

Herne Hill Waypoint Markers & Interpretation Signs Ilminster Town Council - Open Spaces Team

Introduction:

The Herne Hill woodland site is a popular walking location for residents and visitors to Ilminster. The woodland is crossed by a number of unimproved footpaths and access onto the area is currently provided by five entrances.

Access onto and around the hill can prove difficult for some, due to the steep topography of the area. The lack of signage and information can also impede access of visitors to Ilminster, who are unfamiliar with the site.

Aims:

The aim of this report is to provide a solution to improve the access around the Herne Hill woodland site by using waypoint markers to designate three different routes around the woodland. Each route aims to give varied levels of accessibility by taking into account ease of access, topography and total distance.

This report also suggests the option of installing interpretation/information boards, to provide information and increase public knowledge of the site.

All recommendations in this report are in accordance with management objectives provided by the Herne Hill Woodland Management Plan (2016).

The potential benefits to installing the waypoints and signage would be to see increased use of the woodland leading to further appreciation of the areas wildlife value, which would help preserve the ecology of the site for the future. The improved access can be used to promote a healthier lifestyle through exercise, while the information boards would promote the heritage of Ilminster and of Herne Hill in particular. This is useful to residents currently unaware of the history of Herne Hill and visitors to the area.

Objectives:

- To select three separate circuits of the Herne Hill woodland site, graded Green, Amber and Red.
- Provide quotes from at least three suppliers for the waypoint markers.
- To suggest the type of information which should be displayed on the proposed information boards and provide potential locations for them.
- Provide quotes from at least three suppliers for the design and manufacture of the information boards.
- Open Spaces Team to install the waypoint markers and information signs. Ilminster Town Council to promote them to the public.

Plan:

Routes:

The footpaths illustrated in the Herne Hill Nature Trail leaflet, which is available from the Town Council/Ilminster Tourism are an accurate interpretation of the site. By using this map and relating it to the ground, I have identified three potential routes around the woodland. Each route is circular and links back on itself, allowing site users to join a route from any of the five entrances to the woodland.

I suggest using a 'traffic light' system of green, amber and red to aid in interpretation of the routes as easy, medium and high difficulty. However, access around the site will prove difficult to some users due to its steep inclines and uneven surfaces and care should be taken when describing the routes with terms such as 'easy', so as not to create confusion.

A map of Herne Hill can be found below, showing the proposed route each pathway will take through the woodland. All routes incorporate the northern pathway at the bottom of the image.

It should be noted that all remaining paths/trackways will continue to be maintained and accessible to site users, the proposed routes are only a suggestion to aid accessibility.

The Green route makes use of the sites centre pathway, removing the need for walkers to climb the steepest areas and directing them to the newly refurbished steps to the south of the bluebell area. This route is 1.95km in total length.

The Amber route takes walkers through the sites Fir Pound then down through the track with runs through the centre of the bluebell area. This route uses the set of steps close to the OS Triangulation Point, which are due to be refurbished as per the sites management plan. This route is 2.04km in length.

Finally, the Red route takes walkers around the perimeter pathway. The red route is the longest track within the site and includes the steepest inclines and does not utilise any of the steps found within the woodland. This route is 2.14km in length.



Map of Herne Hill illustrating the proposed access routes.

Waypoints:

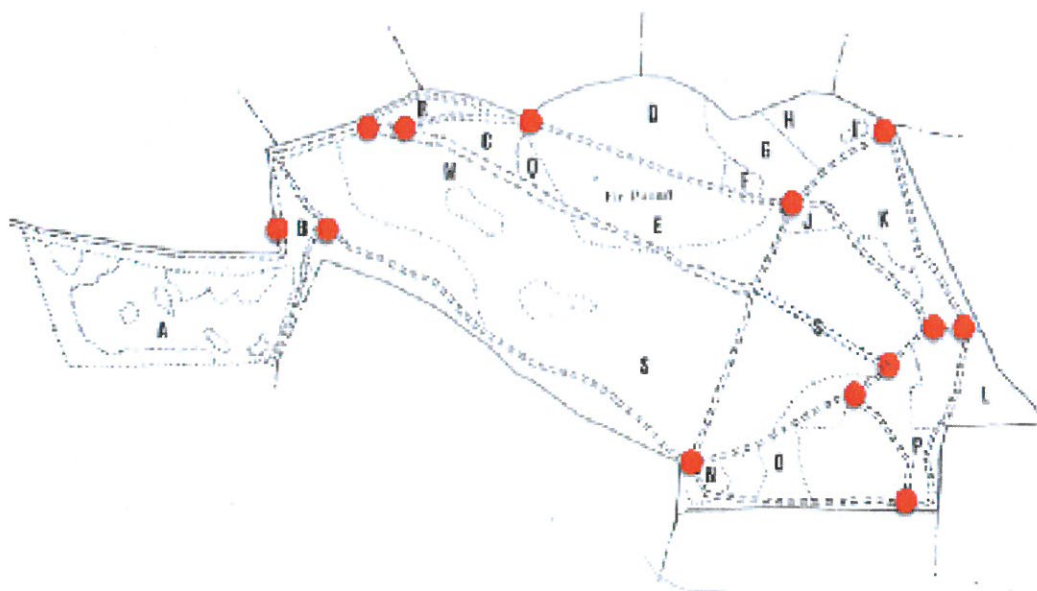
By walking each of the routes I have identified thirteen areas where the waypoint marker posts should be located so that they can be seen easily by site users, providing simple interpretation so walkers are able to easily stick to the correct routes.

There are many different designs available to use for waypoint markers, including posts which are individually designed using custom graphics or branded/etched with information. While these designs are visually appealing, a simpler design of a plain post with colour coded arrow disks would be cheaper to acquire and easier to replace and repair in the long term. A simpler design would also allow for changes to the route in the future, without having to purchase custom designed waypoint posts.

The waypoint markers can be fitted to two sides of the post, this will allow walkers to complete the routes no matter which direction they happen to be walking in. To ensure we have sufficient directional markers we should order sixteen green arrows, sixteen amber arrows and twenty four red arrows. These directional arrows could be made to contain the Ilminster Town Council text, which would help inform users that their local council has provided this service.



An comparison of an engraved waymarker and a simple disk waymarker post.



Map of Herne Hill showing the proposed locations for the waymarker posts.

Information/Interpretation signs:

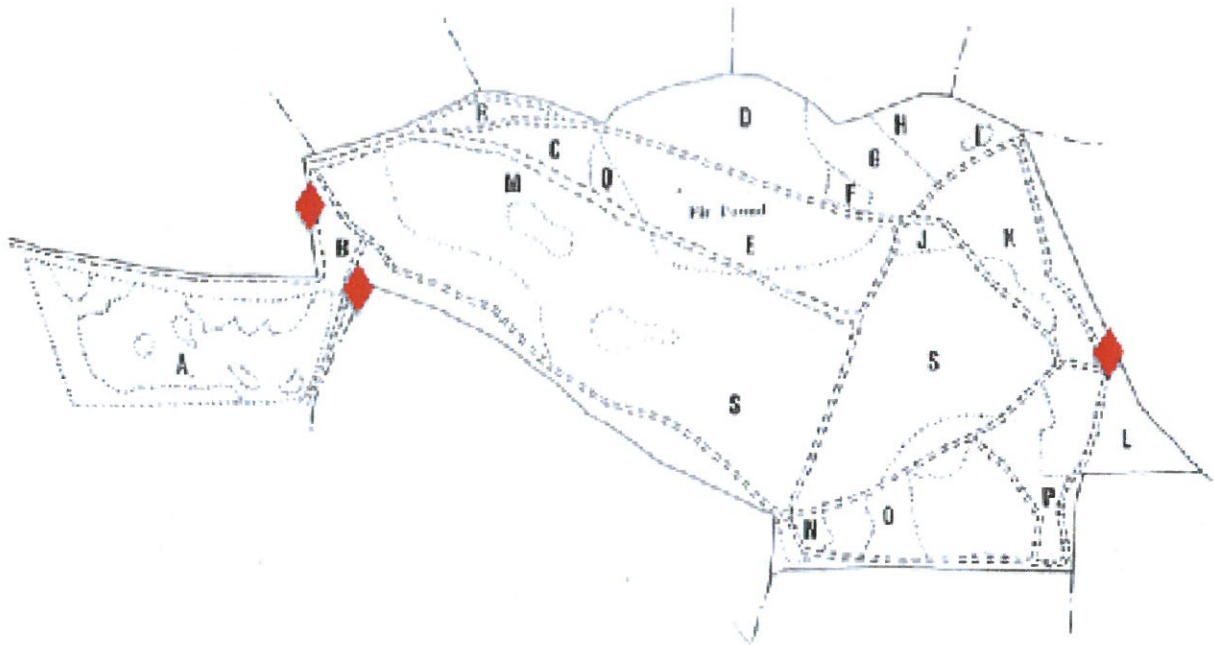
To enhance the experience for visitors to Herne Hill, interpretation signs can be used to inform site users of important information. This information could include a site map, a historic summary of the area, a brief guide to the woodland ecology and emergency contact information.

The information should be concise, with art and/or photographs to aid interpretation. Companies who supply interpretation boards often have their own graphics studios which would be able to work with the council to develop a suitable design. Further consultation with the Herne Hill Advisory Group would be required in selecting the information and images to be used.

The number of signs required may be dependant on cost and whether funding could be sought from a separate organisation or government body.

Ideally at least one Interpretation Board should be installed at the entrance accessed by the ridge path, as this is used by the majority of walkers. If possible, a further two signs could be installed at the Cleeves Close and Donyatt gate entrances to ensure that the information is available to all site users.

Please see the map below for suggested Interpretation Board locations:



Map of Herne Hill showing the proposed locations for the Interpretation Boards.

The Interpretation Boards would be similar in design to the current board installed at the canal; metal in construction and of a lectern design. If required the graphic style could be made to closely match this for continuity.



Current Interpretation Board located at the Ilminster Canal.

Quotes:

Five companies were contacted to provide quotes for the equipment needed to implement the plan in this report. I requested prices for the following items:

- 15x Waymarker posts.
- 24x Red plastic direction disks (with Ilminster Town Council branding).
- 16x Amber plastic direction disks (with Ilminster Town Council branding).
- 16x Green plastic direction disks (with Ilminster Town Council branding).
- 1x Interpretation board (lectern) with graphics supplied by Ilminster Town Council.

The following companies were contacted for a quote for these items:

- Landmark Timber - <http://www.landmarktimber.co.uk>
- Greenbarnes - <http://www.greenbarnes.co.uk>
- Nature Sign Design - <https://www.naturesigndesign.co.uk>
- Border Signs Interpretation - <http://www.bsginterpretation.co.uk>
- Arien Signs - <http://www.ariensigns.co.uk>

Of these companies I received responses from Landmark Timber, Nature Signs Design and Border Signs Interpretation. I had no response from Greenbarnes or Arien Signs as of the 22nd November 2016.

Below is a table containing the prices received, with company names removed:

	Company 1	Company 2	Company 3
15 x Wooden Waymarker Posts	£1275 (£85 each)	£746.25 (£49.75 each)	£630 (£42 each)
60 x Plastic Directional Disks	£300 (£5 each)	£96 (£1.60 each)	£255 (£4.25 each)
Interpretation Board (A1 size)	£775 (Metal)	£592.60 each (Metal)	£775 each (Metal)
Additional Charges	£300 (Graphic Design)	N/A	N/A
Delivery Charge	TBC	£125	TBC
Total	£2650	£1559.85	£1660
Total inc. VAT	£3180	£1871.82	£1992
Optional Extras	£500 (Map Design)	N/A	N/A

Conclusion & Recommendation:

I have made my correspondence with the contacted companies available to Ilminster Town Council. All three companies provided a range of options in regards to the material available for the Interpretation Board lectern, I have selected the powder-coated steel option, rather than wood, from each. This is due to the materials strength and longevity, as well as at matching the material design of the existing board at the Ilminster Canal.

In my correspondence with these companies I feel that company 2 has provided the best solution, including sample images of their previous work. They provide a design service already included in their price, provided that we supply the images and photographs we would like to be used for the Interpretation Board. Companies 1 & 3 would require us to provide a completed design to them, or pay an additional fee.

Company 2 has also provided the postage cost with their quote, whereas companies 1 & 3 have not. We would receive a currently unknown additional charge upon confirming their quotes.

As you can see from the prices provided above, even with the included delivery charge, the quote from company 2 is still lower in cost than companies 1 & 3. This combined with the more professional service and included design work makes their solution the one I recommend to Ilminster Town Council.

The information provided in this report is accurate to the best of my knowledge.

Adam Willis
Open Spaces Warden
Ilminster Town Council