

Welcome to Priory Country Park, owned and managed by Bedford Borough Council.

### Priory Country Park

Nestled within a bend in the River Great Ouse, the Park's 360 acres of lakes, meadows and woodland have something for everyone to enjoy. Whether you want to watch the wildlife or go for a bike ride, the park is a great place for a day out.

### History

There has been human occupation of the area occupied by the park since the Bronze age. Evidence for this was discovered in an archeological survey prior to mineral extraction.

An Augustinian Priory stood on the area now occupied by Aspects Leisure Complex and the Athletic Stadium, from the middle of the twelfth century until the dissolution of the monasteries in 1539. The only visible remnants of this are the fishponds in the north-west corner of the park. There was a Roman Villa where Priory Lake now stands, between the island and the sailing clubhouse.

Since Roman times the area has been farmland, both arable and flood meadow, until the Second World War. The wall (Scheduled Ancient Monument) that runs alongside the marina is constructed from the stones of the Priory (and includes some Roman material) and was the boundary feature for a large house built by the Goswick family in the late sixteenth century.

In the 1960's and 70's most of the rest of the site was excavated for gravel resulting in the formation of the main Priory Lake and the Marina. The first part of the exhausted pits was in-filled with domestic refuse and covered with ash from the nearby Goldington power station (since demolished), and then capped with clay and covered with topsoil. The main car parks, Visitor Centre and a large proportion of the New Meadow lie on top of this former corporation tip.

The Main Lake and the Finger Lake were created from the remaining ex-gravel pits. The lakes rapidly became important for wildlife and the area became a Country Park in 1986.

### Refreshments

#### Ice Cream

The Ice cream van can be found outside the Visitor Centre on most weekends and throughout the school holidays.

#### Cloverdale Retreat Café

Located in the Visitor's Centre with outside tables providing a lakeside view. Please contact the café for more information.

### Activities

The Park Rangers have a variety of pond dipping and bug hunting equipment which can be borrowed by educational groups for use in the park. They are also able to offer training in the use of this equipment. Please contact the Rangers for more information.

#### Walking

There are three way-marked walks around the park, or if you prefer you can just wander and make your own trail.

Blue: Priory Lake offers a bank side walk around the lake, on an all-weather path, giving an easy walk of 1 ½ miles.

Green: This is a more secluded walk around the Finger Lake conservation area, of approx. 1 mile.

This trail includes steps and can be muddy at times.

Red: This is a longer walk taking in most of the park, including parts of the river, which is about four miles.

Please see the separate trail leaflets available from the Visitor Centre.

#### Cycling

Cyclists are welcome in the park, and there is a variety of surfaces, from hard standing to grass, within the park.

ENV180\_T6 Lakeside



[www.lets-go.org.uk](http://www.lets-go.org.uk)

Let's Go! Bedfordshire's

Promoted Routes & Sites

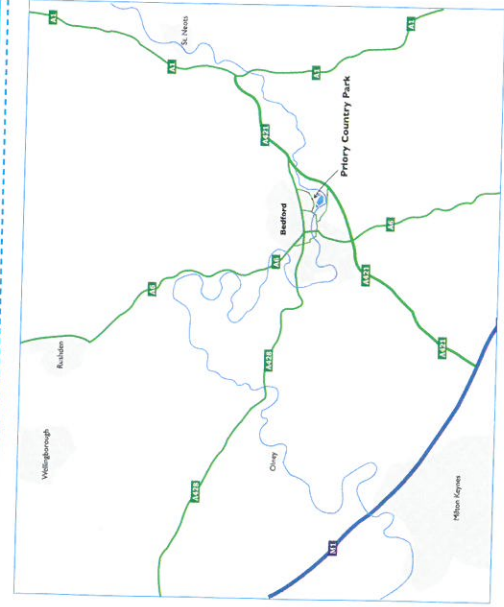
### Other walks

Find out about more of Bedfordshire's walking and riding routes as well as nature reserves and country parks by visiting

[www.lets-go.org.uk](http://www.lets-go.org.uk)

Let's Go! Bedfordshire's

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### How to find Priory Country Park

### Access Information

There are disabled parking spaces in the main car park, off Barkers Lane. The Visitor Centre and toilets are accessible by wheelchairs. The path around the lake is surfaced and suitable for wheelchairs and prams.

### When to visit

The Park is open every day of the year. The main route around the Park is accessible in all weathers although other areas can get wet and muddy. The Park is busy at weekends, especially on Sundays, but is quieter during the week.

### Public Transport

Stagecoach route no. 4 bus stops approx. 200m from the park at the western end of Riverfield Drive from Bedford town centre. The nearest railway station is Bedford, approx. 2 miles away.



### Contact Information

#### Park Address

Priory Country Park, Visitor's Centre

Barkers Lane, Bedford MK41 9DJ

#### Rangers

You can contact the Rangers by phone. Please leave a message and the Rangers will get back to you.

Tel: 01234 718012 (24hr answer phone)

E-mail: [prioryrangers@bedford.gov.uk](mailto:prioryrangers@bedford.gov.uk)

Web: [www.bedford.gov.uk](http://www.bedford.gov.uk)

#### The Wildlife Trust for Bedfordshire, Cambridgeshire and Northamptonshire

Tel: 01234 364213

E-mail: [bedfordshire@wildlifebcn.org](mailto:bedfordshire@wildlifebcn.org)

#### Cloverdale Retreat Café

Tel: 01234 325462

#### Priory Water Sport Association

E-mail: [info@priorysc.org.uk](mailto:info@priorysc.org.uk)

Web: [www.priorysc.org.uk](http://www.priorysc.org.uk)

#### Canoe Slalom

Bookings: [www.canoeslalom.co.uk/courses/cardington.htm](http://www.canoeslalom.co.uk/courses/cardington.htm)

#### Priory Marina Beefeater Restaurant

Table Bookings: 01234 352883

#### Priory Marina (British Waterways)

Boats and Moorings: 01234 351931

Country parks

Priory Country Park

Lakeside  
Wildlife Trail

2 km / 1.5 miles Time: 1.5 hours

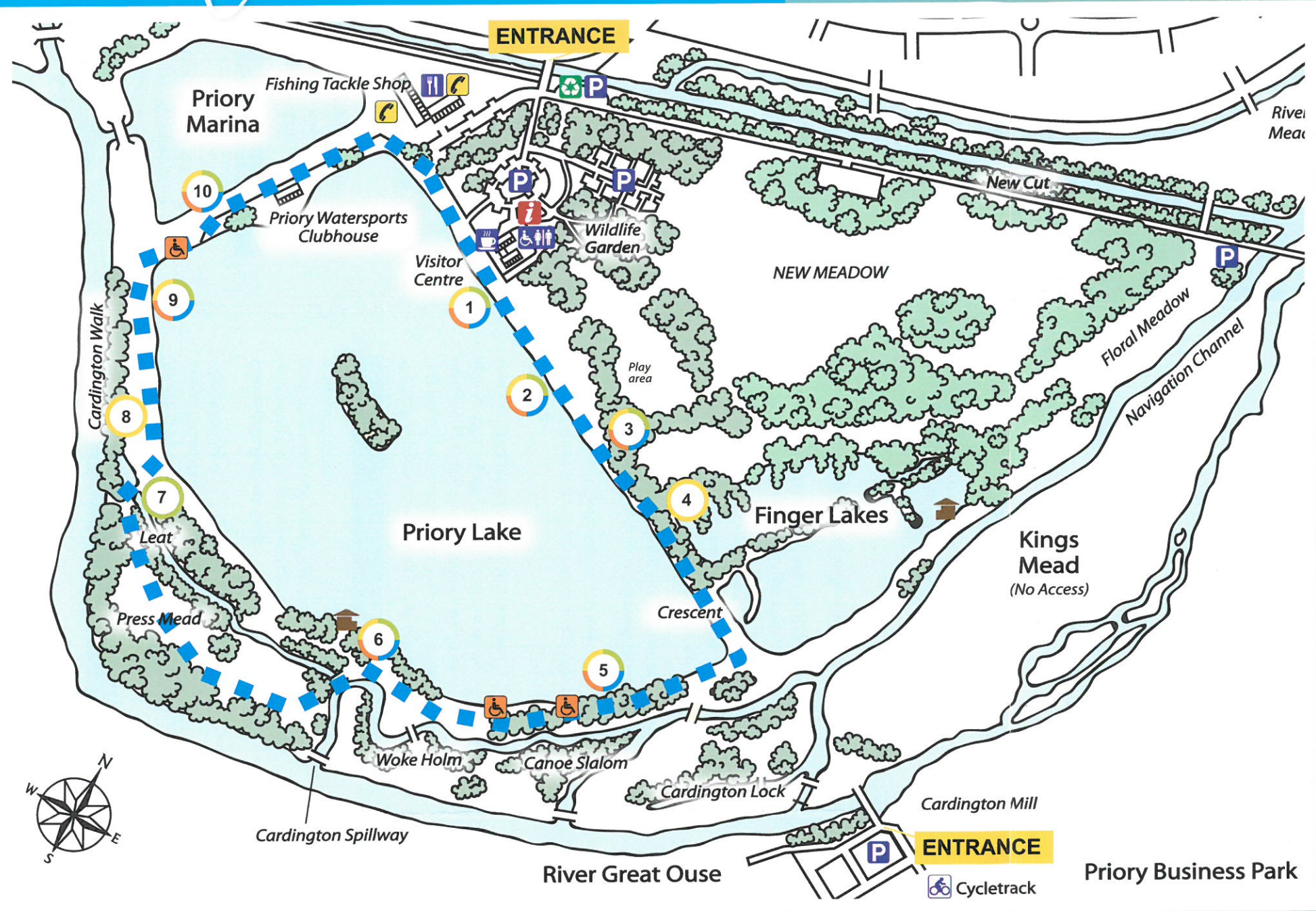
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# Country parks



## Priors Country Park

### Lakeside Wildlife Trail

Approx 2 km / 1.5 miles Time: 1.5 hours

- 1 Bird life to look out for on the lake from the main path includes: Herons, Mallard ducks, Canada geese and Mute Swans
- 2 You may see Willow fencing in the water, this is bank revetment work. It is done to try and prevent the bank and the path from eroding away into the lake.
- 3 Along either side of the main path you will see Willow trees growing. These trees are managed by rotational coppicing. Each year a section is cut down. The new growth encourages insects and nesting birds.
- 4 House martins and Swallows fly up and down the main path feeding on insects.
- 5 Anglers often fish for Bream and Carp along this stretch of the lake.
- 6 From the bird hide you may see Great Crested Grebe in winter plumage and groups of Pochard, Tufted and other migratory ducks. We regularly feed the migratory ducks with grain, to encourage them to over-winter in the park. From the bird hide you will get a great view of the many birds that use the lake throughout the year.
- 7 Frogs and toads use the area in and around the Leat 'pond' bridge for spawning with Moorhen and Coot sometimes nesting here too.
- 8 Also watch out for the aerial acrobatics of Dragonflies as they fly up and down, feeding on insects along this stretch of grass during the summer.
- 9 If you look out over the lake you may spot a Cormorant. These are coastal birds, which have since moved inland to take advantage of the fish stocks in lakes and rivers. They are unpopular with anglers because of the large volume of fish they eat.
- 10 Notice on the left one of the remaining sections of wall, which contains stones from the original Augustinian Priory. It is this link to the history of the area, which helped give the park its name. Behind the hedge on the right is the sailing club.

#### Key

