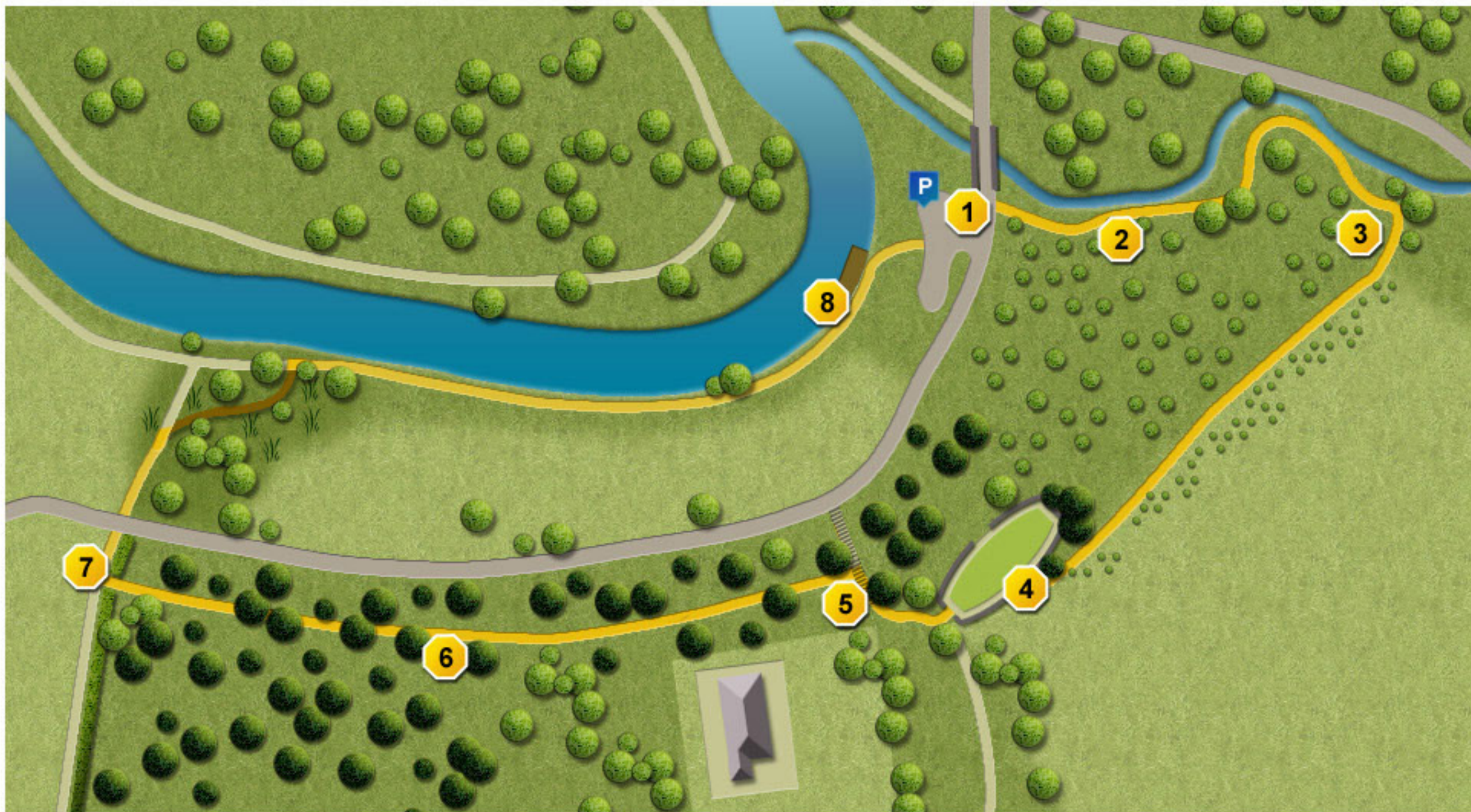


This is an a pleasant 2km walk that takes in the old Terrace Hill view point estate lands and the remarkable Minnowburn Beech trees. The trail is a circular route. Some of the paths may be narrow and may have uneven surfaces.



Facilities

There are no toilets or lunch room facilities associated with this trail.

Guided tours can be pre-booked by contacting The National Trust Belfast.

Tel: 028 90647787

Email: minnowburn@nationaltrust.org.uk

Minnowburn Warden's Office
Ballynahatty Road
Belfast
BT8 8LE

Equipment needed for the trail

- Outdoor shoes & clothing
- Trail booklets
- Teachers guide
- Clip boards / pens / crayons
- ID charts
- Measuring tapes
- Minibeast jars (optional)
- Tray for collecting minibeasts
- Camera (optional)



Stop 1 – Minnowburn Bridge

Starting at car park, walk to the Minnowburn Bridge. Here a small tributary flows over gravel beds through picturesque stone arches towards the River Lagan. This spot is a very important area for wildlife. Birds such as the dipper and kingfisher have been known to nest here. The water level is prone to rising and falling very rapidly.

Go to bridge, explain what a coping stone is (coping stones are used to cap free standing walls. They protect the wall from weather damage as well as giving an aesthetically pleasing finish). Some of the capstones have been replaced. Get the pupils to find both the old and new stones. Ask them if they can find an old piece of graffiti on top of the bridge. The graffiti says M.Clokey 1955. Margaret Clokey was the daughter of one of the owners of the big house (Terrace Hill) that you will discover later along the trail. Her father owned this bridge.



Go to the left-hand side of the bridge.

Ask pupils to count the arches (there are 4). One of these arches doesn't have any water going through it. Ask pupils what they think this arch is for? You can give them a number of clues – water, water wheel, power, linen mill. Explain that water would have flowed under the bridge and along this little canal (millrace) to a saw mill. The water would have powered a large water wheel, which would have been used to work the machines.



Cross the bridge and follow the wooden sign that says 'Rose Garden Giants Ring.'



Stop 2 – River who am I?

Ask students to quietly draw the bridge and complete the river 'who am I' activity.



Carry along the path until you reach a fork in the path. You will see a young woodland, these trees are about 12 years old.



Stop 3 – The 'teenage' woodland

This is a good spot to get pupils to look for minibeasts in the leaf litter. They can also use their ID charts to try and find out what trees are in the woodland and complete the discovering trees worksheet. You will need to use a measuring tape to investigate the age of the trees. This can be done as a large group or by splitting them pupils into small work groups.



Continue up a steep slope, you will pass a plantation of very young trees that is about 3-4 years old. At the top of the slope turn right towards the Rose Garden.



Stop 4 – Terrace Hill

Ask children to look straight over to the Belfast Hills. How many hill tops can they count? Explain to them that these were formed millions of years ago by lava flows coming out of a volcano. This is a good point for them to sketch the hills. You can also see Malone House on the other side of the valley.

Point out the large house through the fence. This is Terrace Hill. This garden used to belong to the house. The garden was built by Ned Robinson, a famous Linen Merchant, in the mid 1930s but became dilapidated until the National Trust began restoring it in 2001. It is gradually returning to its former glory. See if the pupils can find the old electric box (the garden was once floodlit). In the 1930's this garden would have been used for garden parties. There may have been a band playing and people would have been dressed up. Ask the children to imagine there was a party here today. Would it be different? Get them to think about clothes, music, sights, sounds, smells, colours etc. The centre of the walled garden is great spot to carry out the 'discovering the natural world' activity.

Discovering the natural world activity

Ask the pupils to find their own quiet spot and to sit quietly and observe the natural world around them, making notes or drawing pictures to represent what they've found. After about 5 or 10 minutes ask them to form a circle so they can discuss their findings.



Stop 5 – Freddie's steps

Exit the garden past the old electric box and you will reach Freddie's Steps, so called because they were built by Frederick Russell in the 1850s. Have the children count them on the descent. Do not follow the steps completely to the bottom, only until the path breaks left and have the children count the rest of the steps from here. There are 76 steps until the path turns to the left. If you carry on to the bottom there are another 46.



Stop 6 – In the woods

As you walk along the path you will be in a mature woodland. Get the pupils to think about woodland ecosystems and create a woodland food chain. Ask the pupils to complete their looking for evidence worksheet as they walk along the path.



At the end of the woodland path, go up the steps onto the stoned path. Look right at the hedgerow.



Stop 7 – Discovering hedgerows

Ask children why they think hedgerows are important e.g. places for birds to nest, food for birds, habitat for insects.

Hedgerows used to be a common feature in the countryside, but have sadly been disappearing as farmers remove them to make way for large machinery. The best hedges consist of a mix of species; they provide flowers for nectar eating insects, fruit and seeds for hungry birds, cover for small animals, to move from one place to another, a windbreak for cattle, and shelter for a mix of wildflowers. The prickly hawthorn in this hedge will help to keep the cattle on the right side of the fence but this hedge has a long way to go yet before it reaches the standard of some of our ancient hedgerows. Hedgerows are fantastic 'wildlife corridors' for small mammals.



Cross the road and continue straight on. When you reach the River Lagan take a right.

On your right hand side explain that there is a wet woodland. Point out the manmade dams made of natural materials and explain that the trees in here like to have their 'feet wet' (e.g. alder and willow). Explain also that this is good place to see an otter. Introduce the tracks and trails activity asking the pupils to look for tracks as the walk along.

Answers to tracks & trails: 1. badger, 2. duck, 3. fox, 4. dog, 5. heron, 6. squirrel



Continue along the path until you reach a wooden fishing platform.



Stop 8 – Life on the Lagan

Stop by the fishing platform, ask pupils to sit and complete the River Lagan and bird watch worksheet.



The steps to the right of the platform will take up back to the car park.