



giving
nature
a home

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 the South Essex Marshes- Wat Tyler RSPB Visitor Centre

Introduction

The RSPB Visitor Centre and Discovery Zone are located within Basildon District Council's Wat Tyler Country Park and are the gateway to our South Essex Marshes reserves. The Country Park is predominately an area of woodland scrub with surrounding coastal tidal creeks. There are bird hides that overlook reedbeds and freshwater scrapes. Wat Tyler is excellent for insects including dragonflies in the summer whilst the reedbeds and freshwater scrapes attract many ducks and wading birds in the winter.

The RSPB wildlife garden, situated adjacent to the Visitor Centre, has a pond with dipping platforms, a developing sensory garden and a bird feeding area for close views of garden birds. Paths around the wildlife garden are level and step-free, with an average width of 1.2m.

The RSPB Visitor Centre and Discovery Zone is on a flat area in the centre of the Country Park. There is very little gradient in or around the buildings or wildlife garden. The Visitor Centre has an indoor aquarium, TV screens displaying photos or videos of wildlife and a large window overlooking a bird feeding station. There is an induction loop at the reception desk in the Visitor Centre. The Discovery Zone is mainly used for youth groups, bookable family activities, and birthday parties.

There are no public toilets in the RSPB Visitor Centre, but facilities, including accessible toilets, can be found in the nearby Basildon Council operated Wat Tyler centre. This also has a cafe on the 1st floor. A lift is available.

All paths and hides around Wat Tyler Country Park are managed Basildon District Council. Please ask for a map in the Visitor Centre and our Welcome Hosts will be happy to advise you on which routes may be suitable for your access needs.

For more information please visit www.rspb.org.uk/southessexmarshes



Visitor Centre and access path into wildlife garden



Aerial view of Wat Tyler Country Park

Pre-Arrival

- The nearest railway station is Pitsea Railway station, around 1.6 km (1 mile) away. Please visit <http://www.c2c-online.co.uk/> for train times.
- There is a regular taxi service from Pitsea station.
- The approach to the Visitor Centre from Pitsea is along a mainly flat tarmac road (Pitsea Hall Lane). There is a gradient of approximately 1:20 at the railway level crossing at the start of this route. The road is frequently used by trucks accessing Pitsea Landfill, as well as visitors to the park and waste disposal site. On the route down into the park there is a clearly marked zebra crossing to cross the road. The footpath from the Country Park entrance to the RSPB centre is a mixture of flat multi access surfaces.
- The nearest bus stop is at Tesco supermarket in Pitsea approximately 1.9km (1.3 miles) from the Visitor Centre. The No.5 Basildon to Pitsea bus stops every 15-20 minutes Monday-Saturday, and every 30 minutes on Sundays. Other bus services stop at Pitsea Broadway approximately 2.4 km (1.8 miles). Buses from Laindon (no.8), Canvey Island (no.22) and Southend (no.2), run every 15-20 minutes Monday-Saturday and every hour on Sundays. For more information before you travel please visit <http://www.firstgroup.com>
- If arriving by road turn off the A13 at the Pitsea junction and follow brown tourist signs for Wat Tyler Country Park. Travel down Pitsea Hall Lane; go straight over the mini-roundabout, and cross the railway crossing. Wat Tyler Country Park is approximately 1 mile down this road.
- The RSPB Visitor Centre is open from 10 am – 5 pm from April to September then 10am – 4 pm from October to the end of March.
- Entrance to the RSPB Visitor Centre and wildlife garden is free and registered assistance dogs are welcome.

Car parking facilities and arrival

- There is free parking for 15 cars at the RSPB Visitor Centre. There is a drop off point with a drop kerb outside.
- The car park is 40 m (130ft) from the centre and has a concrete surface with two paths to the main entrance. The path in the north east corner of the car park is compacted gravel and the path to the south east is tarmac.
- There are an additional 90 free car parking spaces, including 4 Blue Badge spaces outside Basildon Council's Wat Tyler centre, 90 m (300ft) from the RSPB Visitor Centre.
- There are bike rails in the main Wat Tyler car park.
- The RSPB Visitor Centre entrance has a 1:25 gradient tarmac ramp without handrails. The entrance door is an inward manual opening double door. Both doors can be opened: the clear door opening is 830 mm (32.5 inches) for a single door and 1660 mm (65 inches) for both doors.
- There is no slope into the Discovery Zone or the wildlife garden and all paths around the garden are relatively flat. One of the paths into the wildlife garden, situated directly adjacent to the Visitor Centre doors, is gated, opening manually in the direction of the wildlife garden.



Drop off disabled bay with drop kerb.

Visitor Centre

- There is no entry charge for the RSPB Visitor Centre.
- The ramp into the centre is tarmac with a 1:25 gradient.
- The floor is tiled and level throughout.
- RSPB staff and volunteers are always available and will be happy to provide assistance.
- Seating is sufficient for 15 people, with seat heights between 450mm and 500mm from the floor.
- The centre is evenly lit with ceiling spotlights.
- The reception desk is fitted with a hearing induction loop. It is curved with a lowered middle section at a height of 1240 mm (48 inches) and either end 790 mm (31 inches).
- The bird viewing area gives visitors the opportunity to look at wildlife at a distance of no more than 10 m. Binoculars and bird

identification charts are provided free of charge for use in this area. Binoculars are also available to hire for a small donation.

- Pens and paper are available on request. Large screens show live and recorded footage and photographs of birds and wildlife from the reserve. Some of the cameras providing the video footage can be remotely controlled by visitor centre staff to vary the images shown on the screens. Visitors can also borrow keys to access the bird hides (managed by Basildon Council) if they leave a deposit.
- For families with young children activities include a craft table, colouring, a wildlife garden nature trail quiz, and Wildlife Detective kits with activity and ID sheets and a bird hide poster. All of these are available throughout the year for a small donation.
- There is also an indoor aquarium where native pond creatures can be viewed at close proximity. The side glass panel is at a height of 940–1220mm (37 inches – 48 inches) and it can also be viewed from above.
- Souvenirs for visitors to buy include fluffy singing birds, and “Cottage Corner” arts and crafts made by local artists.
- Tea and coffee is available for a small donation.
- Leaflets about the RSPB Visitor Centre and wider South Essex Marshes are available. There is also a large wall map that centre staff can help explain to visitors.
- Other information leaflets include RSPB membership, nature reserves, events, volunteering, and doing your bit for wildlife.
- Large print wall panels give information about the wildlife and history of the South Essex Marshes. There is a RSPB membership display and examples of the gifts and magazines which members will receive if they join.
- To ensure the continued improvement of our centre all our visitors are encouraged to complete a Visitor Survey Questionnaire. These can be made available in large print on request.
- In the event of a fire or other emergency an alarm will sound and RSPB staff and volunteers will be on hand to guide visitors out of the centre and to the fire assembly point in the RSPB car park.
- For registered assistance dogs (and other dogs belonging to visitors to the park) there is a water bowl and outdoor tap in front of the Visitor Centre.

Nature Trails

- There is a short trail (less than 100 m) around the RSPB wildlife garden. Some of the trail is made from compacted granite and some are made from cemented slabs. It is an average of 1.2 m wide.
- One of the access paths into the garden is gated and opens manually in the direction of the wildlife garden.
- The seating is mostly around the picnic area and sensory garden and consists of 3 circular picnic benches with seating for 8 people at a height of 600 mm (24 inches) and 2 bench seats without backs at 550 mm (22 inches). One of the picnic benches has a space for a wheelchair or pushchair. There is also a bench with a back located with a view of the bird feeding area.
- There are raised garden beds around the picnic area and a wildlife pond 25 m away with 3 dipping platforms designed for wheelchairs or pushchair users. The depth of the pond at the centre is 1100 mm (43 inches) and the edges leading up to the platforms are sloped.
- There are clear print panels with large photographic images and information about the wildlife garden and the wider RSPB South Essex Marshes reserves. There is also an information board situated at the rose garden which details information from The Friends of Wat Tyler Wildlife Garden, a community group set up to support maintenance and development of the garden.
- Volunteers regularly work in the garden maintaining paths and beds and they will be happy to answer any questions that you have about gardening for wildlife.
- Wildlife garden nature trail quiz sheets are available in the Visitor Centre. These encourage children to explore by searching for clues, with a prize for completed sheets in the Visitor Centre.
- A number of willow structures are located in the wildlife garden including an arch, a dome and a walk through nest. More information about the creation of these sculptures and some smaller examples can be found in the Visitor Centre.
- There are a number of nature trails around the Basildon Council Wat Tyler Country Park, maps and information about these trails can be found either in the Wat Tyler centre or the RSPB Visitor

Centre. A leaflet giving more information about the wildlife garden and plants can also be found in the Visitor Centre. You can also visit the Wat Tyler Country Park website for more information and to download their trail guide <http://www.wattylercountrypark.org.uk/>.



Picnic area in wildlife garden

Viewing Facilities

- Viewing facilities available in the RSPB Visitor Centre include a large bay window looking out over the bird feeding area, and live feed camera footage shown on TV screens.
- There are 2 bird hides within Wat Tyler Country Park. These are managed by Basildon Council, but access keys can be borrowed from the RSPB Visitor Centre if a deposit is given.
- The first hide is 300 m (984 ft) from the Visitor Centre, on the opposite side of the road to the Green Centre. Please note there is no marked crossing point so care should be taken when crossing the road. This hide has two levels without a lift. 12 steps lead up to the bird hide with a handrail on both sides. There are 2 skylights to provide light and wooden screens at a height of 1140 mm (45 inches) can be lifted and clipped back to view over the water and reedbeds. The door has a simple key latch at a height of 1360 mm (53 inches) and has a clear door opening of 880 mm (35 inches). The door is weighted and will swing shut when you release it. The floor inside the hide is wooden and level. Wooden benches with no backs are available for sitting on, height 520 mm (20 inches).
- The second hide is 200 m (656 ft) from the Visitor Centre, behind Holly Cottage. To access this hide it is necessary to cross the miniature train tracks that run through the park. These are sunken into the ground. A 15 m (49 ft) wooden ramp then leads up to the hide at a gradient of 1:25 and handrails on both sides. This hide has two levels: there are no steps to access the lower level. The door has a simple key latch at a height of 1360 mm (53 inches) and has a clear door opening of 880 mm (35 inches). Inside there are 2 moveable benches, height 540 mm (21 inches). Views over the creek can be obtained by lifting wooden screens, height 860 mm (34 inches). The upper level is accessed by 12 steps, with a handrail on both sides. Inside the hide there are 2 skylights to provide light and wooden screens can be lifted and clipped back to view over the creek. The door has a simple key latch at a height of 1360 mm (53 inches) and has a clear door opening of 880 mm (35 inches). The floor inside the hide is wooden and level, fixed wooden benches with no backs are available for sitting on, height 460 mm (18 inches).
- There are also 2 viewing screens found on the 2.1 km (1 mile) circular route around Wat Tyler Park. The path is wide, level and with little gradient, but does become wet after rain. Viewing slots

through the hide are at various levels; 1500 mm (59 inches), 1420 mm (56 inches), 1170 mm (46 inches), 1070 mm (42 inches), 1050 mm (41 inches), 860 mm (34 inches).

- Basildon Council does not display any interpretation or information in their bird hides. Binoculars and bird books are available to hire from the RSPB Visitor Centre for a small donation.

Public Toilets

- There are no public toilets in the RSPB Visitor Centre.
- The nearest public toilets, including accessible toilets, are located in the Wat Tyler Centre, 100 m (330 ft) from the Visitor Centre. Toilets are open 10am – 5pm.
- Access between the RSPB Visitor Centre and the Wat Tyler Centre is wide and level. Visitors will need to cross over the road into the car park. The crossing point is clearly marked.

Catering

- Tea and coffee are available in the RSPB Visitor Centre for a small donation. This is self-service, but staff and volunteers are happy to assist.
- The drinks table can be accessed from a seated position, table height 560 mm (22 inches)
- The nearest cafe is located in the Wat Tyler Centre, 100m (330 ft) from the RSPB Visitor Centre. It is located on the first floor with a lift available. The cafe is open 10am – 5pm during summer and 10am – 2pm Tuesday-Sunday during winter. For bookings or enquiries call the cafe direct on 01268 465396.

Education Centre

- The RSPB Discovery Zone is used for youth groups, bookable family activities, birthday parties and is available for small groups to use for formal or informal education.
- The Discovery Zone is located 10 m (33 ft) from the Visitor Centre. Access is level, ramp and step-free. Entry is through a double door which swings open into the centre. Both doors can be opened with a clear door opening of 810 mm (32 inches) for a single door and

1650 mm (65 inches) when both doors are opened. There is a single pull down lever situated 1070 mm (42 inches) from the floor.

- Within the Discovery Zone there is one gradual slope with a gradient of 1:25, there are no handrails on either side of the slope. The set up of the room can be altered dependent on activity, group size and needs, including access needs.
- The floor surface in the Discovery Zone is lino printed with a map of the world. The room is well lit with fluorescent tube lighting.
- There are a number of interpretation boards on display including information on what activities people can do, and RSPB membership. There are also interactive displays where children can move magnetic disks and learn about bird beaks, bird feet, and the type of food that different birds eat. The text is all in large print format. There is an interactive white board facility.
- If the Discovery Zone is not open, information about our youth groups, family activities, birthday parties and education bookings can be requested from the RSPB Visitor Centre.



RSPB Discovery Zone with Wat Tyler centre in the background

Contact Information

RSPB Visitor Centre
Wat Tyler Country Park
Pitsea Hall Lane
Basildon
Essex
SS16 4UH

Telephone: 01268 498620

Email: southessexmarshes@rspb.org.uk

Website: www.rspb.org.uk/southessexmarshes

Community Pages:

<http://www.rspb.org.uk/community/placestovisit/southessexmarshes/default.aspx>

Grid Reference: TQ 73746 87147

Hours of Operation: 10.00 – 17.00 April to September
10.00 – 16.00 October to March

Local Accessible Taxi: A and B 01268 555555

Local Public Transport: Trains <http://www.c2c-online.co.uk/>

Buses <http://www.firstgroup.com/ukbus/essex/>