

# English Heritage opens new woodland walks in Cheshire

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## BEESTON CASTLE – BIGGER AND BETTER THAN EVER BEFORE!

Although a claim that an 800 year old castle has just become ten times bigger may seem like an extravagant claim, that is exactly the situation at Beeston Castle (<http://www.english-heritage.org.uk/beestoncastle>), near Tarporley, where a series of new pathways have been launched to open up a further 10-15 acres of the woodland site.

As part of a major landscape management project, English Heritage is launching a number of new trails and pathways around the site, which will hugely extend the site from around one and a half accessible acres to over ten acres on the 30-acre site.

“Beeston Castle was very popular as a visitor attraction in its own right during Victorian times. The then-owners brought livestock, including deer, sheep and even kangaroos into the walled grounds for the amusement of visitors, and these animals did a great job of keeping paths clear and self-sown saplings and bracken under control,” explains site manager, Mark Hodgson. “Sadly, the animals were removed when the site was taken into state ownership in 1959, and since then, the bracken and brambles have largely had free reign, blocking pathways and strangling many of the native flowers and plants. The work we have done should go a long way towards restoring those plants – this spring alone, we’ve already got a far larger show of bluebells at the site!”

The new woodland trail takes visitors from the wall of the outer bailey in a circular route through the woodland around the base of the cliff. Starting off under a 250 year-old broadleaf canopy, the route then moves into the pinewood forest, which was planted in the 1850s, and from which you can see the edge of the castle, looming on the clifftop high above! The route emerges by Beeston’s other legendary gems: the Robin Hood cave - so-called after Patrick Bergen and Uma Thurman used it as the entrance to the outlaw’s lair in their 1992 movie - and the sand caves, created when excavating grit for sand-blasting canal boats, and now supposedly inhabited by Beeston Castle’s resident dragon, Simon!

The woodland trail takes around 45 minutes to walk, although there are plenty of places to stop off en-route to enjoy the flora and fauna, or stop and have a picnic. Although less strenuous than the hike to the top of the cliff, the path is uneven in places, so good footwear is advisable, and visitors are asked to stick to the woodchip pathways.

However, the land management project has also opened up a number of other paths and trails within the outer bailey of the castle. Visitors can now pick from several different routes from the outer gatehouse up to the summit of the castle, as well as exploring the Iron Age ditch that runs around the outside of the outer bailey wall. Later on in the summer, a whole new set of views over the Cheshire plains will also be revealed when the rock-cut ditch re-opens to the public for the first time since Victorian visitors walked around a man-made platform to the rear of the Castle!

Beeston Castle is open daily from 10.00am to 6.00pm until the end of September, and from Thursday to Monday, 10.00am to 4.00pm during the winter. Admission is £5.00 for adults, £4.00 for concessions and

£2.50 for children, or free for English Heritage members.

For more details, please visit [www.english-heritage.org.uk/beestoncastle](http://www.english-heritage.org.uk/beestoncastle) or call 01829 260464.

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Hi-resolution photographs (<http://www.fim.org.uk/beeston>) for media use are available at [www.fim.org.uk/beeston](http://www.fim.org.uk/beeston)

For further media information, or a CD of images, please contact:

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