

Access Statement for WWT Welney Wetland Centre



Introduction

WWT Welney Wetland Centre offers an excellent day out for people of all ages and abilities. The Ouse Washes are one of the largest areas of lowland wet grassland habitat left in the Fens and are of vital importance to many species of bird, plant, insect and animal. Welney Wetland Centre offers fantastic access onto the wetland habitat of the Ouse washes which are over 400 years

old, as well as views across restored wet grassland and the surrounding arable farmland.

Welney consists of low-lying flat land typical of that found in the Fens, with a three-storey visitor centre, giving elevated views of the Fens landscape. Bridges, ramps and paths with steady to no incline are used throughout the site except on the furthest reaches of the reserve. The paths lead to accessible hides overlooking a rich wetland habitat filled with a huge variety of wildlife.

We hope that the information provided here will enable all of our visitors to get the most from their visit. If you should experience any difficulties during your visit then please inform a member of our staff.

Our facilities at a glance

- The reserve and centre grounds have tarmac or compacted stone paths, the furthest reaches of the reserve are grassy paths with uneven surfaces.
- Hides have compacted stone or boardwalk ramps to give access and most have windows of varying heights.
- Lifts are found in the centre to give access to all floors and to the bridge giving access to the reserve.
- There are two electric mobility scooters which can be hired free of charge – advanced booking is advised.
- Two manual wheelchairs are also available to use free of charge – advanced booking is advised.
- There are fixed hearing induction loops in the centre foyer, the Wigeon cafe Goodwin room and the Main Observatory.
- Trained assistance dogs only (i.e. guide dogs). No other dogs are permitted.
- Accessible toilets are on the ground floor and the first floor of the visitor centre.
- Free car parking. Tarmac surface and reserved bays for disabled visitors closest to the centre, the rest of the parking bays are gravel over hard-surfacing. We have a lay-by at the front of the centre which can be used for dropping off. Overflow parking can be found at the far end of the car park, but again this is gravel surfacing.

We look forward to welcoming you. If you have any queries or require assistance please phone 01353 860711 or email info.welney@wwt.org.uk

Pre-Arrival

By car

Welney Wetland Centre is located 12 miles North of Ely, 26 miles North of Cambridge and 33 miles East of Peterborough. The turning from the A1101 is 2 miles South of Welney village at the New Bedford Suspension Bridge, signposted Ten Mile Bank. Or from the North leave the A10 at the turning for Ten Mile Bank. From all directions there are brown tourist signs, which have been updated in summer 2017.

Occasionally, the A1101 between Welney village and Suspension Bridge floods and is closed to cars, buses and bicycles. This normally happens during the winter after periods of prolonged rainfall. Under such circumstances, access to WWT Welney is always possible from Ely or Downham Market, off the A10.

By bus

Unfortunately, there are no regular bus routes to the Welney Wetland Centre.

There is now a pre-booked minibus service available in East Cambridgeshire which can collect from Ely or Littleport train stations. This service is available to book Monday-Friday 7am-7pm, with bookings made at least one working day in advance to the date needed. More details are available on the website here - <http://www.wwt.org.uk/wetland-centres/welney/plan-your-visit/directions/>

By rail

The nearest mainline train station is Littleport, approximately 7 miles South East of us. This is a short bicycle ride (not recommended in winter, please be aware of farm traffic and make sure you are highly visible) or taxi journey away. Unfortunately it is not safe to walk from the train station to the visitor centre as the rural roads do not have footpaths on them.

If you are using rail and bike, a quieter road route is accessible from Downham Market train station, approximately 10 miles North East of us.

Further details on rail approaches can be found here - <http://www.wwt.org.uk/wetland-centres/welney/plan-your-visit/directions/>



Details of some local taxi firms with accessible vehicles can be found below, please contact them to pre-book a taxi if needed.

Parker's Taxis – 01353 860111

Anglia – 01353 863877

Littleport Cabs – 07495 768906

By bike

Visit the Sustrans website; we are located on [Sustrans route](#), number 11.

A free cycle rack is available for use at the front of the visitor centre – please bring your own lock.

The approach road to the car park entrance is tarmac but is not paved and is uneven at the edges.

A map of the site can be requested in a larger format so that it can be made easier to read.

Opening times

Open 7 days a week, except 25 December

Summer (March to October)

9.30am to 5.00pm, visitor centre and reserve (last admissions are at 4.30pm)

Wigeon cafe is open 10am - 4pm daily

Winter (November to February)

Mondays, Tuesdays and Wednesdays

10.00am to 5.00pm - visitor centre and reserve (last admissions are at 4.30pm)

Thursdays - Sundays

10.00am to 8.00pm – visitor centre and reserve (last admission at 6.30pm)

Wigeon cafe is open -

10am – 4.30pm Monday - Friday

10am - 6pm Saturday & Sunday

2017 Admission Prices

Prices are shown inclusive of Gift Aid and without. The Gift Aid admission price includes a voluntary donation, which enables us to claim the tax back as part of the Government's Gift Aid scheme.

Ticket	With Gift Aid	Without Gift Aid
Adult	£8.45	£7.68
Concession (65+, disabled, full-time student and unemployed)	£6.49	£5.90
Child (4-16 years)	£4.12	£3.75
Family (2 adults and 2 children, 4-16 years)	£22.61	£20.55
Children (under 4 years)	free	free
Essential helpers assisting disabled visitors	free	free

Under 16s must be accompanied by an adult.

Visitors with disabilities are charged the appropriate rate for their age and circumstances and whether they are part of an organised group visit (12 people or more are eligible for discount, booking essential). Carers are offered free admission when assisting a visitor with disabilities. Registered assistance dogs are welcome on site.

The Wildfowl & Wetlands Trust is a charity with members receiving free admission to all ten Wetland Centres in the UK. For further details visit www.wwt.org.uk or ask a member of staff.

Car Parking Facilities and Arrival

Car parking

The car parking on site is free to use. The car park is gravel and tarmac and contains approximately 80 parking bays including 3 disabled bays, closest to the centre. There is also an area at the far side of the car park set aside for coaches. There are tarmac footpaths from the car park to the Visitor Centre.

It is permitted to drop passengers off at the front of the Visitor Centre (this area has a dropped kerb) but vehicle owners are requested to then park in the

main car park as this area is also used for delivery lorries and emergency service vehicles.

During the winter months when the visitor centre is open some evenings the car park and walkway to the centre is illuminated by a set of waist-high lights which are set to a timer.

Entrance

The main entrance to the centre is level with the ground outside. The two sets of doors can be opened electronically by wheelchair-accessible buttons. The doors open inwards and are heavy if opened manually. The width of the doors when open is 65inches/1650mm.



Visitor centre

Ground floor

On entering the visitor centre you will find:

- Entrance foyer containing welcome desk, manned at busy times by volunteers, the flooring here is wood panelling and all level. There is a hearing induction loop at this desk. A pen and pad of paper are available at this desk when manned. Large windows allow natural light into this area; this is enhanced by spotlights in the ceiling.
- Fenland Worlds tunnel to the left giving access to our museum area with video, audio and text information about the history of the area, the

- flooring here is lino and all level. Chairs are provided at each video station. This area is illuminated by spotlights in the ceilings but this is a darker area of the centre due to no windows letting in external light.
- Through Fenland Worlds, access is gained to the Pond Room our educational room for indoor family activities and room hire, the flooring here is lino and all level. Chairs are provided at microscope stations and for craft activities. Large windows allow natural light into this area; this is enhanced by spotlights in the ceiling.
 - Access to men's, ladies and 1 disabled toilet can be found around the entrance to the Fenland Worlds tunnel.
 - Lift and stairs access to the first floor can be found to the right.

First floor

The first floor consists of:

- Gift shop and admissions desk (with dropped section to counter). A pen and pad of paper is available in this area. Large windows allow natural light into this area; this is enhanced by fluorescent tubes at the sides and spotlights on the shelves. During the centre opening hours staff are on hand to help visitors with their needs/questions. We have two electric scooters and two manual wheelchairs which are free to hire from the shop. Binoculars can be hired from this area for £5 with a £20 deposit return to you on returning the binoculars to us. Activity backpacks are available to children during the summer months, free of charge (recommended ages 4-8). The wildlife sightings board can also be found in this area, sightings are hand written in large, clear print. A day planner is offered to all visitors, and our staff highlight points of interest and landmarks to any newcomers. A larger version of this leaflet can be requested at the desk.
- Access to men's, ladies, 1 disabled toilet and baby changing room
- Gallery, this area is illuminated by a strip of fluorescent lights running down the entire centre of the building.
- Wigeon cafe, non-fixed seating is provided in this area, three highchairs are available for use. Tables are situated in a way to allow wheelchair users to move freely within this environment but if you are having difficulties our staff happy to help move tables or chairs. There is a hearing induction loop in this area. A pen and pad of paper is available in this area. Large windows allow natural light into this area; this is enhanced by fluorescent tubes at the sides of the room. During the cafe opening hours staff are on hand to help visitors with their needs/questions.

- Cafe veranda, wooden seating is provided in this area.
- Lift and stairs access to the second floor (access to the reserve)
- The flooring throughout this floor is wood panel except in the toilets where it is lino.

Second floor

The second floor consists of a door at the top of the stairs or the direct opening of the lift onto an outdoor landing giving access to the bridge that goes onto the reserve. The flooring here is non-slip wood onto a bridge that is also a non-slip surface.

Wheelchairs and Mobility Scooters

We have two electric scooter and two manual wheelchairs which are available to hire free of charge. To avoid disappointment it is recommended that this is booked by telephone prior to your visit. A short induction programme is given to every new user. Should you need assistance on the day, please contact reception on 01353 860711.

Nature trails

- Bridge to reserve; to get to all the nature trails on the reserve a 54 metre bridge is crossed which leads into the main hide from which all trail start. This crossing takes about 10 minutes and is over non-slip hard surface.
- Screen bank trail to Friends hide – 940 metres from the main hide, there is a branch of footpath to the Lyle hide which is an additional 50 metres. The straight trail to Friends hide takes about 30 minutes, add an extra 5 minutes for the addition of Lyle hide. The first half of this trail is on tarmac with passing bays to allow wheelchairs/pushchairs to pass each other or other visitors; the second half of the path to Lyle or Friends hides is compacted stone and is flat and firm underfoot. The turning for Lyle hide is signposted.
- Screen bank trail to reedbed hide – 470 metres. This trail takes about 15 minutes. The majority of this path is flat tarmac; the last section is on a non-slip boardwalk.
- Summer walk – 3.5km. This trail takes about 2 hours. The first section of this trail as far as the reedbed hide is flat tarmac, the majority of this trail is an uneven, grassy path. This path is mown into the vegetation and so visitors are asked to keep to the mown pathway and not deviate.

Getting Around

The Visitor Centre is a large 3 storey building with access throughout – there is a lift from the ground floor (entrance area, Fenland Worlds exhibition and education pond room) to the first floor (toilets, café, gallery and shop) and from the first floor there is another lift to take you to the bridge to the reserve.

From the bridge there are ramps to the Main Observatory, which has an electric door that opens on people approaching it. To come back out of the hide, a push button reopens the door. A further ramp leads down to the tarmac pathway that gives access to other hides. All the hides and the Dragonfly ponds are accessible via tarmac, compacted stone or boarded pathways.

The Main Observatory and some hides have wheelchair accessible windows. The Main Observatory is heated in the winter for birdwatching and swan feeds.

The terrain on the Reserve is flat. However, the Summer Walk are mown grass pathways only. These may be accessible by manual wheelchairs with assistance but would not recommend for electric wheelchairs.

Dogs

Assistance Dogs/Guide Dogs are welcome. Please ask if you require a bowl of water for your dog. No other dogs are allowed access to the Visitor Centre or Reserve.

Induction Loops

The Centre has induction loops fitted in the Wigeon Café Goodwin Room (small meeting room) and also in the main observatory.

Guided Tours

Guided tours of the Visitor Centre can be provided for groups and also Reserve tours are available. These must be booked in advance.

Leaflets and Map

The day planner provides basic site information and a map, the wetland adventures leaflet provides information on the WWT sites found throughout the

UK (both are free literature available from admissions or the gift shop). Similar details are available on our website www.wwt.org.uk/welney .

Fire Alarm

The Visitor Centre is fitted with smoke and heat detectors linked to the alarm system together with push alarm points at wheelchair level. If the fire alarm should activate, you will be moved to a safe area by a member of staff. The Centre also has an EvacuSafe chair to assist with safe evacuation down stairways.

Wigeon Café

The Wigeon Café is in the Visitor Centre on the first floor. Opening times are 10am to 4pm (summer) and 10am to 4.30pm Monday to Wednesday and 10am to 6.30pm Thursday to Sunday (winter).

Service is from a tray counter. Visitors requiring assistance to carry trays of food and drink to a table should ask a member of our staff.

There are always vegetarian options for lunch. Should you have special dietary requirements, then please call in advance to speak to our Catering team on 01353 860711.

Staff in both the café and shop are happy to assist by reading our menus or labels and describing or locating products for those visitors with visual impairments.

Updated June 2017.