

Newport Wetlands & Goldcliff Loop

Distance: 11 km | Time: 3½ hours



About the Gwent Levels

The Gwent Levels are an iconic, estuarine landscape of international significance. First reclaimed from the sea in Roman times, the Gwent Levels are a network of fertile fields and historic watercourses, known locally as reens. This special landscape of high skies and low horizons is one of the finest examples of a 'natural' landscape hand-crafted by people in Europe; and one of the largest tracts of bio-diverse wet grassland left in the UK.

The Partnership

The Living Levels Landscape Partnership is supported by The National Lottery Heritage Fund. We are delivering a programme of work which will promote and reconnect people to the heritage, wildlife and wild beauty of the Gwent Levels.



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For more information about this walk visit:

www.livinglevels.org.uk



Walk Highlights

NEWPORT WETLANDS NATIONAL NATURE RESERVE

The 866 hectare reserve, which opened in 2000, stretches from the mouth of the Usk east along the coast to Goldcliff. It is made up of a diverse range of low-lying habitats, including wet grassland, reedbeds, saltmarsh and saline lagoons, which makes this one of the best sites in the country for viewing bird life and lots of other wildlife, too.

EAST USK LIGHTHOUSE

The East Usk Lighthouse was constructed in 1893 and is one of two marking the entrance to the River Usk. Originally much taller than it now appears, the legs of the lighthouse were gradually buried under fly ash from the Uskmouth Power Station. It was converted from a gas-powered light to electricity in 1972 and is still in operation today.

GOLDCLIFF PILL

Goldcliff Pill is the remnant of an ancient tidal creek that once travelled inland across the Levels. Over time it has been adapted to carry fresh water out to sea; the reen (drainage ditch) known as Monk's Ditch carries water across the Levels from high ground to the north, through a sluice gate in the sea wall, called a 'gout', and out into the estuary.

ST MARY'S CHURCH, GOLDCLIFF

The tiny parish church of St Mary Magdalene sits within a well maintained churchyard at the end of a grove of lime trees. The medieval building is linked to Goldcliff Priory, which once stood on the coast about 1km to the south. A brass plaque on the north wall of the nave records the loss of property and life during the Great Flood of 1607

ST MARY'S CHURCH, NASH

The Church of St Mary's, known locally as "The Cathedral of the Moors", is medieval in origin but was extensively rebuilt in the 1500s. The church was once much larger, but the north aisle to the nave was demolished in 1792 - you can still see the roofline on the side of the tower. The tall 15th century tower has an octagonal spire and was once one of the tallest structures on the Levels. At its base, next to a small door, is a plaque commemorating the Great Flood of 1607, marking the height reached by the flood waters.

Follow the Countryside Code

- Consider the local community and other people enjoying the outdoors
- Park carefully so gateways and driveways are clear
- Leave gates and property as you find them
- Follow paths but give way to others where it's narrow
- Leave no trace of your visit, take all your litter home
- Don't have BBQs or fires
- Keep your dog under effective control and on a lead around livestock.
- Pick up after your pet - dog mess can harm livestock
- Plan ahead, check what facilities are open, be prepared
- Follow advice and local signs

Look out for...



Marsh harrier (L Bunyan, RSPB-images.com)



Otter (Ben Andrew, RSPB-images.com)



4-spotted chaser dragonfly (Chris Harris)



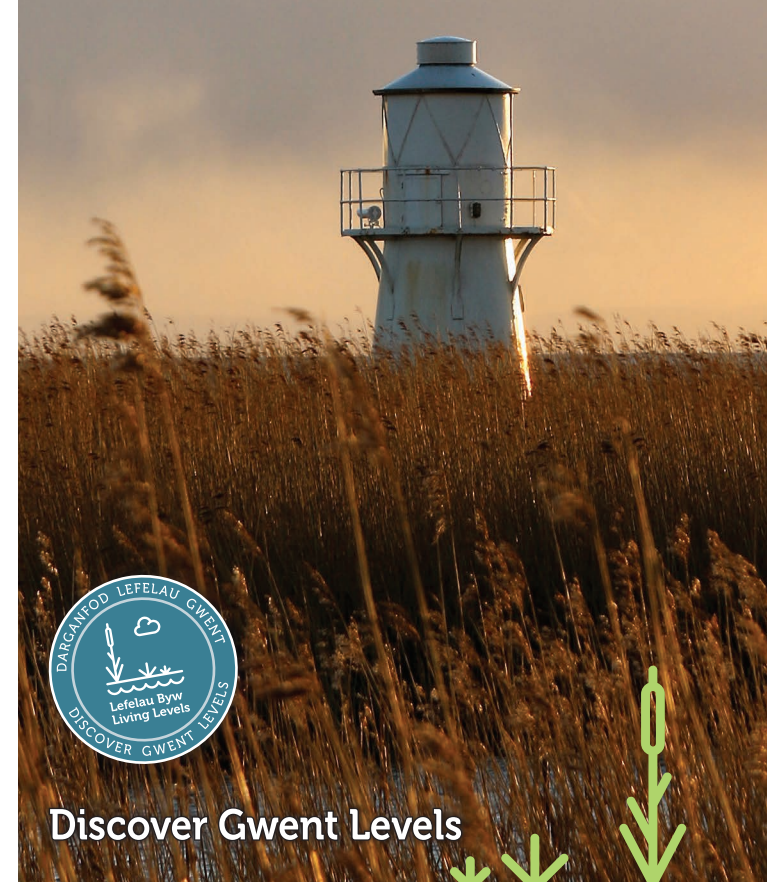
Shrill carder bee (Chris Harris)



Water vole (Ben Andrew, RSPB-images.com)



Bearded tit (Tony Smith)



Discover Gwent Levels

Newport Wetlands & Goldcliff

An exhilarating walk from the Newport Wetlands visitor centre, via the East Usk Lighthouse and the Wales Coast Path, to the medieval churches of St Mary's at Goldcliff and St Mary's at Nash.

The Route

Start at Newport Wetlands Visitor Centre
(Grid Ref ST 334833 | OS Explorer Map 152)

- 1 From the Visitor Centre, follow surfaced path onto main reserve and around the reed beds heading towards **East Usk Lighthouse**.
- 2 At the lighthouse, turn left along Wales Coast Path (WCP) following the coast towards Salt Marsh Lane.
- 3 Walk along the lane for approximately 500m, then follow WCP waymarks leading you to field path on the right. The route winds across fields and footbridges past Redhouse Farm and onto Goldcliff Road.
- 4 Turn right along road for approximately 120 metres, look out for a finger post again on your right.
- 5 Turn right along a footpath that loops around **Goldcliff Pill** before bringing you back to Goldcliff Road.

- 6 Turn left onto road toward Farmers Arms pub, leaving the WCP. Bear left through the pub car park to **St Mary's Church**. Go through the church gates and along a tree-lined path before turning left at the porch and around the tower. Cross the footbridge at the rear of the church.
- 7 Bear left and follow the waymarks across a series of fields and footbridges towards Henton Farm (point 8). *Please note: livestock may be present, dogs must be on a lead.*
- 8 Cross stile onto green lane and turn left following the track past Henton Farm, before a better surfaced track leads you towards Cross Farm and Goldcliff Road.
- 9 Turn right along Goldcliff Road for a short distance before rejoining the footpath at a finger post and bridge on your left.
- 10 Follow waymark arrows over several footbridges to Farmfield Lane. Cross the lane and follow the footpath to Nash and **St Mary's Church**, known locally as 'The Cathedral of the Moors'.
- 11 After visiting the church, head diagonally across the car park of the Waterloo Inn to a stile and bridge to rejoin the WCP. Turn left and follow the WCP way marking over several fields to Fish House Lane. Turn left and follow lane for 50 metres before turning right through a kissing gate back towards the Wetlands Visitor Centre.

WILDLIFE

Newport Wetlands is best known for its fantastic range of wetland birds, including bearded tits, little egrets and avocets. As you explore the reserve in the Spring, listen out for the distinctive boom of the bittern, a shy and elusive member of the heron family. During the summer, the reserve teems with butterflies, dragonflies and bees, including one of the UK's rarest, the shrill carder bee.

Please note, dogs are only allowed in Newport Wetlands along the WCP and must be kept on a lead at all times. From the RSPB car park, follow the WCP around the outside of the reserve, rejoining the walk route at the East Usk Lighthouse.

