



Introduction

Welcome to one of a series of maps of self-guided walks in the Black Country Urban Forest. There are currently maps for walks in Bilston, Tipton, Wednesbury, West Bromwich, Oldbury and Willenhall. These routes go through some of the greenest parts of the Black Country. Thanks to the large number of small woods, wetlands and wildflower areas, these landscapes change a great deal through the seasons, so once you find a favourite walk, try sharing it with friends and visiting it in spring, summer, autumn and winter. There should always be something new to see.

The walks have been carefully chosen so that almost anyone can use them. Within the network of footpaths, three short health walks have been highlighted on each map. These are particularly easy and written directions can be found on the back of the map. Alternatively you could choose a longer circular route or take advantage of the many public transport links that connect to the walks. Information about buses, trains and the Midland Metro can be obtained from the Centro hotline on 0121 200 2700 or the website www.travelwm.co.uk

Most of the walks are along surfaced footpaths and many of them follow canal towpaths or disused railways. They may be muddy in places and shelter is limited, so wear suitable footwear and clothing. Most of the paths are unlit, so time your walk to avoid getting caught out at dusk. The distance printed on the map will help you to work out the length of a walk.

There are very few public toilets along the routes, but the maps show pubs and other places where you can buy food and drink. There are plenty of places to picnic, but please take all your litter home and do not light fires.

Finally, do be careful, especially along canal towpaths and where the routes cross busy roads or the Midland Metro. Help may not be at hand in the event of illness or injury, so it makes sense to enjoy your walk with a companion.

Black Country Urban Forest



The Black Country is surprisingly green. There are a great many public parks and recreation grounds, but there is also wilder 'urban countryside' where nature has turned derelict industrial land, old quarries and abandoned railway lines into new woodlands.

For the turn of the Millennium, a large grant from the National Lottery was spent in adding even more trees. Now there are over 1000 small woodlands across the region and these, together with existing trees in streets, parks and gardens are what is known as the Black Country Urban Forest.

Woodland on the doorstep benefits the people who live and work in the Black Country and it also improves the region's image for those who are just passing through. The urban forest helps to clean up air pollution, reduce the risk of flooding and it provides a wonderful habitat for wildlife.

Most important of all, the natural peacefulness of the Black Country Urban Forest is very easy to enjoy, thanks to the endless networks of footpaths which weave through the landscape and link conveniently to rail, Metro and bus routes. With the help of these maps, many more people should gain real pleasure (and a little more good health) from the Black Country Urban Forest.



Walking the Way to Health initiative

Walking the Way to Health is a national initiative which is helping people to get fitter and healthier through regular walking. Walking is also a good way of enjoying the outdoors, meeting new people and exploring the local area.

Gentle exercise through walking is known to reduce the risk of a number of illnesses, including Alzheimer's disease, bowel cancer and stroke. Walking can also reduce anxiety and depression, whilst increasing self confidence and stamina. Regular walking can also help people to maintain or reduce their weight.

The map overleaf shows three health walks which have been specially designed for people who are not used to regular physical exercise or who need encouragement to explore their local area. All the walks start and end at points which are easily accessible by public transport and they are suitable for just about everybody. As well as using the map, you can also follow the written directions. Alternatively, you may wish to design your own route from within the wider network of footpaths shown.

Walking for health

Walking at any speed will burn calories, improve muscle tone and strengthen bones. It is also likely to make you feel better. If you wish to improve heart and lung fitness, you need to walk briskly. When you are health-walking effectively, you should find that you

- Breathe a little faster
- Feel warmer
- Sweat slightly
- Have a slightly faster heartbeat

...but you should still be able to hold a conversation!

If you have not done much exercise for a while, it is important to build up gently. Start with one of the shorter, easier health walks before tackling the longer, more challenging ones. Try to build up to being active for 30 minutes at a time on five occasions a week. Walking is very good, but so are swimming, cycling and even gardening - in fact anything that helps your heart and lungs to work a little harder.

Health Walk 1

Bilston to Loxdale

Start point Bilston Central Metro Stop/
Bilston Bus Station

End point Loxdale Metro Stop

Total distance 1.7 miles (2.8 km)

Difficulty level Medium
includes some slopes & unsurfaced paths

Time allowance
45 mins-1hour

- 1 Leave Bilston Central Metro stop from the Wolverhampton end of the platform or walk from Bilston Bus Station from the Stafford Street end and walk through the small walled public garden into Church Street
- 2 Turn left along the main pedestrianised shopping street. Continue along High Street and when you reach the fifteenth century half-timbered *Greyhound and Punchbowl* public house, turn left by the Post Office into Stonefield Walk
- 3 Cross over the busy Black Country Route by the footbridge and turn right down the ramp along the front of Parkfield School (now closed) and turn left to follow the path which runs along the side of the school grounds
- 4 Keep the school and railings on your left and when the playing fields end follow the path as it bears round to the right. Another path will join from the left, but you should keep right
- 5 At the end of the concrete fence, bear round to the left and then take the left fork. Walk through the narrow belt of trees up a small rise until you see the canal
- 6 Turn left at the canal and walk along the towpath with the water on your right as it bends round to the right and then to the left
- 7 Pass under two bridges and a large grey industrial building which straddles the canal
- 8 Pass under the next bridge and then leave the towpath, turn back on yourself and then right into Loxdale Street. Walk a short distance down the hill to Loxdale Metro stop and travel by Metro one stop back to Bilston



Health Walk 2

Weddell Wynd Circular

Start point ASDA - Tipton Branch,
Wednesbury Oak Road
End point ASDA - Tipton Branch,
Wednesbury Oak Road

Difficulty level Easy
includes some gentle slopes

Time allowance
40 - 50 mins

Total distance 1.2 miles (1.9 km)

- 1 Turn left out of the entrance to Asda car park and cross the Wednesbury Oak Road at the pelican crossing and enter the small open space just beyond the grounds of Wednesbury Oak Primary school
- 2 Take the right fork and follow the path that leads out of the corner of the open space through a double metal barrier marked with a "WW"
- 3 Once in the Weddell Wynd open space, follow the footpath, keeping the wood on your left and pass through two sets of wooden barriers
- 4 When you reach a T-junction in the path, turn left and then immediately right and take the main path that leads towards the centre of the open space
- 5 The path forks close to the centre of the open space. Take the path that leads off to the left, heading for the church tower, just visible above the trees in the distance
- 6 Follow this path until the surface changes to tarmac and it rises up a low hill
- 7 Turn right at the top of the hill and follow the path which leads towards a row of semi-detached houses along the boundary, drop down the bank and through the "WW" barrier out into the road named Weddell Wynd
- 8 On reaching the road, turn right and when the road ends, continue straight on through another "WW" barrier, back into the open space. Follow the path, keeping the embankment on your right and when you reach a T-junction, turn right
- 9 Follow the path until it begins to curve round to the left and just before the houses begin, turn right through a "WW" barrier in the embankment and then almost immediately left. You will recognise the path that leads you back to Wednesbury Oak Primary School and Asda, this time with the woodland on your right

Travel West Midlands bus service 313 (Walsall - Stourbridge) stops outside ASDA on Wednesbury Oak Road. For information on this service call the Centro Hotline on 0121 200 2700

Health Walk 3

Moorcroft Wood/Walsall Canal

Start point Bradley Lane
Metro Stop
End point Wednesbury Parkway
Metro Stop

Difficulty level Hard
includes steep slopes & unsurfaced paths

Time allowance
45 mins-1hour

Total distance 1.5 miles (2.5 km)

- 1 Leave Bradley Lane Metro stop at the road bridge end. Turn left into Bradley Lane and walk down to the junction with Great Bridge Road
- 2 Turn right at the T-junction. Walk the short distance down to the *Fiery Holes* public house and cross Great Bridge Road carefully
- 3 Turn left by the public house into Bull Lane. After the first road on the right, cross Bull Lane by the crossing and then take the second road on the right (Hawkswood Drive) just beyond the Dorothy Purcell School. You will then see Moorcroft Wood ahead of you
- 4 After a short distance, between the second and third speed bump, turn left and enter Moorcroft Wood
- 5 Follow the main path on the left, which leads into the heart of the wood and as it curves round to the right and the lake comes into view, turn left off the tarmac onto a rough footpath
- 6 Keep the lake on your right and follow the path through the wood around the northern edge of the lake and up a short flight of steep log steps
- 7 Follow the path round to the right and note the canal just beyond the trees on your left
- 8 The path runs through the wood, with the canal on the left until eventually you leave the wood through a metal gate
- 9 Turn left over the canal bridge which also carries a large diameter metal pipe and then turn right along the canal towpath
- 10 Follow the brick paved towpath, passing under Willingworth Hall Bridge and Monway Bridge
- 11 When you eventually reach the blue bridge which carries the Midland Metro, turn sharp left and leave the canal.
- 12 Join Hallens Drive by a small roundabout planted with pine trees. With the old gates to the former Patent Shaft Steelworks behind you, walk about 300m up the gentle slope to Wednesbury Parkway Metro stop

BLACK COUNTRY URBAN FOREST

EASY WALKS AROUND BILSTON, TIPTON & WEDNESBURY

1	2
3	4

Disused railways & canals provide an ideal corridor for wildlife to move around the urban area:



Dragonfly
(Odonata)



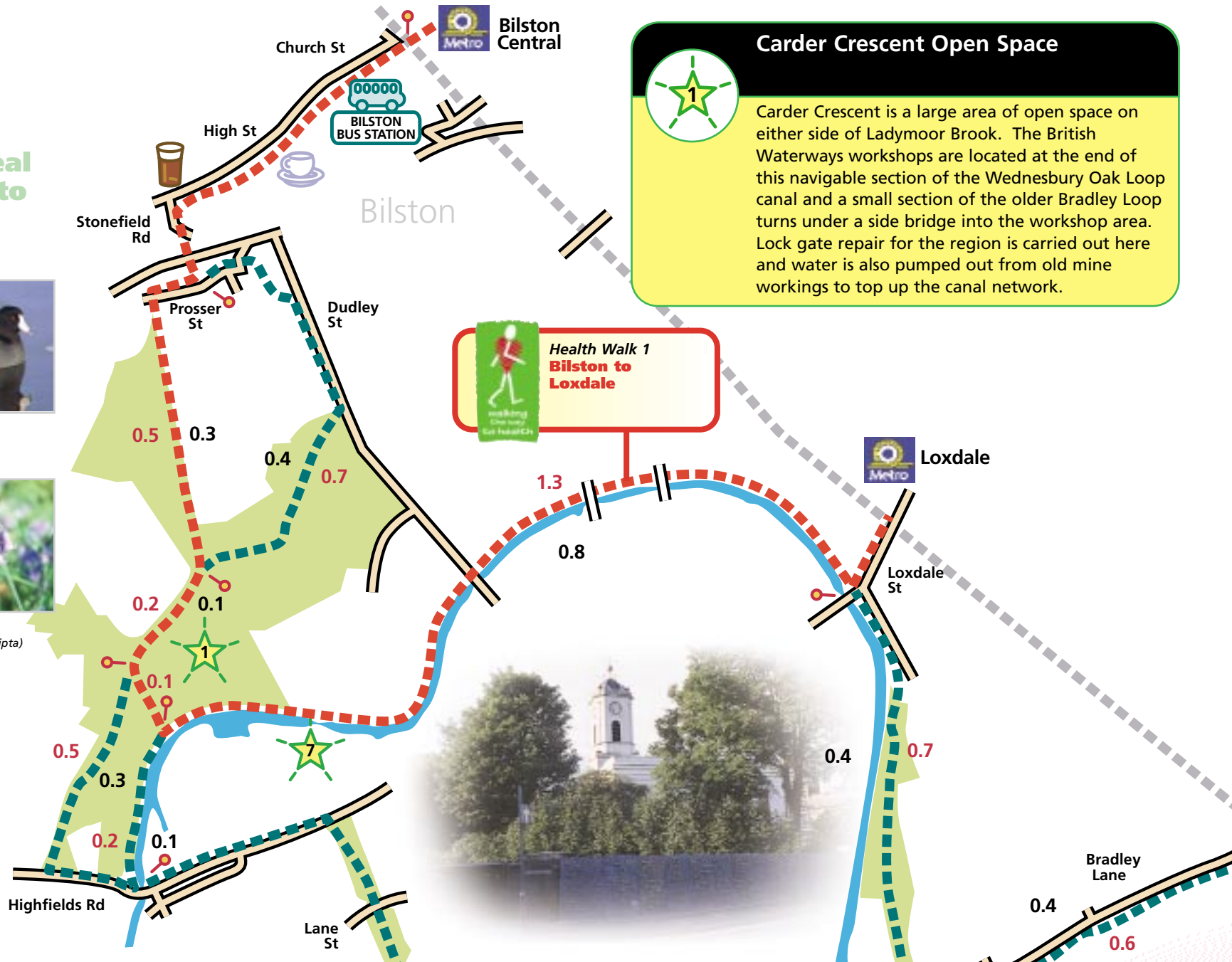
Coot
(Parus caeruleus)



Fly agaric
(Amanita muscaria)



Bluebell
(Hyacinthoides non-scripta)



Carder Crescent Open Space



Carder Crescent is a large area of open space on either side of Ladymoor Brook. The British Waterways workshops are located at the end of this navigable section of the Wednesbury Oak Loop canal and a small section of the older Bradley Loop turns under a side bridge into the workshop area. Lock gate repair for the region is carried out here and water is also pumped out from old mine workings to top up the canal network.

Health Walk 1
Bilston to Loxdale



1	2
3	4



LOOK OUT FOR THESE TREES & SHRUBS ALONG YOUR WALK:

3

Moorcroft Wood

Moorcroft Wood is 13 hectares in area and contains a range of habitats, including woodland, wetland and grassland. Until 100 years ago, the site of Moorcroft Wood was a mix of farmland and factories. It was mined for coal and iron ore, but all this activity had ceased by 1904, when it was bought as the recreation grounds for the convalescing patients from nearby Moxley Hospital (now closed). To improve the site, many young trees were planted by volunteers from the pioneering Midlands Reafforesting Association.

In the early 1980s work started to conserve Moorcroft Wood for wildlife and for visitors. During May small clumps of bluebells can be seen flowering amongst the brambles and the pools are rich in plant and bird life. Moorcroft has been declared a Local Nature Reserve. For more information see www.walsall.gov.uk/countryside

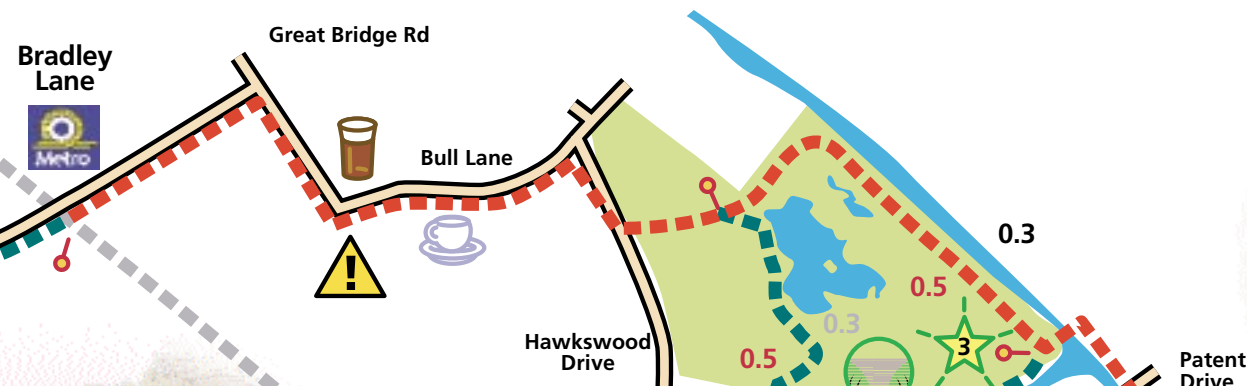
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Walsall Canal

This section of the Walsall Canal was built in 1786 to carry coal from Broadwaters Colliery to Birmingham. The Bradley Branch canal, by Moorcroft Wood, provided a link with the Wednesbury Oak Loop through nine locks, and was opened in 1849 although most of the branch has since been filled in.

The positions of the locks can still be seen where the ground rises as you walk towards Weddell Wynd.

- Sycamore**
(*Acer pseudoplatanus*)
- Common alder**
(*Alnus glutinosa*)
- Goat ("pussy") willow**
(*Salix caprea*)





Oxford, Worcester & Wolverhampton Railway

This section of the walk was once the route of the Oxford, Worcester & Wolverhampton Railway and was built by the great Victorian railway engineer Isambard Kingdom Brunel. It ran from the Low Level Station in Wolverhampton through to Dudley and on to Stourbridge. As you cross Daisy Street you will pass the site of the Daisy Bank & Bradley station.

The line was operated by the Great Western Railway Company, but trains were so often delayed or cancelled, that it became known locally as the Old Worse & Worse. The line was eventually closed in 1968 following the electrification of the West Coast Main Line.



Wednesbury Oak Loop Canal

James Brindley was one of Britain's greatest canal builders. His Birmingham Main Line Canal, known as the Wednesbury Oak Loop, is more than 200 years old and it is still navigable for half of its original course. It was built to take a long, winding route through the mines and quarries of the Black Country, but the opening of Coseley Tunnel in 1827 provided an alternative route, which was five miles shorter and gradually the Wednesbury Oak Loop fell into disrepair.

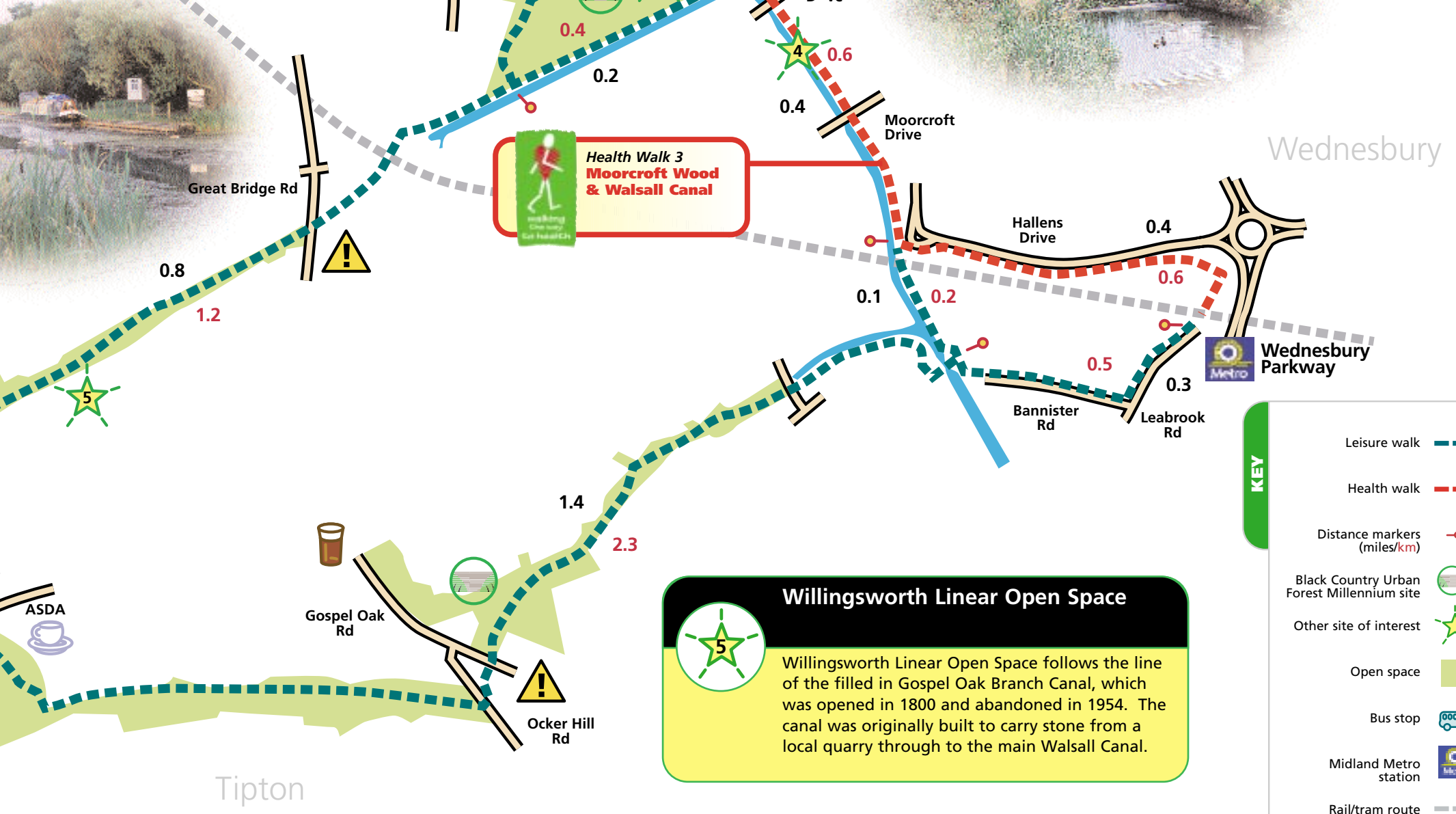


Weddell Wynd Community Woodland

Weddell Wynd is a large area of open grassland and young woodland. It is grazed by horses and ponies and is a good place to see butterflies. The Wednesbury Oak Loop Canal crossed the site and was still in use until 1961, when it was abandoned and filled in. The tops of the some of the in-filled locks can still be seen as you walk towards the Walsall Canal.



1	2
3	4



Health Walk 3
Moorcroft Wood & Walsall Canal

Willingsworth Linear Open Space

Willingsworth Linear Open Space follows the line of the filled in Gospel Oak Branch Canal, which was opened in 1800 and abandoned in 1954. The canal was originally built to carry stone from a local quarry through to the main Walsall Canal.

- KEY**
- Leisure walk
 - Health walk
 - Distance markers (miles/km)
 - Black Country Urban Forest Millennium site
 - Other site of interest
 - Open space
 - Bus stop
 - Midland Metro station
 - Rail/tram route
 - Newsagent
 - Public house
 - Refreshments
 - Main road
 - Cross with care**

1	2
3	4

