

Cumbria
Wildlife Trust



The Solway Coast AONB

The Solway Coast AONB (Area of Outstanding National Beauty) was designated in 1964 and covers around 73 square miles (118km) of the Solway Plain. It stretches from Rockcliffe in the north-east to Maryport in the south-west. The primary purpose of the AONB is to conserve and enhance the natural beauty of the area.

Solway Wetlands Landscape Partnership Scheme

This book has been produced as one of the many projects undertaken by the Heritage Lottery Funded, Solway Wetlands Landscape Partnership Scheme. This 5 year scheme brought together a wide range of partners with an interest in the distinctive heritage and ecology of the Solway Wetlands has worked to:

- Improve the condition of wetland sites
- Conserve the built and natural heritage of the area
- Improve access for the public
- Provide opportunities for people to learn about the distinctive character of the area
- Provide training in heritage skills and environmental conservation
- Provide volunteering opportunities

Finding out more

www.solwaycoastaonb.org.uk

www.solwaywetlands.org.uk

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Remember the Countryside Code

RESPECT – PROTECT – ENJOY

Respect other people:

- Consider the local community and other people enjoying the outdoors
- Leave gates and property as you find them and follow paths unless wider access is available

Protect the natural environment:

- Leave no trace of your visit and take your litter home
- Keep dogs under effective control

Enjoy the outdoors:

- Plan ahead and be prepared



EXPLORE THE SOLWAY WETLANDS



A unique heritage landscape



A UNIQUE HERITAGE LANDSCAPE



The Solway Wetlands area is a remarkable place; a mosaic of wetland habitats located along England's Solway Coast. Northwards, across the Solway Firth are views of Criffel and the Scottish Coast. Southwards lie Skiddaw, Grasmere and the other Lakeland giants.

This area was once much wetter but drainage, first by the monks of Holme Cultram Abbey and more recently for agriculture and by peat extraction has left the landscape we see today – coastal marshes, raised mires, wet grassland and rivers and streams.

This booklet describes fascinating places that will help you explore and learn about this special place. They include: the once great Holme

Cultram abbey at Abbeytown, a number of wetland sites and three visitor centres. Many of the sites have short, waymarked walks and more information on the rich natural and cultural heritage of the wetlands.

So immerse yourself in a watery wonderland – explore the Solway Wetlands today!



Volunteers excavating the infirmarer's lodging

The Cistercian Monks of Holme Cultram Abbey owned much of the land hereabouts and they soon set about winning profit from it. They grew crops on the drier land and grazed sheep on the wetter rough grasslands. At one time, the Abbey owned the largest flock of sheep in North West England.

To preserve meat and fish the Monks developed a salt-making industry. In 1536, 21 salt pans were operating between Angerton and Seaville. To produce salt the monks first trapped sea water on the highest tides in brine ponds, or 'kynches'. The brine was concentrated by a process known as 'sleeching' – adding salt-rich sand. Peat from Wedholme flow was used as fuel under metal salt pans to evaporate the concentrated brine and produce the finished article - salt crystals. To transport the peat to the 'salt cotes' and produce to the Abbey, the monks built roads and many 'clapper bridges' using large slabs of sandstone.

There is little quality building stone available between Maryport and Carlisle and the cost of transporting stone made it too expensive for all but the rich. The wealthy abbey built buildings of stone, including the church at Newton Arlosh, with its fortified tower to protect against Scottish raids.

Most farms and houses were built using a method called clay dabbin. As you explore the Solway see if you can spot clay dabbins with their irregular and thick walls. You can see a clay dabbin at Campfield Marsh and learn more about these fascinating buildings of the Solway by picking up a Solways Built Heritage booklet.



helping to build a clay dabbin

SPECIAL WILDERNESS



Sphagnum Moss

The raised mires, or bogs, of the Solway Wetlands are a rare and internationally important habitat. Peat extraction, mostly for horticultural use, and agricultural drainage has led to the destruction of most of our lowland raised bogs and now just 9,600 hectares remain in England. A significant proportion of this is in the Solway Wetlands.

The bogs began to form at the end of the last ice age, about 10,000 years ago. As the ice melted, water was trapped in hollows in the clay soil that was left behind. Sphagnum mosses and other vegetation colonised the ponds.

As vegetation in the active growing layer of moss dies it accumulates in the cold acidic water forming peat at a rate of approx 1mm per year. Over thousands of years the bogs have grown upwards developing a domed surface with centres some height above the surrounding landscape.

You can learn more about the formation of lowland bog at the Solway Wetlands Centre or at the viewing tower and platform at Glasson Moss.



A well-camouflaged Snipe

The bogs that remain are precious places. On the one hand, they are huge carbon sinks, locking up vast amounts of carbon from the atmosphere. On the other, they have become home to many specialised plants insects and other creatures that live here.



Cotton grass

Many species of Sphagnum Moss have evolved and these can cope with various levels of wetness. Sedges and rushes also grow where the ground is wet. White tufts of Cotton Grass are a fine sight on top of the bog in the summer and if you look closely beside the boardwalks you might see a Sundew, one of our rare native carnivorous plants, but relatively abundant here. The yellow flower of Bog Asphodel turns into an orange spike of seeds in the autumn.

In spring and summer, the raised mires are alive with insects. Look out for dragonflies and damselflies hunting around pools of standing water.

The coastal marshes and wet grasslands are also great places to watch wildlife. In the winter, huge flocks of Barnacle Geese feed on grass through the day before flying across the Solway Firth to roost on the Scottish side. Other birds, such as lapwing and snipe breed here in the summer.



Damselfly

SOLWAY WETLANDS CENTRE



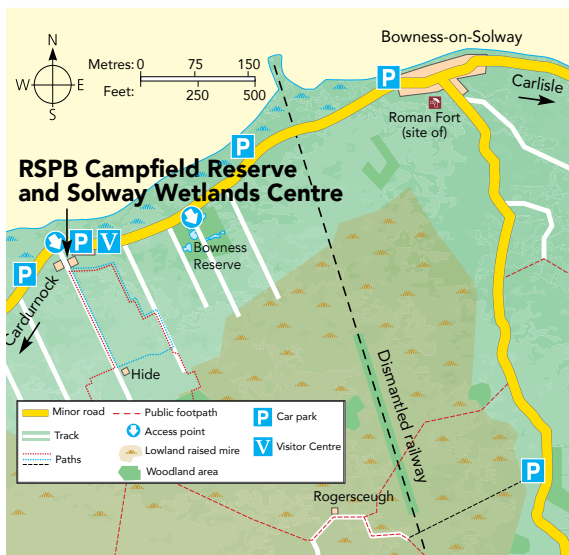
Solway Wetlands Centre

Facilities

- Free Parking
- Toilets
- Disabled Access
- Family Friendly
- Interactive Exhibition
- Discovery Field with pond dipping, bug hunts, children's play area
- Refreshments
- Picnic Area

You will find the Solway Wetlands Centre in a renovated barn at RSPB Campfield Marsh. Inside, there is a fascinating exhibition on the Solway Wetlands. You can find out more about the areas unique landscape heritage and rich wildlife. A range of interactive screens enable children and adults alike to explore further the rich habitats of the Solway and learn what makes this landscape so special. A large screen will inspire you with stunning images of the other reserves and sites and provide information on events and highlights from across the Solway Wetlands.

The Discovery Field provides a picnic area and plenty of activities for families including pond dipping and bug hunting. Here you will also find a clay dabbin, built by volunteers with an exhibition on these unique vernacular buildings of England's Solway Coast.



Clay dabbin at Campfield Marsh

SOLWAY COAST DISCOVERY CENTRE



Solway Coast Discovery Centre

The Solway Discovery Centre offers a fascinating journey through time exploring the creation of the distinctive landscape we see today.

The exhibition starts some 10,000 years ago with the ice sheets of the last ice age grinding their way south and west forming the Solway Firth along with the flat wetlands and extensive lowland raised mires that characterise the Solway Plain.

The exhibition continues with the influence of human settlement. The turbulent history of the area is told with the Roman occupation and building of Hadrian's Wall followed by Viking settlement leaving place names and the ancient fishing technique called Haaf netting. The medieval period sees the establishment of Holme Cultram Abbey and with the coming of the monks the creation of the Solway Landscape as

we see it today begins with drainage of the wetlands and development of agriculture.

The exhibition is fun, interactive and informative making it a great starting point for your visit to the Solway.

Facilities

- Free Parking
- Toilets
- Tourist Information
- Disabled Access
- Family Friendly
- Interactive Exhibition
- Facilities and attractions of Silloth, the finest example of a Victorian seaside town in North West England



HOLME CULTRAM ABBEY



Visit Holme Cultram to see the remains of an early Medieval abbey founded in 1150, by the Cistercian Monks from Melrose Abbey in the Scottish Borders. They built Holme Cultram Abbey on land given to the church by Prince Henry, son of the Scottish King, David I. At this time, the English Solway coast and plain were in Scotland. Now used as the parish church, the Abbey contains a wealth of historic features in a spectacular historic building.

The Abbey houses an exhibition illustrating the life of a Cistercian monk at Holme Cultram. It shows how the monks transformed the landscape of

the Solway bringing new agricultural techniques to drain and cultivate the wetlands.

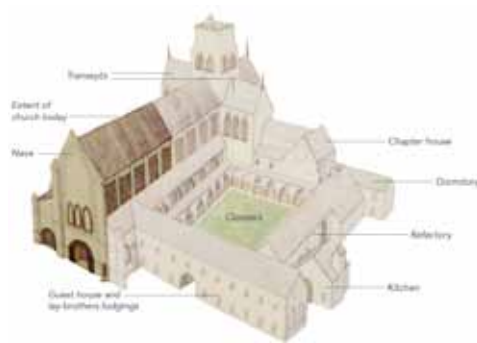
You can explore how recent archeological investigations have increased our knowledge of the Abbey buildings along with the sacred and economic life of the Abbey community.



Inside the porch



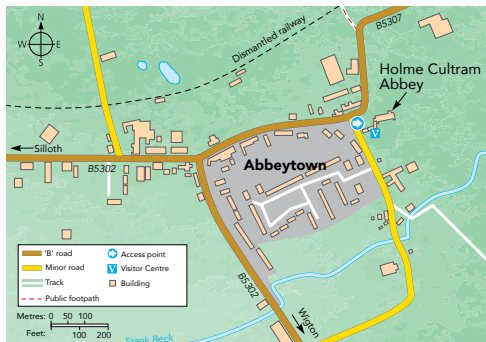
Abbeytown



Holme Cultram Abbey (front)

Facilities

- Free Parking
- Toilets
- Disabled Access
- Family Friendly
- Interactive Exhibition
- Refreshments
- Picnic Area



FINGLANDRIGG WOOD

NATURAL
ENGLAND



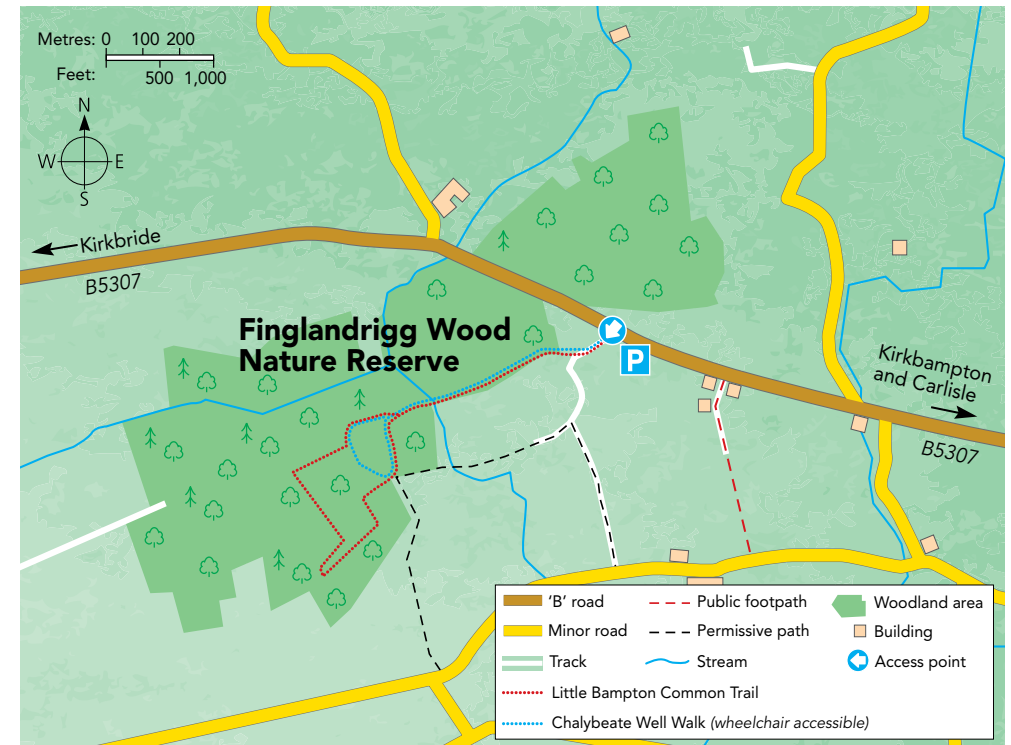
Red squirrel

Several trails start from a large lay by to the north of the reserve. These lead you through a mosaic of habitats that have developed on the former raised mire, including woodland, peat bog,

Facilities

- Car parking
- Picnic area
- Trails

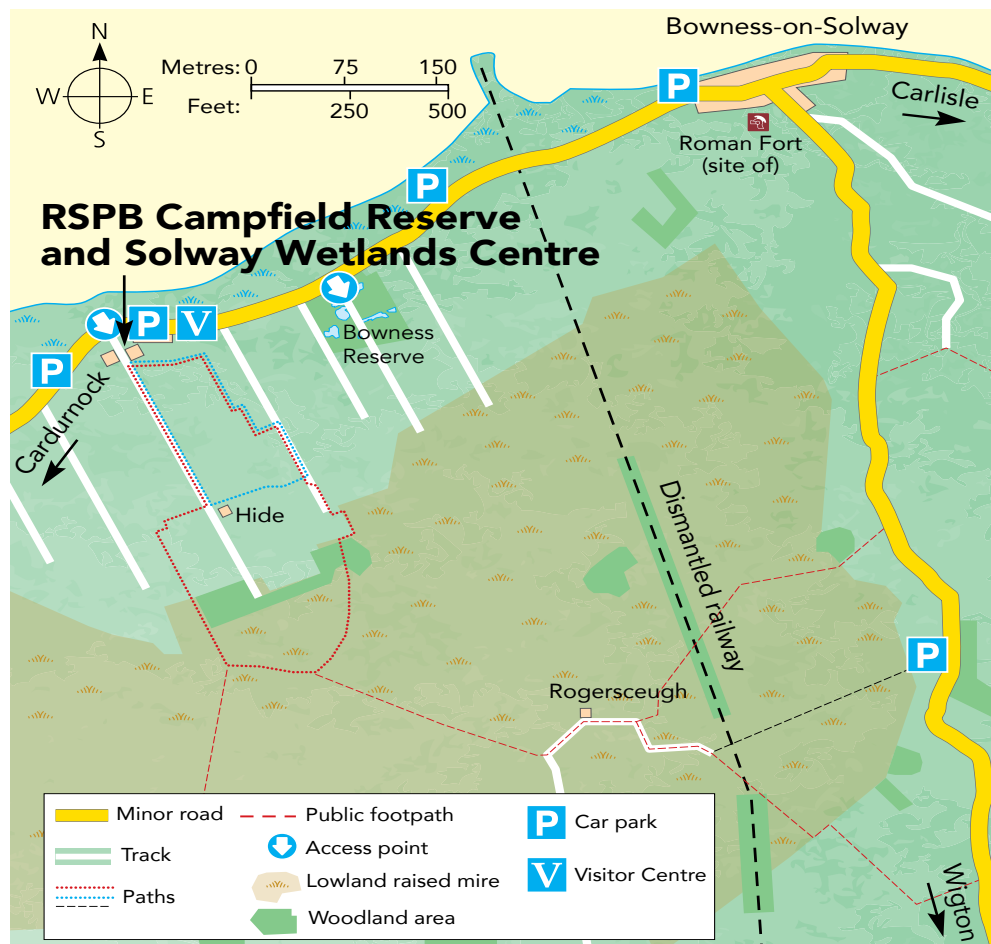
heathland and rough pasture. You may see Red Squirrels and deer and there are up to 40 species of birds. Follow the butterfly trail in May-June and look out for the rare Marsh Fritillary butterfly. Finglandrigg Wood is a National Nature Reserve.





	Motorway		Solway Coast
	A road (primary route)		Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty
	A road (main road)		Built-up area
	B road		Marsh
	Minor road		Nature reserve
	Rail line / station		Abbey
	Hadrian's Wall (course of)		Visitor centre
			Wildlife site
			Access point
			Heritage site





Dragonfly

Campfield Marsh is part of Bowness Common, a great example of a raised mire on the Cardurnock Peninsula.

The reserve is made up of a mosaic of saltmarsh, peatbogs, farmland and wet grassland providing homes for a great variety of native wildlife. Trails lead to a wheelchair accessible hide looking out over the main wet grassland area where lapwings, redshanks and snipe breed in the summer and thousands of swans, ducks and geese spend the winter. There is a pond-dipping platform and picnic tables with activities for children.



RSPB Campfield showing the Solway Wetlands Centre and Discovery Field

Longer trails over more difficult terrain cross the peatbog where bog plants and dragonflies abound. You can watch the spectacular wading bird roosts at high tide on the saltmarsh from the roadside laybys.

Lapwings have declined in number over the last 50 years, but a healthy breeding population remains at RSPB Campfield Marsh.



Lapwing

Here the wet conditions and many pools are a haven for insects, which provide food for hungry Lapwing chicks. Watch for the spectacular courtship displays of adult Lapwings in the spring.

Facilities

- Free Parking
- Toilets
- Disabled Access – Access to Solway Wetlands Centre, Discovery Field and Hide for those with limited mobility/ wheelchair/tramper users
- Visitor Centre and Exhibition
- Network of trails and viewpoint
- Information boards
- Family Friendly
- Solway Wetlands Centre
- Discovery Field
- Tale Trail
- Refreshments
- Picnic Area



On top of the bog

Glasson Moss lies at the heart of the Solway Wetlands. A network of paths and boardwalks provide access to the varied habitats of this lowland raised mire, part of the South Solway Mosses National Nature Reserve.

Successful restoration work on this bog over recent years offers the opportunity to experience one of the best examples of a healthy, wet, growing bog on the Solway.

Exploring the paths round the edge of the bog to the South you will see evidence of the restoration work keeping water on the bog, along with clouds of butterflies and dragonflies during the summer months. The boardwalk to the North offers more of a wilderness experience venturing across the centre of the bog. Feel the ground move below your feet as the boardwalk crosses healthy bog containing more than 95% water.



Fen on the edge of the Glasson Moss

At the northern access to the bog you will find a viewing tower offering panoramic views across the bog surface and beyond to the Lakeland Fells. Information boards on the tower illustrate the importance of the lowland raised mires and explain the restoration work that has created the healthy bog and fen visible below.

Facilities

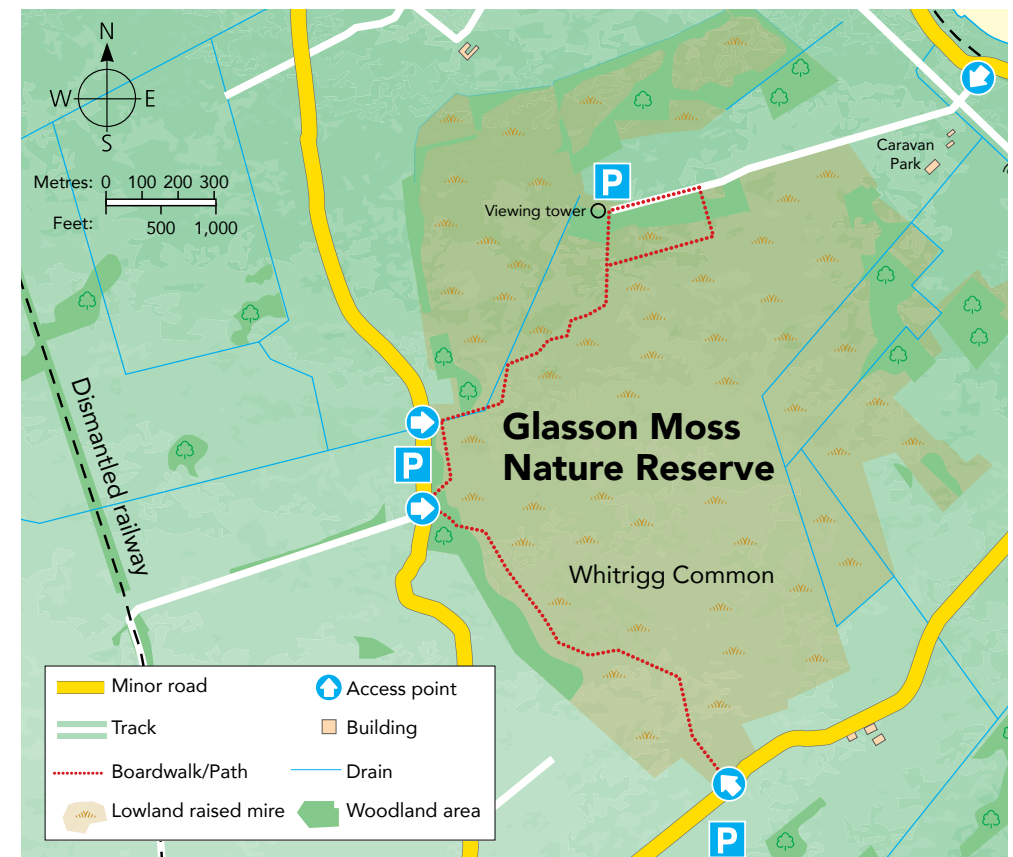
- Free Parking
- Small car park at Northern access point accessed via a track
- Parking in large layby 30m to South West of Southern Access Point
- Limited layby parking at Western Access Points
- Disabled Access – Access to network of accessible (wheelchair/tramper) boardwalks from Northern Access Point
- Network of trails and viewpoint
- Information Boards
- Family Friendly
- Access to network of accessible (pushchair/buggy) boardwalks from Northern Access Point
- Viewing Tower
- Picnic Areas



Aerial view of the boardwalk



Restored bog



DRUMBURGH MOSS



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Cottongrass

Drumburgh Moss is reached by a long, unsurfaced road from Drumburgh village. Park by the information shelter. From here you can explore the bog on a series of waymarked trails. Interesting at all times of year, the bog is alive with sound and movement on a warm summer day. Keep your eyes peeled for dragonflies, lizards and birds.



Drumburgh viewing platform



Common lizard



Drumburgh panorama

A waymarked trail leads to an observation platform located on the top of the bog from which there are fine views of the surrounding area. Remember to note down your sightings on the blackboard in the information shelter!

Facilities

- Free Parking – access is via a rough track
- Network of trails and viewpoint
- Information Boards

WEDHOLME FLOW

NATURAL
ENGLAND



Standing water on the bog

Wedholme is the second largest of the Solway Mosses and the most damaged by peat extraction. People have exploited the moss for hundreds of years. The monks from Holme Cultram Abbey used peat from here as fuel, but industrial scale peat milling in the last century caused significant damage.

Natural England now owns 70% of Wedholme Flow and is working with the other landowners to implement a major restoration scheme.

There are waymarked trails from the car park on the eastern edge of the bog. From these you can see undamaged parts of the bog and areas that are recovering as a result of the restoration scheme.



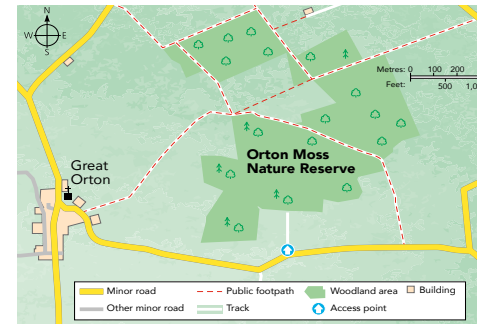
Facilities

- Free Parking
- Network of trails and viewpoint
- Information boards
- Picnic area



Restoration work. Creating a dam to raise the water level

ORTON MOSS



Access is on foot along a grassy lane east of Orton village. A visit to Orton is an exploration into a hidden world. There is a variety of woodland, grassland and heathland habitats. Devil's Bit Scabious, the food plant of the rare Marsh

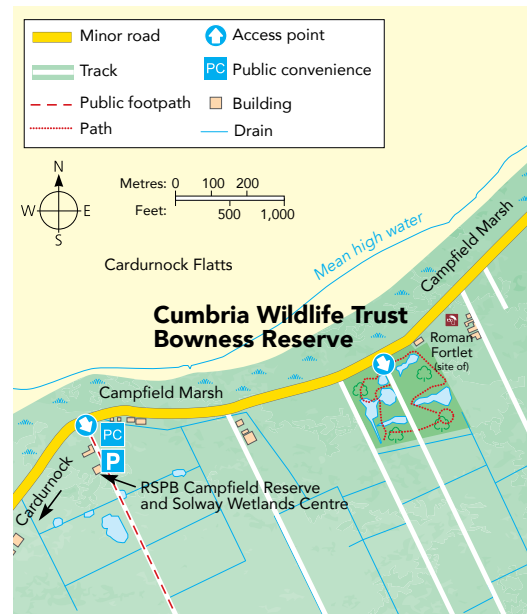


Marsh fritillary butterfly on buttercup

Fritillary butterfly, has recently been planted by volunteers and this beautiful butterfly has been re-introduced to one of its former strongholds. Note the site can be wet after periods of rain.

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BOWNESS-ON-SOLWAY



A circular walking trail gives access to this former gravel quarry. Now, the ponds and surrounding vegetation are managed by this Cumbria Wildlife Trust and it has become a haven for a host of fascinating plants, insects, amphibians and birds. Look in the ponds for frogs and Great crested newts and check the air above for butterflies, dragon and damselflies and a host of birds feeding on the insects.

Facilities

- Parking – limited layby parking
- Information boards

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