

Manifold Way cycle trail... 8½ miles

 THE NATIONAL TRUST

# Manifold Valley, Peak District

This is a great cycle ride through the lower Manifold Valley, along the former route of the Leek and Manifold Light Railway in Staffordshire's White Peak area. Look out for the impressive Thor's Cave and interesting rock formations along the way and relax in the peaceful setting of Wetton Mill tea-room.



## Start

From either **Hulme End** visitor centre car park (SK103593), or, **Waterhouses** old station car park (SK093503). OS maps Landranger 119 and Explorer OL24

## How to get here & local facilities

**By bike:** National Cycle Network Route 54 runs through the Manifold Valley between High Peak Junction and Waterhouses

**By bus:** 442 Buxton-Ashbourne, every 2hrs, alight Hulme End visitor centre. 108 Ashbourne-Leek-Macclesfield, alight Waterhouses cycle hire centre.

**By train:** Buxton  12ml from Hulme End, Uttoxeter  10ml from Waterhouses

**By car:** Hulme End: from the A515 Buxton-Ashbourne road, take the B5054 to Hulme End, car park next to the visitor centre. Waterhouses: on the A523 Leek-Ashbourne road, car park at the old station

Cycle hire centre, shop and WCs at Waterhouses. Tea-room and WCs at Ilam Park and Wetton. Visitor Centre and WCs at Hulme End.

## Things to look out for...

### **Beeston Tor**

Overlooking the confluence of the River Hamps with the River Manifold, Beeston Tor is one of the largest and most spectacular limestone crags in the area. Findings of Neolithic and Bronze Age remains suggest that the caves have been used by both humans and animals for at least 50,000 years.

### **Wetton Mill**

Located close to the stone built village of Wetton, the mill was a water mill for grinding corn for the local community. It closed down in the mid 19<sup>th</sup> century, but it remains a popular stop-off point for tourists, with a tea-room, WCs and two National Trust holiday cottages.



Thor's Cave dominates the central area of the Manifold Valley and its entrance can be seen for miles around. Excavations in the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries found human and animal remains, stone tools, bronze items and pottery.

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Part of the River Manifold is subterranean, disappearing underground just past Wetton Mill and reappearing in the grounds of Ilam Hall. Look out for the bright blue flash of kingfishers along the river.

© Northeast Wildlife



The Leek and Manifold Light Railway ran for thirty years from 1904 until 1934. It transported dairy products from the valley to the main railway south of Waterhouses.

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## Terrain and accessibility

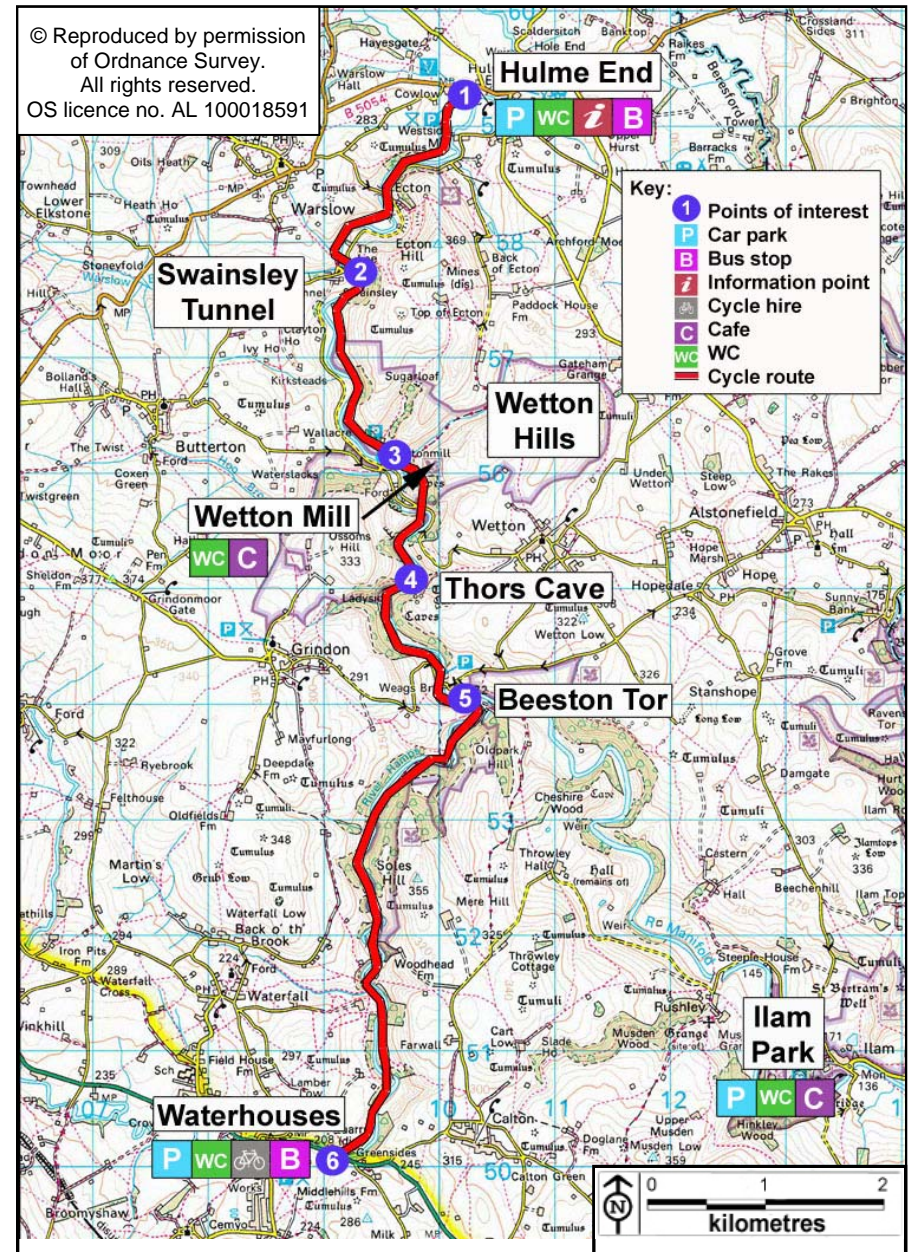
8½ ml (14km) linear route from Hulme End to Waterhouses (or vice versa). Flat, even-surfaced track with gentle gradients. Traffic-free, apart from one small 2ml section from Swainsley tunnel to Wetton Mill, where the track is shared with motor vehicles.

## Directions

From the car park at Hulme End, join the Manifold Way and follow it to the end at Waterhouses. Look out for the following points along the way:

1. Pop into the visitor centre within the old railway station at Hulme End where there are various books and local walk leaflets you can purchase.
2. Swainsley Tunnel is a tangible reminder of the Leek and Manifold Light Railway and was constructed to keep the noise and fumes away from Swainsley Hall.
3. The tea-room at Wetton Mill is a great place for a break and to admire the beautiful surroundings, including the limestone grasslands of Wetton Hills; an excellent habitat for ground nesting and ground feeding birds.
4. The impressive Thors Cave rises 360ft above the River Manifold and has a 60ft high entrance. It's worth taking a small detour from the track to explore the cave and savour the excellent view of the valley.
5. Beeston Tor is a wonderful example of a limestone crag and is one of the largest in the area. The areas of grassland are managed by traditional methods of stock grazing by both sheep and cattle.
6. Continue along the trail, where a short climb will lead you to the old station car park at Waterhouses.

**Contact us on:** 01335 350503 or [southpeakestate@nationaltrust.org.uk](mailto:southpeakestate@nationaltrust.org.uk)



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