

## Join the **Cuckoo Challenge**

Join the challenge and look for the Cuckoo Challenge discs on the wooden mile posts.

Download the **Cuckoo challenge** from: [www.healthywealden.co.uk](http://www.healthywealden.co.uk)

**Complete 100 miles – and receive your own Cuckoo Challenge Certificate.**



## Calculate your distance and the calories you have burnt today!



=

100 Kcal

What an average adult will burn for each mile they walk of the Cuckoo Trail.



=

50 Kcal

What an average adult will burn for each mile they cycle along the Cuckoo Trail.



Runners and joggers can burn even more calories each mile – but this depends on your speed and weight.

For more information about staying healthy and walking in Wealden look at the websites:

[www.healthywealden.co.uk](http://www.healthywealden.co.uk)

[www.wealdendosussexwalks.co.uk](http://www.wealdendosussexwalks.co.uk)

## Physical Activity guidelines:

**Adults** should aim, if possible, to take part in at least **150 minutes each week** of moderate intensity physical activity, in bouts of 10 minutes or more.

**Children and young people** should be encouraged to be physically active, if able, for at least **60 minutes every day**.

## How to get to the Cuckoo Trail

**Train:** There are stations at Polegate and Hampden Park. For information on timetables: [www.nationalrail.co.uk](http://www.nationalrail.co.uk)

Bikes can be carried free of charge though there are some restrictions during peak hours.

**Bus:** Service 251, 252, and 54 operated by Eastbourne Buses/Stagecoach links Polegate, Hailsham, Hellingly, Horam and Heathfield. For information: [www.bustimes.org.uk](http://www.bustimes.org.uk)

**Car:** There are free car parks at Heathfield, Horam, Hellingly and Hailsham and on-street parking at Polegate and Hampden Park.

**Horsebox:** Horsebox space is provided at the Hellingly car park, where the Trail is accessed via an easily graded ramp. A mounting block is provided.



# The Cuckoo Trail



A 14 mile trail for walkers, cyclists and horseriders, taking you through the beautiful East Sussex countryside



Helping people to choose active travel







## The history of the Cuckoo Trail

The Cuckoo Trail runs for 11 miles along the route of the old railway linking three of the district's larger towns: Heathfield, Hailsham and Polegate.

Opened in 1880, the railway was named the Cuckoo Line after the tradition that the first cuckoo of spring was always heard at the Heathfield Fair. Transporting of goods by road became more popular, and the line was shut in the 1960s, as part of the "Beeching" cuts.

## Wildlife and nature along the Trail

Look for the wildlife information boards under Shawpits Bridge at Hellingly.

**On the trail you might see the following:**



**Cuckoo** A summer visitor. Listen for the distinctive call from April to June. Lays its eggs in the nests of birds of other species (mainly Dunnock in this area).

The young cuckoo ejects the hosts' own eggs and demands all the food. It is grey with a long tail, usually solitary and flying with shallow wing beats.

**Dunnock** Like a sparrow but not a sparrow! Commonly seen hopping about on or near the ground along the Trail. Grey-brown with darker stripes on its back and a narrow beak. The Dunnock sings a rolling, warbling song from an exposed perch. It nests in dense cover such as thorn bushes and may unwittingly play host to a Cuckoo.



**Lady's Smock** also known as Cuckoo Flower. Commonly found in damp places along the Trail. The pale mauve flowers with four petals appear in spring.

**Orange Tip** The Orange Tip butterfly starts life as a bright orange egg. This deters other Orange Tips from laying eggs on the same plant. Only the male butterfly has an orange tip to the cream wings. The green caterpillars of the Orange Tip feed mainly on the Cuckoo Flower.



black then produces a cluster of green berries, which go bright orange-red in the autumn and are poisonous.

**Lords and Ladies** Also known as Cuckoo Pint. Can be seen for most of the year in shaded areas. The leaves are arrow-shaped and glossy. The flower starts white, turns

## Share with Care

Whether you are traveling on foot, by bike, or horse, please share the path respectfully with all other users:

- Keep left, pass on the right
- Keep to a safe speed
- Look and listen
- Clear up after your dog
- Do not leave litter
- Don't block the path
- Use lights at night

**Horseriders:** Can ride between Hellingly and the south of Heathfield and between Summerhill Lane south of Hailsham and Polegate. This latter section involves going over a bridge, which crosses the A27 Polegate bypass, where a mounting block is provided at each end.

**Cyclists:** Don't surprise people - ring your bell or call out, remembering that some people are hard of hearing or visually impaired. Don't just assume that they can see or hear you.

Benches have been erected along the Trail, many carved from fallen trees by local craftsmen. Picnic tables and bike racks are located at intervals along the Trail, and you are welcome to picnic where you like en route.





## Places/attractions along the Trail

### Heathfield

The market town of Heathfield stands on one of the main ridges of the High Weald Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, giving magnificent views south towards the South Downs.

Heathfield gained its market charter in 1316. This charter included the right to hold a fair, which was traditionally held on 15 April. An old lady would appear to release the first cuckoo of spring from her basket, giving rise to the "Cuckoo Fair" name.

### Horam

Horam was originally a small hamlet, which grew up around the station, which was supposed to serve the village of Waldron, some two miles away. A small fragment of the platform and the station nameboard survive alongside the Trail today. Horam was the main depot for Express Dairies in the 1930s.

### Hellingly

The old station, by the side of the line, is now a private house. Look out for the ornate plasterwork, mock-Tudor chimneys, canopy fretwork and stained glass windows. The water mill in Mill Lane is said to be the oldest mill in England.

### Hailsham

Hailsham is an historic town, first granted its market charter in 1252 by King Henry III so that it could hold its own cattle market.

The town was formerly famous for its rope making, the largest such industry in Sussex and a statue in the town centre commemorates this.

### Polegate

Polegate's importance dates back to the arrival of the railways in Sussex, in the 1840s. Originally a wayside station on the 1846 line from Brighton to Hastings, it swiftly became a junction for lines to Eastbourne and Hailsham; the latter now forming the Cuckoo Trail. Unsurprisingly, a settlement grew up around the station.

### Hampden Park

Along this part of the Trail, look out for birds and waterfowl which are attracted to Shinewater Park. Herons, cormorants and other wildfowl may be seen all year round, while in summer there are also reed and sedge warblers, house martins and swallows.

## Accommodation and attractions near the Cuckoo Trail

For details of a wide variety of accommodation and local attractions near the Cuckoo Trail:  
[www.wealdendo-sussex.co.uk](http://www.wealdendo-sussex.co.uk)

## Contact us / more information

The Cuckoo Trail is managed as a partnership between East Sussex County Council and Wealden District Council.

For more information see:  
[www.wealden.gov.uk](http://www.wealden.gov.uk) and  
[www.eastsussex.gov.uk](http://www.eastsussex.gov.uk)



Contact the ranger:  
[countrysidemanagement@eastsussex.gov.uk](mailto:countrysidemanagement@eastsussex.gov.uk)

For the national cycling network:  
[www.sustrans.org.uk](http://www.sustrans.org.uk)

If you, or somebody you know, would like the information contained in this document in large print, Braille, audio or in another language, please contact Wealden District Council on 01323 443322 or [info@wealden.gov.uk](mailto:info@wealden.gov.uk) quoting ref number DP.16906.02.18

