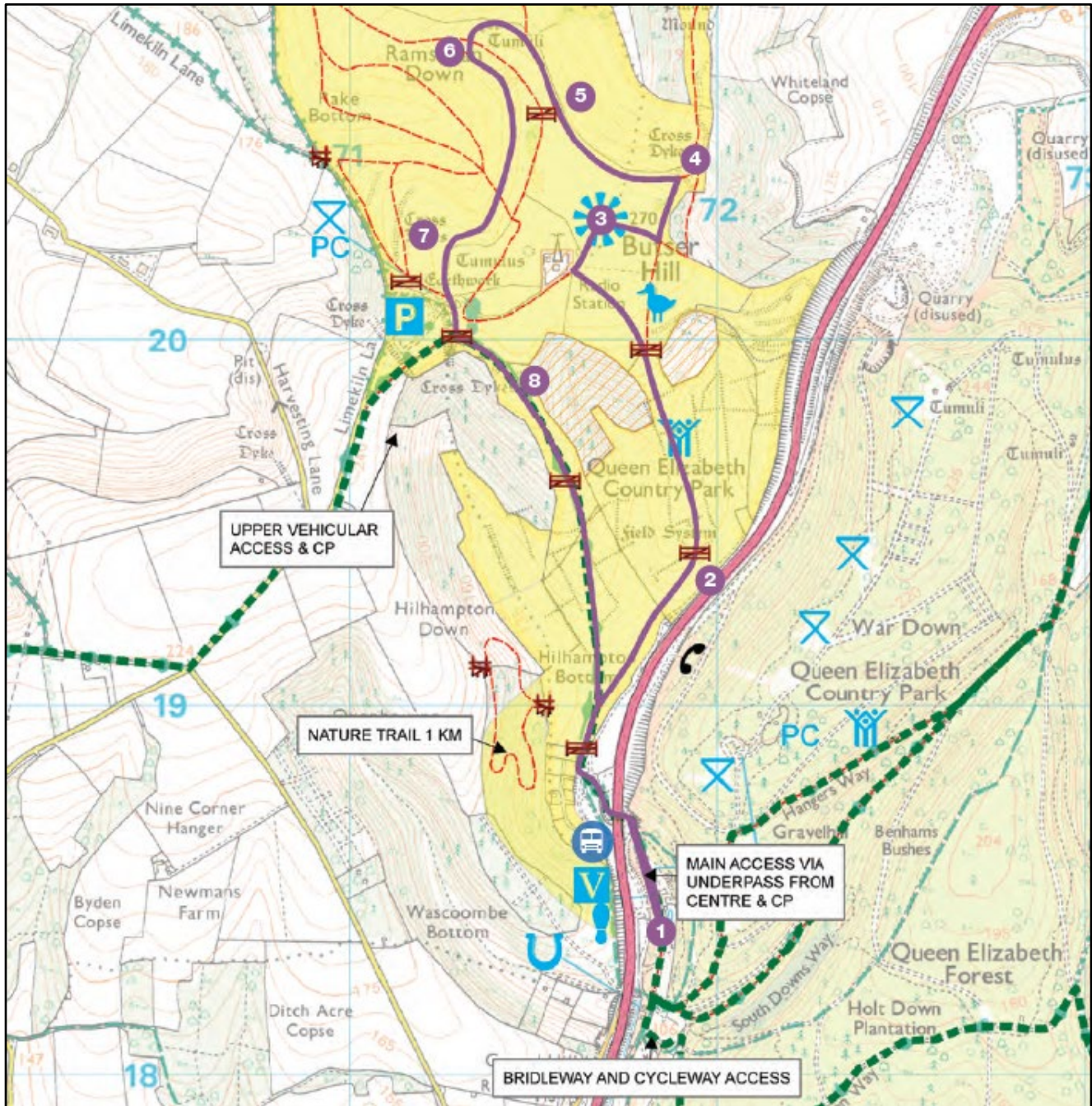


SELF-GUIDED WALK

Queen Elizabeth Country Park

A circular walk from the Queen Elizabeth Country Park Visitors Centre up to and around the top of Butser Hill the highest point on the South Downs chalk ridge. There is one steepish climb and a steep descent mostly on grass. Majestic downland landscape with exceptional views.

Distance - 3¾ miles



Spread over three hills, the 1400 acres of the Queen Elizabeth Country Park incorporates extensive woodlands to the east of the A3 road and a substantial area of chalk grass Downland to the west, highlighted on our map, rising to the 270m summit of Butser Hill, the highest point on the South Downs. Much of this open area is designated as a Site of Special Scientific Interest and a National Nature Reserve, sustaining a rich variety of wildlife including 30 species of butterfly.

This map will help you get more from a visit to Butser Hill whilst enjoying it in harmony with the site's wildlife and its management.

Route

- 1 From the visitors centre walk northwards through the car park and under the road bridge until you reach a South Downs Way finger post on your right. Cross the road and follow the path until you descend a short slope between trees. Go through the gate and keep right to walk parallel to the fence line making towards another gate in the distance.
- 2 Go through the gate and follow the grassy track up the hill spur. Watch out for 2 or 3 obvious breaks of slope (short steeper bits) on the path. These mark the boundaries of a patchwork of small parcels of land comprising a Celtic field system dating back over 2000 years. Go through a gate and make towards the radio tower. In front of the tower turn right aiming for the concrete triangulation pillar.
- 3 These were set up by the government from 1935 to aid in the production of more accurate maps. The metal plate in the top is for attaching a theodolite or reflector. Modern technology now replaces this system.

This is the highest point on the South Downs chalk ridge at 270m. On approaching the pillar turn right and follow a wide grassy track with the escarpment of the South Downs stretching away in front of you. The steeper scarp slope faces north across the Weald while the gentle dip slope falls away to the coastal plain and the sea beyond. Cross another track and turn left at the T-junction. Bear right at a fork and right again down a slope to reach a water trough.

- 4 Before turning left here admire the view. The steep slopes opposite are the Hangers which overlook Petersfield at the head of the Western Weald. On the horizon at about 2 o'clock is the outline of Black Down the highest point in the National Park at 280m or 919 ft., the second highest hill in SE England. Follow the grassy track west along the edge of the escarpment until you reach a wooden gate.
- 5 Beyond the gate go downhill keeping the high ground to your left and the view across the Western Weald to your right. At a fork go right on a narrower path towards the fence and a wooden post marked with a red band. Do not cross the stile but turn left along a narrow path to reach a similar post. Looking uphill to the left you will see a series of 'humps'. These are the remains of Bronze Age burial mounds created some 3,000 to 4,000 years ago. Take the rough path uphill just past the end of the burial mounds to the next post hiding in the gorse.
- 6 At the top of the ridge cross the main track to find a narrow pathway running along the edge of a deep dry valley. Away to your right lies East Meon church and spread before you in the middle distance is the upper valley of the River Meon. This small stream flows north before turning west at East Meon and then south at West Meon.

Turn left and carefully follow this well-worn valley-side path until you reach the head of the dry valley known locally as Grandfather's Bottom. This impressive valley cuts into the chalk escarpment. It has a V-shaped profile with unusually steep slopes. It may well have been dry for 10,000 years having been formed by high snow-melt runoff over permafrost during the brief summers of the last ice age. Once past the head of the dry valley fork left uphill to a gateway.

- 7 Pass through the gate keeping to the right and then cross a tarmac drive. Refreshments may be available at the 'conical' hut. Once across the drive follow the grassy track, initially close to the fence but bear slightly left aiming for the blue topped post some 100m distant.
- 8 This marks the South Downs Way which you now follow downhill and back to the visitors centre about 1.5km away. The prominent hill ahead is Windmill Hill and in front is the busy A3 snaking its way towards Portsmouth, The Solent and the Isle of Wight. The stretches of water either side of the hill are Langstone Harbour (right) and Chichester Harbour (left).