



## **ACCESS GUIDE – REW DOWN LOCAL NATURE RESERVE**

### **Address**

Steephill Down Road, Ventnor, Isle of Wight

**Postcode for Sat Nav: PO38 1AD**

### **What 3 Words for Steephill Down Road site entrance:**

`///trophy.scared.lamenting`

### **How to get there:**

There is one entrance to the top of the site on Steephill Down Road, where parking is easiest, and there are three entrances to the bottom of the site, all footpaths from Whitwell Road.

#### **By car**

For the top of the site: Steephill Down Road is accessed from Newport Road. Follow the brown sign marked 'Ventnor Golf Club'. After approximately 100 metres the asphalt road turns to a rougher track. You need to park roadside before this point. There are usually on-road parking spaces available. From here there is a 25 metre walk to the site entrance with an incline of 1 in 10.

For the bottom of the site: park in unrestricted areas on Whitwell Road and enter through one of the three

unmarked paths. Note that whilst there are unrestricted parking areas on this road, it is a fast road and parking can be hazardous.

### **By public transport**

For the top of the site: Steephill Down Road stop (Route 3) is 30 metres from Steephill Down Road then access the site up the hill along Steephill Down Road behind the chip shop, as described above. There is an incline of 1 in 20.

For the bottom of the site: Pine Point Bus Stop (Route 6 and Island Coaster, which is seasonal). Walk west where you will find three entrances. There is no pavement and cars drive fast along this road.

### **By foot and bike**

Access from the surrounding countryside is good.

Footpaths V54, V54a, V64, V64a all transit the site, V56 skirts the west border. There is an entrance on Steephill Down Road, and three entrances from Whitwell Road.

### **Nearest public toilets**

There are no public toilets near this site. The nearest are in the town of Ventnor.

### **Car and bike parking**

There is no car park at this site. See above for parking guidance.

There are no cycle racks, but there are gates to which bikes can be attached.

### **Site entrance**

The Steephill Down Road entrance is a stile and kissing gate. The kissing gate has 90 cm clearance. There is an Information Pillar at this point. The site Information Pillar has a QR code that links to an audible description creating a mind's eye view of the area to allow a visually impaired person to enter with confidence. The information pillar also has a QR code that links to a map and activities. There is also a site map on the Information Pillar.

The entrances from Whitwell Road are all via kissing gates. These have 80 cm clearance and have been weighted to stop sheep escaping.

### **Getting around the site**

There is approximately an altitude difference of 50 metres between the top and bottom of the site, which is about a slope of 1 in 5. In other words, this is a steep site.

It is not suitable for wheelchairs, buggies or anyone with mobility issues.

The paths are grass or earth and very narrow. Our Countryside Stewardship agreement means that we cannot mow Rew Down until mid-July, when the flowers have set seed. The vegetation can make access difficult prior to this cut. They can be slippery at all times of year. The site is popular with rabbits so care should be taken around rabbit holes. The site is occasionally grazed so dogs should be kept on leads at these times.

Once in the site, it is free of gates although, if being grazed, fencing may be put up. There is only one bench. This is at the top of the site.

## **What you can see**

- From the top of the site there are wonderful views stretching from Ventnor harbour in the east across the south of the Island to the west and then across the Channel,
- In very early spring, look for the violets,
- In spring, look for cowslips – fairies are said to hide under the flowers, but its name actually means ‘cow-slop’ or cowpat as it is common in pastures,
- In May and June look for the early gentian. It is a small, rare annual or biennial wildflower. It grows on chalk grassland, favouring south-facing slopes with thin soil that are grazed to keep the vegetation cover low. Its purple, trumpet-shaped flowers appear in branching clusters,
- Pyramidal orchids make a fine show in late June and early July,
- Stemless thistles, with their deep purple flower heads and sharp shiny leaf rosettes flat against the ground, are a feature of late summer,
- Butterflies love Rew Down’s flowers. The adonis blue butterfly have been seen at Rew Down; it is the most striking of the blue butterflies.

## **What you can hear**

- At the bottom of the Down, you will hear lots of garden birds such as robin, wren, blue tit, great tit, dunnock and goldfinch,
- Listen to the rooks from the rookery. You will also hear jackdaws and carrion crows,

- Sit near the scrub and 'a little bit of bread and no cheese' will tell you a yellow hammer is there. Whitethroats also like the scrub,

### **What you can smell**

- The gorse has a coconutty smell,
- In late spring sniff the bluebells. If you can smell them, they will be English ones,
- Stinking iris loves the wetter environment alongside the bottom of the slope; it smells like roast beef.

### **What you can touch**

- In World War Two, Ventnor was home to a secret system that was critical to the Allied victory. It was the site of a Royal Navy 'Y station' (from 'WI' for Wireless Interception) that intercepted and located enemy transmissions and passed the information on to Portsmouth HQ and Bletchley Park for decoding. Find the blast wall and base and sit and survey the coast, you will understand why it was so strategically important,
- Make a daisy chain. In the past they were used to link young lovers, not to mention the generations of girls who have long pulled off the petals one by one, chanting 'he loves me, he loves me not',
- Tell the time with a dandelion clock.

**We look after Rew Down Local Nature Reserve for the benefit of the plants and animals that live here and for you as visitors...we hope you enjoy your visit.**

