

Circular walks

Whipsnade

Walk: approx. 4.5 miles/7.2km **Time:** 2.5 hours

This walk covers a variety of terrain including heathland, chalk quarries and downland as well as grassland with the opportunity to see a variety of flowers and wildlife.

Central
Bedfordshiregreat
lifestyles

Whipsnade

The village of Whipsnade was not named in the Domesday Survey and was possibly an amalgamation of lands recorded in 1086 from Eaton Bray and Studham and possibly Totternhoe, indeed during the 12th Century much of the parish was still wilderness. A settler named Wibba cleared a piece of the woodland giving the parish the 13th Century name of 'Wibba's Snaed'.

The church of St Mary Magdalen at Whipsnade was first mentioned in 1228, the tower, built from bricks possibly obtained from the dell in the field behind the church, dates from 1590 whilst the nave is more recent dating from 1719, the pulpit inside is 17th Century.

Tree Cathedral

The Tree Cathedral is a tranquil place for worship and meditation and is designed to match the ground plan of a medieval cathedral. It is not consecrated, but occasionally hosts services, and is permanently open to the public without charge. Owned by the National Trust it is managed and funded by the Trustees of Whipsnade Tree Cathedral.

The plantings are laid out to form a nave, transepts, and chancel for public worship, chapels for private prayer and remembrance, cloisters for meditation, and a cloister garden for relaxation with a dew pond at its centre.

Planting began in 1930 by Edmund Kell Blyth assisted by Albert Bransom as a memorial to three friends who had perished during the First World War.

Whipsnade Green

This is part of a network of 213 Commons found throughout the Chiltern Hills and the Chilterns Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB), and is much valued locally as an area of open access land with a strong local community interest in its use.

Typical of many of the Chilterns Commons the Green has undergone changes, particularly since the end of the Second World War and the decline in traditional hay making and grazing has resulted in an increase in scrub and rougher grasses.

The meadows are a most attractive part of the Green and the habitat gives the Green its distinct 'commonland' character.

Whipsnade Heath

Whipsnade Heath was once an area of open heath but since the decline of sheep grazing, trees and scrub have colonised much of the site. The Heath offers an interesting mosaic of grassland, scrub and woodland, and mainly consists of dense scrub areas with a mixture of hawthorn, elder and blackthorn. The more open woodland areas include oak, wild cherry, beech

and hazel with displays of bluebells and wood anemones in the spring.

Dunstable Downs

The downland landscape is very distinctive with rolling hills, steep escarpments, fine views and areas of open grassland and scrub.

The chalk was formed at the bottom of a shallow, warm sea approximately 70 million years ago by the accumulation of the remains of microscopic plants and animals on the seabed. When sea levels fell and became dry land, erosion sculpted the dry valleys and rounded hills that we see today.

Chalk grassland is a very rare habitat that was traditionally managed by large flocks of sheep; this kept the downs open and alive with wild flowers and insects.

Gradually sheep grazing declined, and after World War II ceased altogether; this meant that the Downs became overgrown and scrub began to invade threatening the grassland communities, and resulted in the disappearance of some grasses and flowers. Fortunately, again sheep are grazing part of the Downs and volunteers help to keep the grassland open, allowing a varied mix of grassland and scrub to benefit as many species as possible.



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Healthy walking

Why not get out and get healthy? There is no better way to start than by taking a walk. Just 30 minutes a day can improve health and well-being, reduce the risk of heart disease, help to prevent diabetes, improve muscle strength even reduce anxiety and depression. So make today the day you start to enjoy Bedfordshire and enjoy good health. For information on healthy walking log on to www.walkingforhealth.org.uk

Planning your walk

The car park at Dunstable Downs is the suggested starting point and the route is described in an anti-clockwise direction. However, you can begin at any point and walk in either direction.

Refreshments, parking and toilets

The Chilterns Gateway Centre at Dunstable Downs has adequate parking, toilet facilities and refreshments available throughout the year during the opening times displayed. There is also limited parking (approx 7 spaces) at Whipsnade Heath car park.

Public transport

For information contact Traveline 0871 200 22 33. The closest train station is at Luton, on the Bedford to St. Pancras Thameslink Line contact Traveline or www.thameslink.co.uk

Ordnance Survey maps

The route is covered on Ordnance Survey Explorer map 182 available from local bookshops and some petrol stations.

Did you enjoy the walk?

This is one of a series of circular walk leaflets produced by Central Bedfordshire Council. If you wish to request a leaflet, give us some feedback or report any problems encountered, please contact us on **0300 3008305** or e-mail us on recreational.routes@centralbedfordshire.gov.uk

Tips for enjoying your walk

Parts of the walk can become muddy especially after heavy rain, so strong waterproof footwear is recommended. Take care where conditions are rough and do let someone know where you are going. Please be aware that much of the walk is unsuitable for wheelchairs and difficult for pushchairs.

Other walks

To discover more walks in Central Bedfordshire visit www.centralbedfordshire.gov.uk/countryside or www.lets-go.org.uk

Or why not explore the Greensand Ridge by following the fabulous Greensand Ridge Walk, a walk that passes through many of the area's most valuable landscapes and historic towns www.centralbedfordshire.gov.uk/greensand



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Walk

- | | |
|------------------------|----------------------------|
| 1 Sandy and Everton | 7 Rushmere and Stockgrove |
| 2 Old Warden | 8 Cranfield |
| 3 Silsoe - Shillington | 9 Totternhoe |
| 4 Ampthill - Maulden | 10 Dunstable Downs |
| 5 Ampthill - Millbrook | 11 Whipsnade |
| 6 Woburn - Eversholt | ■ ■ ■ Greensand Ridge walk |

 **@BedsCountryside**

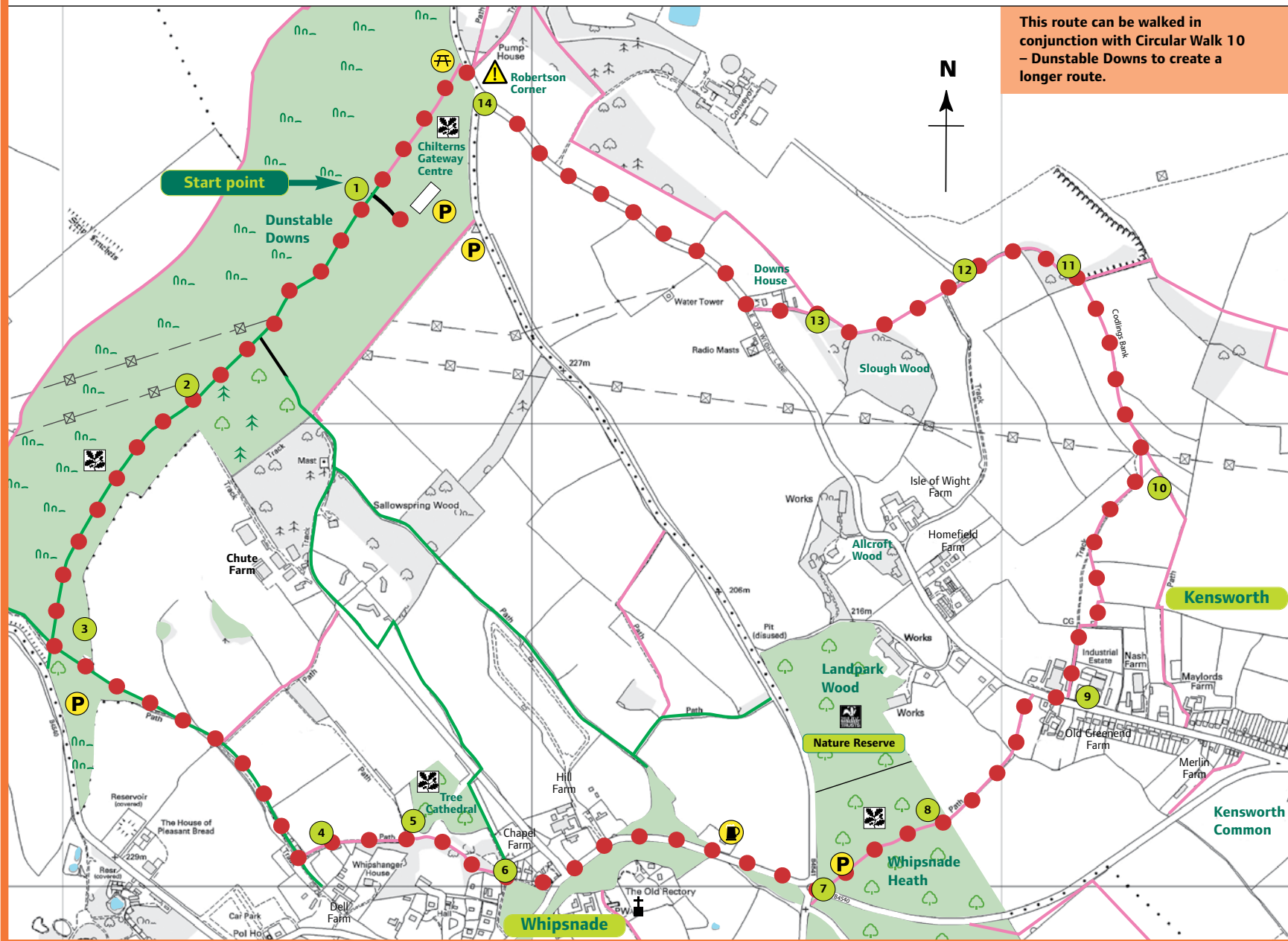
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Walk 11

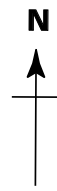
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This route can be walked in conjunction with Circular Walk 10 – Dunstable Downs to create a longer route.



Key

- ● ● ● ● The walk
- Footpath
- Bridleway
- Other Paths
- 🌲 🌲 🌲 🌲 Woodlands
- P Parking
- 🍺 Public house
- 🌳 Picnic area
- ✝️ Church
- Open space
- 🦉 Wildlife Trust
- 🌿 National Trust

Dogs are welcome on all our sites and rights of way, but do keep them under control and away from any grazing animals as well as other visitors. Please be a considerate owner; clean up if your dog leaves a mess.

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Countryside code

- Be safe – plan ahead and follow any signs
- Leave gates and property as you find them
- Protect plants and animals, and take your litter home
- Consider other people.

- 1 From the Chilterns Gateway Centre walk down past the Windcatcher and turn left on to the bridleway.
- 2 Continue along the bridleway, through the gate into a grazing meadow with a line of beach trees then a woodland on your left.
- 3 Leave the grazing area through the gate and immediately turn left and continue along the bridleway following the sunken lane.
- 4 Directly after the house, turn left through the gap in the fence, follow the footpath along the side of the house boundary to a kissing gate, walk through the field with fencing on the right to the next gate that leads into the meadow around the Tree Cathedral
- 5 PLEASE TAKE TIME TO EXPLORE THE TREE CATHEDRAL Bear slightly right with the Tree Cathedral on your left, continue and walk on through the Tree Cathedral car park
- 6 Cross the road with care and follow the road towards Kensworth, past the church, downhill and past the Old Hunters Lodge public house, to the Whipsnade roundabout.
- 7 Cross the road with care to Whipsnade Heath car park. Follow the tarmac path and then follow the footpath straight on through woodland.
- 8 Continue through woodland, follow the footpath straight on to kissing gate and cross into pasture, cross field to roadside opposite Greenend Farm.
- 9 Cross the road and follow the footpath to the right of Old Greenend Farm which leads down onto Codlings Bank.
- 10 In the valley bottom turn left through kissing gate and walk diagonally uphill across pasture to go through kissing gate by telegraph pole and continue straight on and through kissing gate in chain link fence.
- 11 Enter tree plantation and follow path left downhill past brick built shed to join track by the quarry's chain link fence.
- 12 Follow the track with the fence line on your right to the corner, bear right off the track onto the gently rising headland. Follow the left hand field edge in the direction of a mixed tree plantation with tall aerial on skyline.
- 13 Follow the headland path with the copse on your left and turn left into copse at the way mark post. Follow the path to the roadside and turn right to join Isle of Wight Lane and continue to junction with B4541 at Robertson Corner.
- 14 Cross the road with care and turn left to return to the Chilterns Gateway Centre.

Please follow these tips to keep you and your dog safe:

- 🐾 Always keep your dog in sight and train it to come back when called.
- 🐾 Never let your dog chase wildlife or grazing animals – it could get injured too.
- 🐾 Unless you're already friends, keep your dog away from other people and other dogs – not everyone loves your dog as much as you do!
- 🐾 Always clean up after your dog.
- 🐾 Look out for horses, cyclists and runners – for everybody's safety it's best to put your dog on a lead as they come by.
- 🐾 Follow all local signs about grazing animals.



Central Bedfordshire's Travel Choices has supported the printing of this leaflet. Travel Choices is a Sustainable Travel and Transport project for Dunstable, Leighton Buzzard and Houghton Regis. For further information, please visit www.cbtravelchoices.co.uk

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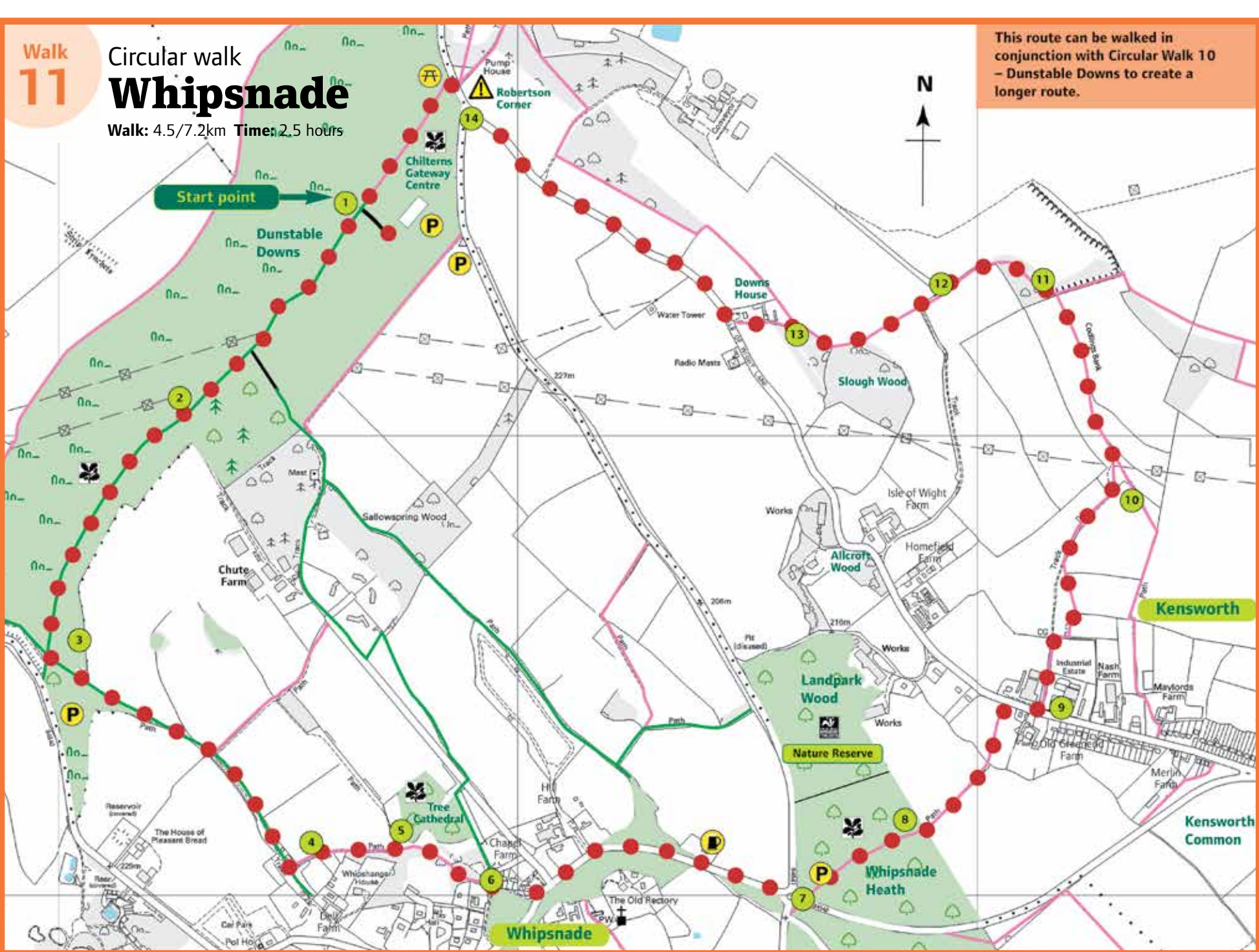
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