

# Green Health Routes



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# CSH – Who we are

- Leading UK charity supporting the transformation of healthcare for environmental, social, and financial sustainability
- Works closely with NHS organisations, healthcare professionals, educators, and policymakers
- Training, resources, and networks
- Practical, evidence-based approach
- Supports health professionals to become agents of change
- Home of the NHS Forest and Green Space for Health programmes



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# NHS Forest

## It's more than just tree planting

- Nature Recovery Rangers
- Green Health Routes
- Tree Equity Score
- NHS Forest network – over 400 sites registered
- Research and policy work
- Mapping and ecological advice
- Conference and awards
- Volunteer matching service
- Tree planting since 2009 resulting over 160,000 trees in the ground.
- Green Space for Health Sustainability Network



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# Nature for health

- Nature supports health, wellbeing, prevention and recovery
- Access to green space is not always easy, welcoming or confidence-building
- Common barriers include uncertainty, mobility, confidence and social isolation
- Healthcare professionals need trusted, accessible nature-based opportunities to connect people with



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## The impact of greenspace or nature-based interventions on cardiovascular health or cancer-related outcomes: A systematic review of experimental studies

Jean C Bikomeye<sup>1</sup>, Joanna S Balza<sup>1</sup>, Jamila L Kwarteng<sup>2,3</sup>, Andreas M Beyer<sup>3,4</sup>, Kirsten M M Beyer<sup>1,3</sup>

Affiliations + expand

PMID: 36417344 PMCID: PMC9683573 DOI: [10.1371/journal.pone.0276517](https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0276517)

### Abstract

**Significance:** Globally, cardiovascular disease (CVD) and cancer are leading causes of morbidity and mortality. While having different etiologies, CVD and cancer are linked by the presence of which exacerbate adverse outcomes for individuals with e pathologies, factors such as poverty, lack of physical activity (PA), poor diet change increase risk of adverse outcomes. Prior research has shown that g nature-based interventions (NBIs) contribute to improved health outcome resilience.

## Effect of nature-based health interventions for individuals diagnosed with anxiety, depression and/or experiencing stress—a systematic review and meta-analysis

 Nanna Holt Jessen<sup>1</sup>, Claus Løvschall<sup>2</sup>,  Sebastian Dyrup Skejød<sup>1</sup>,  Louise Sofia Sofia Madsen<sup>2</sup>, Sus Sola Coraz Thomas Maribo<sup>2,4</sup>, Dorthe Varning Poulsen<sup>3</sup>

Correspondence to Dr Nanna Holt Jessen; [n.holt@ph.au.dk](mailto:n.holt@ph.au.dk)

### Abstract

Outcomes. The effect of nature-based health interventions as elements in the treatment and rehabilitation of n the present review was to summarise the knowledge of individuals diagnosed with anxiety, depression and/or experie

## Study funded by NIHR highlights inequalities in access to green spaces and mental health

10 October 2023 | 2 min read

## COMPENDIUM ON ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACTS HEALTH AND BIOLOGY

## Greenspaces And Cardiovascular Health

Rachel J. Keith, Joy L. Hart<sup></sup>, Aruni Bhatnagar<sup></sup>

**ABSTRACT:** Accumulating evidence suggests that living in areas of high surrounding greenness or even brief exposures to areas of high greenery is conducive to cardiovascular health, which may be related to the environmental, social, psychological, and physiological benefits of greenspaces. Recent data from multiple cross-sectional, longitudinal, and cohort studies suggest that living in areas of high surrounding greenness is associated with a lower risk of all-cause and cardiovascular mortality. High levels of neighborhood greenery have been linked also to a decrease in the burden of cardiovascular disease risk factors as reflected by lower rates of hypertension, dyslipidemia, and diabetes. Those who live in greener environments report better mental health and more frequent social interactions, which can benefit cardiovascular health as well. In this narrative review, we discuss evidence linking greenspaces to cardiovascular health as well as the potential mechanisms underlying the beneficial effects of greenspaces, including the impact of vegetation on air, noise and light pollution, ambient temperature, physical activity, mental health, and biodiversity. We review literature on the beneficial effects of acute and

> [Psychol Sci. 2008 Dec;19\(12\):1207-12. doi: 10.1111/j.1467-9280.2008.02225.x.](https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-9280.2008.02225.x)

## The cognitive benefits of interacting with nature

Marc G Berman<sup>1</sup>, John Jonides, Stephen Kaplan

Affiliations + expand

PMID: 19121124 DOI: [10.1111/j.1467-9280.2008.02225.x](https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-9280.2008.02225.x)

[Free article](#)

### Abstract

We compare the restorative effects on cognitive functioning of interactions with natural versus urban

# Green Health Routes

- Trusted local spaces (e.g. GP surgeries and libraries).
- Promote and introduce people to routes.
- Routes feel familiar and welcoming.

## Community hubs

- Designed around local need.
- Focus on accessible, different confidence levels and ease of use.
- Make choosing nature a simple everyday option.

## Accessible, co-designed routes

- Connect people to parks, woodlands, meadows and waterways.
- Supported by maps, leaflets, digital tools and guided walks.
- Help build confidence, routine and nature connection.

## Green spaces

- Used by health professionals as green prescriptions.
- Promotes health creation and supports prevention.
- Support physical health, mental wellbeing and social connection.

## Health and wellbeing

# Where are the routes?

- **Oxford** - Botley, Wood Farm, East Oxford, Marston, Jericho, Blackbird Leys: Routes link urban neighbourhoods to parks, waterways, and nature reserves. Developed with Oxford City Council, community groups, and local GP practices.
- **Wiltshire** - Chippenham: Integrates GP-led promotion with accessible walking maps for patients and residents.
- **Wales** - Bangor, Cardiff: Focus on connecting healthcare settings to urban meadows and riverside walks. Both have virtual story maps.
- **North East**: Partnership with Forestry England to provide woodland walking opportunities linked to community spaces.



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# North East routes

- Forestry England has been exploring how they can connect with communities around their forests, supporting local people to discover, connect, move and feel good in the forest.
- CSH and Forestry England teamed up to test whether the Green Health Routes model would work in and around Forestry England sites
- Sport England funded a project officer role at CSH, to lead on the project and work closely with Forestry England's Active Forests Coordinators at those sites.



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# What we delivered

- 9 walking routes developed across Chopwell Wood, Guisborough Forest and surrounding urban and rural communities
- Routes connected familiar community hubs, town centres, transport links and woodland access points
- Designed for different confidence, mobility and energy levels, with clear accessibility information and practical route features highlighted
- Co-design with local communities through engagement sessions, and delivery of wellbeing walks and seasonal family activities



# What we delivered

Making routes visible and usable:

Printed and physical materials:

- 7,000 leaflets, posters in GP practices, libraries, community centres, loyalty card scheme at The Bank (free drink after 6 walks)
- Placed in trusted, high-footfall spaces so people encounter them naturally.
- Digital resources included: NHS Forest project pages, Go Jauntly app routes, downloadable maps, 2 audio-guided routes and 2 virtual walk videos.



## USEFUL INFO

### The Bank in Chopwell village

- Free toilets for all – no purchase needed
- Pay-as-you-can café  
Open Wednesday to Friday:  
9am–3pm  
Saturday :  
10am–3pm
- Note: There is no parking at The Bank. Only street parking.

## Emergency info

**Name of key location:**  
Chopwell Wood, Rowlands Gill,  
Gateshead, NE39 1LT  
**Grid ref:** NZ 136580

**Nearest access road:** B6315

**Nearest A&E hospital facilities:**  
Queen Elizabeth Hospital, Queen  
Elizabeth Avenue, Gateshead, NE9 6SX  
T: 0191 482 0000

**In case of an emergency call 999.**  
Inform Forestry England, 0300 067 4200

## Know before you go

Wear comfy shoes like trainers that you're able to walk in.

Make sure you bring water with you. Free refills are available at The Bank Café.

Chopwell Wood car park has accessible parking bays and benches.

There are no public toilets or café facilities in the forest.

Choose the walk that suits your needs. There's lots of choice.

Find out more:  
[forestryengland.uk/chopwell-wood](http://forestryengland.uk/chopwell-wood)

Want to explore a route?  
Head to our website:

[nhsforest.org/green-health-routes-north-east/](http://nhsforest.org/green-health-routes-north-east/)



Scan to explore all routes!

# Green Health Routes

## Discover your local walks



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NHS Forest  
Green space for health

Credit: Forestry England

Forestry England  
**CHOPWELL  
WOOD**

## Why walk?

- Improve fitness
- Explore local green spaces
- No special gear needed
- Enjoy gentle exercise in nature
- Boost mood and reduce stress



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## ROUTES SUMMARY

### Easy Access Trail 0.4 km | 15 minutes | Easy

**Start/end:** Forestry England Chopwell Wood car park

**Accessibility:** Flat and firm ground with no gates or steps.

**About:** A short, circular walk ideal for first-time visitors, families and anyone short on time.

**How to get there:**

- Free parking at Forestry England Chopwell Wood car park.
- Bus 47 from Gateshead/Consett to Hookergate bus stop.

### Wellbeing Trail 1.6 km | 30 ~ 40 minutes | Moderate

**Start/end:** Forestry England Chopwell Wood car park

**Accessibility:** Well-surfaced with some steeper gradients, no gates or steps.

**About:** An engaging loop designed to help you slow down and recharge. Try forest bathing along the way, following guidance on the trail signs.

**How to get there:**

- Free parking at Forestry England Chopwell Wood car park
- Bus 47 from Gateshead/Consett to Hookergate bus stop. Then follow Purple access path.

### Forest Stroll from The Bank 4.5 km | 1 hour 20 minutes | Moderate

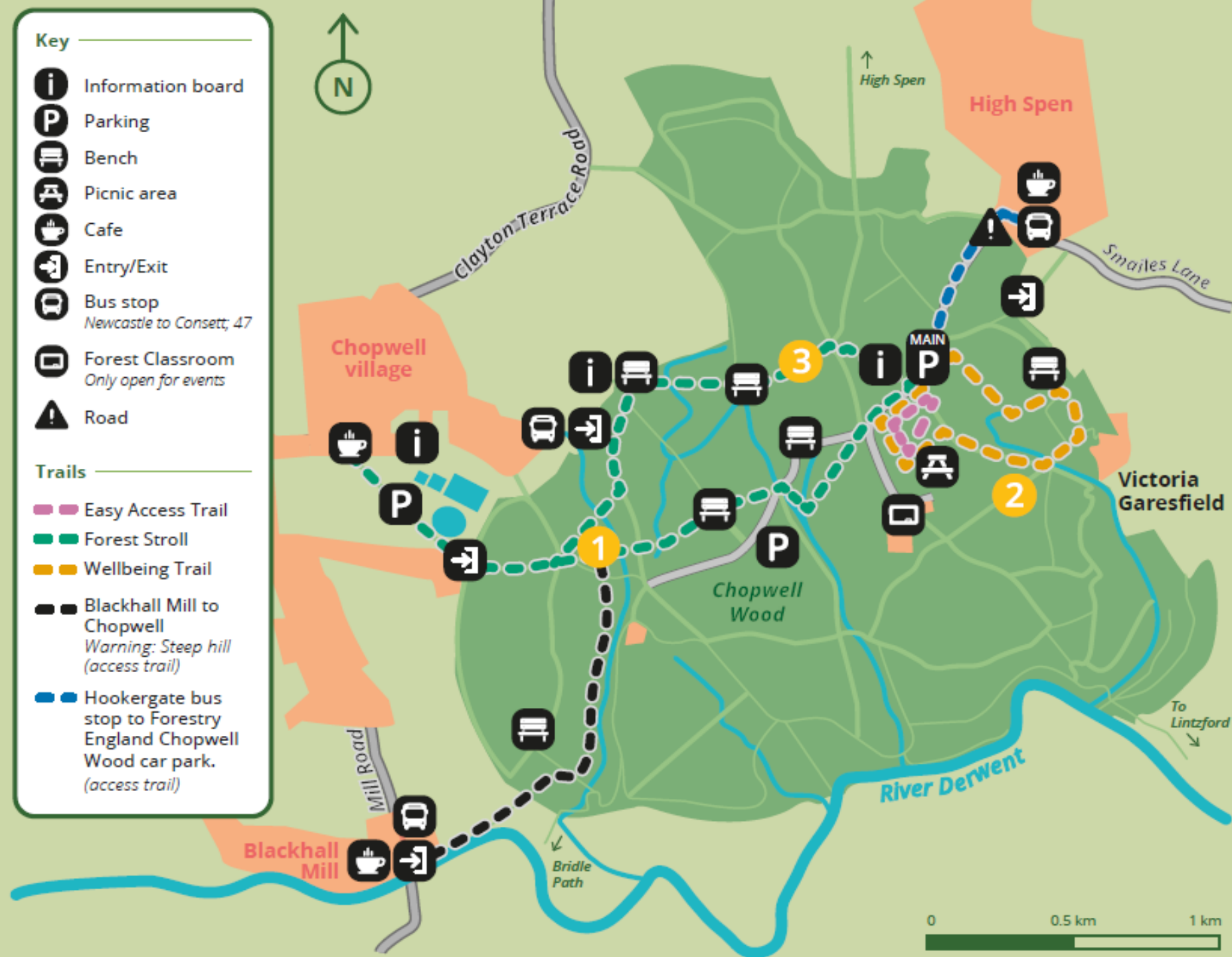
**Start/end:** The Bank Café

**Accessibility:** Mostly flat with some inclines. Firm path with no gates or steps.

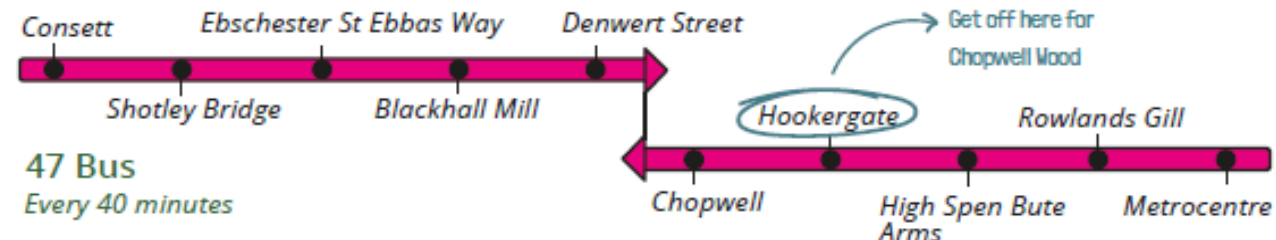
**About:** A peaceful, tree-lined walk. Follow the green boundary signs and then join the old railway trail and follow the blue signs. You can also begin this walk from the main Forestry England car park.

**How to get there:**

- Walk from Chopwell village or Derwent Street bus stop.
- Bus 47 from Gateshead (~45 minute journey) will take you to Chopwell Derwent Street near The Bank Café which is a 5-minute walk from the nearest entrance to the wood.



- #### Landmarks
- 1 Historical landmark
  - 2 The Hands sculpture
  - 3 Railway Carriages





# What changed for communities



## Active communities

- More people choosing walking as part of everyday life.
- Greater confidence to explore local green spaces.
- Progression from supported walks to independent use.

## Connected communities

- Opportunities for social connection and shared activity.
- Increased visibility of local wellbeing opportunities.
- Stronger links between healthcare, community organisations and residents.

## Valued green spaces

- Greater awareness and use of green and blue spaces.
- Communities reconnect with nearby nature.
- Local green spaces seen as part of the health offer.

## Lasting local change

- Routes embedded into local programmes and partnerships.
- Accessible maps, guides and digital resources.
- Creates a model that can be adapted and scaled elsewhere.
- Sustainable walking groups.



**Case study:** *One participant recovering from cancer used the routes to gradually rebuild strength, starting with short walks before progressing to longer and more challenging routes and joining local walking groups.*

# Creating lasting connections with nature

Permanent access to nine routes which remain live via NHS Forest, Go Jauntly and printed leaflets, supported by audio and virtual options.

Walking kit bags distributed to Forestry England teams and key partners, enabling independent delivery.

Volunteers signposted to Ramblers training.

Ongoing promotion and referral: routes shared through GP networks, MECC, councils and community hubs to support continued awareness and use.

Continued activity: Forestry England embedding routes into future activity planning.



# Stakeholder Engagement

**Social prescribers** – embedding the routes within primary care and referral pathways.

**Creative Frame** – delivering wellbeing photography walks (led by a former occupational therapist).

**Council public health / health improvement team** – integrating routes with initiatives such as Making Every Contact Count.

**PCN / You've Got This** – exploring inclusion of routes within a new weight-management journal.

**School sports partnership** – using the routes to engage families in regular activity.

**Community Lounge** – linking the routes to mental health support, isolation reduction and older people's activities.

**Ramblers** – promoting the routes within wider walking networks.

**Waiting Well** – connecting patients awaiting treatment with green-space activities.

**The Comfrey Project** – engaging with refugees and asylum seekers to access nature and community spaces.



# Partnerships

*The project demonstrated the value of connecting forests more intentionally with the communities around them. As she reflected, the routes have “quite literally put the forests on the local community map” and have helped make being active in nature something that can be part of people’s everyday life, in spaces hyper-local to them, as well as part of a visit to a nearby forest.*

**Ellen Divine (Wellbeing Projects Manager – Forestry England)**



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# Reflections

- Embedding nature-based approaches into healthcare takes time, trust and sustained relationships
- Green Health Routes strengthened links between healthcare, communities and nature through engagement with GP practices, social prescribers and wellbeing networks
- The project helped raise awareness, build referral confidence and create clearer opportunities to connect people with nature
- More than a walking initiative, it provides practical pathways for embedding nature into community health and wellbeing
- Forestry England and local partners are continuing activity beyond the funded project period



# Find out more



[nhsforest.org/projects/green-health-routes/](https://nhsforest.org/projects/green-health-routes/)



[nhsforest.org/projects/green-health-routes/north-east-health-routes/](https://nhsforest.org/projects/green-health-routes/north-east-health-routes/)



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**Thank you!**