

# Accessibility at Astbury Mere Country Park

Sandy Lane, Congleton, CW12 4FP



We want all visitors to enjoy Astbury Mere. The following information is designed to help you plan your visit. Please note that Astbury Mere is a country park, so while many accessible features are provided, paths and surfaces are part of a natural setting and may be uneven or bumpy in places.

Written by Dr Deborah Lawson

## Getting here & parking

- The main car park entrance from Sandy Lane has a shallow kerb and a speed hump.
  - The car park surface is a mixture of hardstanding and gravel.
  - There are two designated Blue Badge spaces, exempt from parking charges.
  - Blue Badge holders may also park in any space within the car park free of charge, provided their badge is clearly displayed.
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## Entrances

- **Main entrance (Sandy Lane off Newcastle Road):**
  - Pedestrian access is via a kissing gate (manoeuvring space approx. 159 cm x 106 cm).
  - This may be difficult for some wheelchair and mobility-scooter users to use independently, and some larger wheelchairs or mobility scooters may not fit.
  - There are some uneven sections of the path between the kissing gate and the toilets, caused by tree roots pushing up through the hardstanding. These do not run the full width of the path, so they can be avoided.



- **Other entry points include:**

- Alternative step-free access is available from Ennerdale Drive, where there is an open gate. The path gradient here is steep, and there is no parking at this entrance (see left photo).
- There are steps from Wagg's Road/Banky Fields and from Astbury Street (not accessible).
- The Water Sports Centre entrance on Newcastle Road slopes down to the Mere, providing access for Water Sports Centre customers and nearby homes. Parking here is not for general visitors, and there is no wheelchair-accessible path along the access road itself.



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## From the car park to the Mere

- After passing through bollards, there are two staggered timber barriers to pass through (gaps approx. 112 cm and 100 cm).



- From the car park, there is a smooth gradient down to the Mere circuit via a hardstanding path.
  - There are seven benches at the Mere entrance, with hardstanding in front of them and a hardstanding wheelchair space next to each bench.
  - In the orchard (reachable by a path 150 cm wide), there are a further four benches (two benches are on the path, and two are on grass up a slight gradient). All have hardstanding in front of them and a space for a wheelchair to the side.
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## Paths & routes

- The circular route around the Mere is approx. **1 mile (1.6 km)**.



- Surfaces are firm (hardstanding and fine gravel).
- In windy weather, some dust may blow across the path.
- Paths are wide enough for a wheelchair and a companion or assistance dog, and for others to pass.

- There is a forest area off the main circuit. However, this is not wheelchair accessible due to rough, uneven terrain and tree stumps.
- After the Water Sports Centre (if passing the building on your left), the outer edge of the main path slopes slightly towards the Mere. This can be avoided by keeping towards the left of the path.
- General waste bins and dog waste bins are positioned along the route, at an accessible height. Dog waste bins have heavy lids with pull handles.



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## **Water Sports Centre area (halfway point around the route)**

- As you approach the Water Sports Centre, there is some larger gravel on the floor and uneven terrain (though the uneven terrain can mostly be avoided).
- There is a two-metre-wide hardstanding bypass around a closed gate (see the photo on the left on the next page).



- Dropped kerbs here have been improved with tarmac, but there is still a slight ridge going up and down them.
- To continue the route, visitors need to cross a raised speed hump in the road (see right photo below).



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## Seating & rest stops

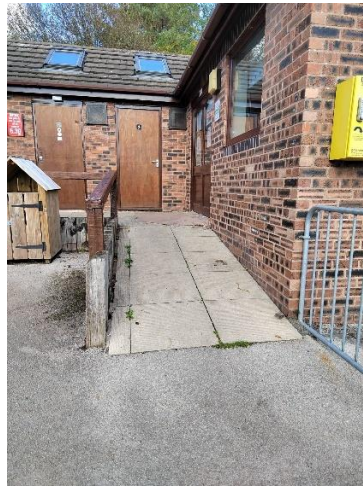
- There are benches positioned around the Astbury Mere site. Along the circular route, there are 13 benches, positioned approximately every 100 metres.
- About half have hardstanding and a wheelchair space beside them.
- All benches have backs and armrests.

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## Toilets

- One accessible toilet (RADAR key) alongside male and female facilities.

- Doorway approx. 80 cm wide.
- Internal space approx. 155 cm x 190 cm, but the sink, WC and nappy bin reduce the usable space.
- Left-hand transfer when seated on the WC.
- Grab rails by the WC: one drop-down, one wall-mounted.
- Ramp access (with a single handrail) to the accessible toilet (the gradient may feel a little steep for some users).
- Points to note: the sink is slightly high if using a wheelchair; the turning space may be tight for larger wheelchairs.



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## Café

- The café has a ramped entrance and two small thresholds that may be difficult for some wheelchair users.
- Two wheelchair-accessible outdoor tables are provided for customers.



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## Dogs

- Dogs must be kept on a lead around the Mere.
- There is a large, grassed area at the top of the site where dogs can run off-lead.



- Dog waste bins are coloured red and black and placed along the route, at an accessible height. They have a heavy lid and pull handle.

## Other facilities

- There are two defibrillators available on site. One at the Visitor Centre and one at the Water Sports Centre.
  - The Visitor Centre can be rented out and is wheelchair accessible via the same ramp (with a single handrail) as the accessible toilet; the gradient may feel a little steep for some users.
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## Summary:

Astbury Mere is a scenic country park, offering a one-mile circular route, regular rest stops, accessible parking and a RADAR-key accessible toilet. As it is a natural site, some paths may be uneven or sloping in places; however, overall, it provides an enjoyable and welcoming place to explore.

