

This access statement does not contain personal opinions as to our suitability for those with access needs, but aims to accurately describe the facilities and services that we offer all our guests/visitors.

## **Access Statement for RSPB Flatford Wildlife Garden**

### **Introduction**

RSPB Flatford Wildlife Garden is situated on the banks of the River Stour, tucked into the edge of the Dedham Vale. It is within a few minutes drive of the town of Manningtree, which is situated on the tidal Stour Estuary. The historic hamlet of Flatford, with its associations with the artist John Constable, provides a lovely backdrop to the RSPB's new wildlife garden. The National Trust, who own some of the surrounding land, work hard to keep the landscape true to its cultural heritage, and Flatford and the surrounding meadows and fields feels wonderfully untouched as a result.

The garden at midsummer 2012.JPG



The intention of the wildlife garden is to showcase practical methods of improving gardens for the benefit of wildlife, in the hope of inspiring visitors to begin to think of wildlife in their own gardens. The garden consists of sweeping borders providing nectar and pollen to passing winged insects such as bees and butterflies. Areas of dense native shrubs provide shady, sheltered areas for birds to forage, and a wildflower meadow provides long grass for many small creatures, including frogs and butterfly caterpillars to shelter in. A young orchard of heritage apple varieties provides nectar & pollen in the spring and windfalls in the autumn. Our barn provides an undercover area for visitors to congregate, chat to staff and learn more about gardening for wildlife, and the RSPB's wider conservation work.

Access to the garden is from the National Trust Car park. Able-bodied visitors park in the main car park, and then have a short walk down the hill, and down a flight of stairs to the garden. For disabled visitors there is a small car park in the heart of Flatford village, from which the garden is merely across the lane.

The garden itself is situated on a slope, which means that only about half of the paths are wheelchair accessible. However, these are smooth and relatively level, and allow easy access to the visitor area in the barn. Public toilets are available at the adjoining National Trust Visitor Centre.

We look forward to welcoming you. If you have any queries or require any assistance please phone 01206391153 or email [shirley.boyle@rspb.org.uk](mailto:shirley.boyle@rspb.org.uk).

## **Pre-Arrival**

- The nearest railway station is Manningtree, which is 3.9 miles away by road. There is also a footpath which leads along the River Stour from the station to Flatford, and takes about 45 minutes at a brisk walk, this path can be very slippery in the wet and walking boots are advised.
- There is a taxi rank at the station.
- There is a bus service, the Dedham Vale Hopper Bus, which runs at hourly intervals between mid-July and mid-October. The bus runs between Manningtree station and Dedham Vale, stopping at Flatford en route. Passengers are dropped off at the National Trust car park, after which there is a short walk down the hill and a flight of stairs to the garden.
- The lane which gives access to the garden is tarmac and level with the garden thresholds. The garden is open every day between April and the end of October, between the hours of 10:30am and 4:30 pm. Over the winter months, the garden is frequently open on Thursdays, but it is best to phone and check before making a special visit – 01206 391153/392119.
- Entry to the garden is free.

## **Car Parking Facilities and Arrival**

- There are ample car parking spaces nearby in the National Trust car park, which charges non-members £3.50 to park. The attendant accepts payment upon entry. There is a short walk from the car park to the garden, around 100m, which involves a slight hill and a shallow flight of steps.
- For disabled visitors, there are 6 parking spaces situated in the heart of Flatford, beside the National Trust Visitor Centre. The disabled car park is clearly signed, and situated immediately opposite the garden entrance. There is also a single drop-off bay within the disabled car park.
- The surface between the car park and the garden entrance is level tarmac, although there is a slight slope.
- Both entrances to the garden are level with plenty of width.

## **Visitor Centre**

- There is a barn in the garden which provides an undercover area for visitors to gather, chat to staff and learn more about wildlife gardening. There is a slight lip at the threshold, but it is negotiable by manual wheelchair although very low electric wheelchairs find it difficult to get over. The floor within the building is painted concrete, level throughout. There are folding chairs and tables within the building which are available for visitors to use. Lighting is available, in the form of fluorescent tubes and spot lights. Magnifying glasses can be requested. There are usually staff and volunteers on hand to offer assistance and information, and there is clear information on wildlife gardening and related topics on display in the barn.
- The visitor centre doubles as a classroom when required.

IMG\_3779.JPG



## **Nature Trails**

- The garden has roughly 160m of hard-packed gravel paths, of which over half are level enough for wheelchair access. Some of these have a slight gradient. The remainder are only accessible by shallow steps (with handrails on one side), due to the sloping nature of the site. There is a boardwalk of about 25m in length, accessible by a slightly uneven grass path or by a surfaced path (with steps and handrail). Most paths are wide enough to allow two wheelchairs to pass if necessary. There are several rustic wooden benches within the garden, within 25m or one another. Signage providing information on the garden is clearly legible. Staff or volunteers are usually on hand to assist with further information where required. Look out for flower borders full of bees and butterflies during summer, a young orchard of heritage apple trees, a wildflower meadow, and ideas for wildlife gardening at home, such as log piles, provision of artificial habitat boxes, feeders, etc. A list of wildlife friendly plants is also available.

IMG\_6181.JPG



## **Public Toilets**

- The nearest public toilets are situated at the National Trust information Centre, which is easily accessible just across the lane from the garden's main entrance, by the Disabled Car Park. There is a disabled toilet there as well, on the right as you approach the building, next to the ladies toilets.

## **Catering**

- Although there is no provision of refreshments in the garden, the National Trust has a café within 100m of the garden's main entrance. Please check the National Trust website for opening hours. <http://www.nationaltrust.org.uk/flatford-bridge-cottage/opening-times/>

## **Picnic Area**

- There are several benches throughout the garden which visitors are welcome to use for picnicking. In addition, there are two picnic benches on a level area near the visitor centre. Visitors are welcome to bring their own refreshments into the garden.

## **Contact Information**

Address (Inc  
postcode): RSPB Flatford Wildlife Garden, Tunnel Lane, Flatford, East  
Bergholt, Suffolk, CO7 6UL  
Postal address: RSPB Stour Estuary reserve, Unit 1 Brantham Mill,  
Bergholt Road, Brantham, Manningtree Essex CO11 1QT

Telephone: 01206 391153/392119

Email: [stourestuary@rspb.org.uk](mailto:stourestuary@rspb.org.uk)

Website: [www.rspb.org.uk/flatford](http://www.rspb.org.uk/flatford)

Grid Reference: TM076333

Hours Of Operation: 10:30 - 4:30 1 April - 31 October.

Local Carers: Essex & Suffolk Quality Care, 01255 831594

Local Equipment Hire: Hadleigh Mobility Centre: [www.hadleighmobilitycentre.co.uk](http://www.hadleighmobilitycentre.co.uk)

Local Accessible Taxi: Stour Cabs: 01206 393 935 Riverside Taxis: 01206 397 563

Local Public Transport: [www.suffolkonboard.com](http://www.suffolkonboard.com)