parking, food, shop, red kite information. Kite Viewing: from outdoor seating area. Tel: 01207 549777.</p>	<p>East Byermoor Guest House Location: Near Wickham. Facilities: Bed and Breakfast. Tel: 01207 272687.</p>
<p>Black Horse Pub Location: Barlow. (Limited opening hours). Facilities: parking, food, red kite information, toilets. Kite Viewing: from conservatory and car park. Tel: 01207 542808.</p>	

For more accommodation information, please contact Gateshead Tourist Information on 0191 4338420

The Red Kite Trail

This detailed Guide was written and produced by the Northern Kites for the Friends of Red Kites and updated in February 2021.

Any sightings of red kites can be sent via our website at <https://friendsofredkites.org.uk/contact-us>