

## The Cotswold Beechwoods Special Area of Conservation (SAC)

The Cotswold Beechwoods is an area of internationally important woodland situated between Gloucester, Stroud and Cheltenham. It is protected for its beech woodland, which supports a unique range of rare and sensitive plants, including red helleborine, stinking hellebore, narrow-lipped hellebore, narrow-lipped helleborine and wood barley.



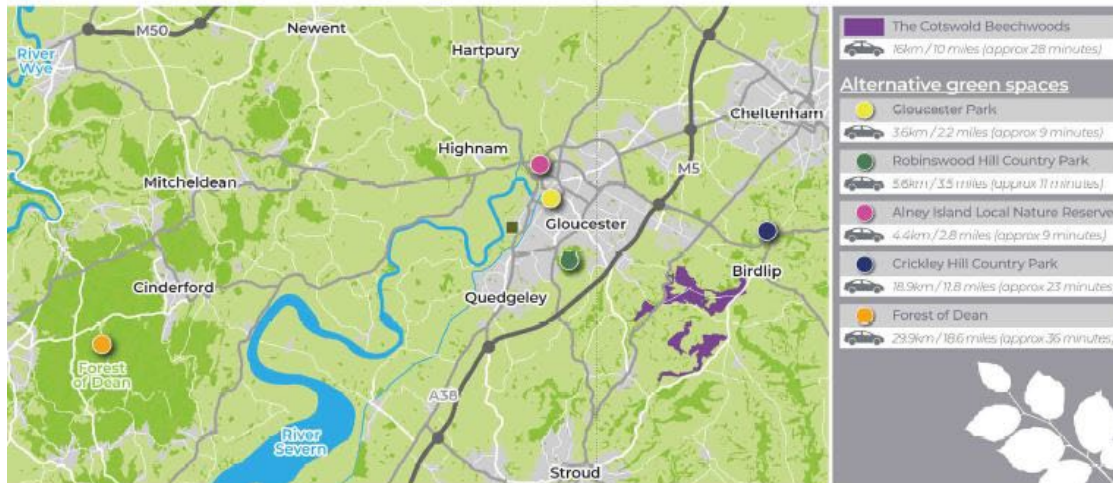
red helleborine



stinking hellebore



narrow-lipped helleborine



## Overuse of the area

The woodlands are sensitive to damage by increased levels of walking, mountain biking and horse riding, which can have detrimental impacts on the woodland and change their unique nature. Where people and bikers have strayed from footpaths, additional trackways have been created causing erosion within the woodland. Where dogs are not kept on leads, rare plants can be damaged and wildlife disturbed. Where dog owners do not clean up after their pets, excessive nutrients are released that upset the delicate ecosystem and can prevent certain plants from growing.

### What you can do to help

- **Utilise other green spaces** - there are many other open spaces in the local area that can be utilised for recreational activities, including walking and cycling (see below).
- **Stick to existing footpaths** - to reduce erosion and avoid damage to the sensitive ecosystem.
- **Keep dogs on a lead** - loose dogs can disturb wild animals and plants.
- **Pick up after your dog** - nutrient enrichment can negatively affect rare plants through changes to the soil.

## The Severn Estuary SPA



The Severn Estuary was classified as a Special Protection Area (SPA) in 1995 after being identified as national and international importance for the breeding, feeding, wintering and migration of rare and vulnerable species of birds, covering nearly 25,000 ha of the Estuary. These species are known as 'features'. The intertidal mudflats and sandflats, saltmarsh, shingle and rocky shore habitats bordering the Estuary are also protected within the SPA, as they support the protected bird species.

These supporting habitats are known as 'sub-features'. The Severn Estuary is one of the most important estuaries in the UK for overwintering wildfowl and waders, especially when severe weather conditions affect sites further north and east. The Estuary regularly supports over 20,000 wintering wildfowl, with over 80,000 individual waterfowls recorded in the winter seasons.

To view the summary data sheet of the Severn Estuary SPA by The Joint Nature Conservation Committee you can visit [www.jncc.gov.uk](http://www.jncc.gov.uk) and to view the Conservation Objectives for the Estuary you can go to [www.publications.naturalengland.org.uk](http://www.publications.naturalengland.org.uk)

## Alney Island Local Nature Reserve

Alney Island is an important site for nature because of its wet meadows, which provide a home to a range of species including orchids, dragonflies and cuckoos in summer, and teal, shoveler and gadwall in winter, when the meadows often flood. Walkers should stick to surfaced footpaths throughout the reserve to



prevent damage or excessive disturbance to wildlife within the nature reserve. Dogs should be kept on a lead where possible to avoid disturbance to birds and other wildlife.

## Alternative location for mountain biking



Mountain biking is one of the main causes of erosion within the Cotswold Beechwoods. An alternative location for mountain biking is the **Forest of Dean**. The Forestry Commission have set up a number of trails that are signposted and ranked by difficulty.

Parking is available at the **Cannop Cycle Centre**.



Forestry Commission



Find out more



Nearby parks and open spaces



The Cotswold Beechwoods

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Special Area of Conservation (SAC)



PLEASE HELP US KEEP IT  
**SPECIAL**



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