

The Derwent Valley Mills World Heritage Site must be connected to the National Cycle Network

Derbyshire aims to be the UK's most connected cycling county but the only UNESCO World Heritage Site in Derbyshire (and in the East Midlands) has totally inadequate cycling provision

England has only 18 sites inscribed as UNESCO World Heritage Sites and Derbyshire is honoured to be the location of one of them, the Derwent Valley Mills, which is recognised for the birth of the factory system and as the first location worldwide to see large scale industrial activity in a rural landscape.

The Derwent Valley Mills Heritage Site is 15 miles from end to end and cycling would offer an excellent and sustainable way for visitors to travel between the various attractions. However, uniquely amongst the English World Heritage Sites, the facilities for cycling are totally inadequate.

The Derbyshire Cycle Plan, supported by Derbyshire County Council, declares that they want Derbyshire to be the **"most connected cycling county in England"**. Until there is cycle access throughout the only World Heritage Site in the East Midlands that goal is unachievable.

The National Cycle Network has good connections to Derby at the southern end of the Heritage Site, the High Peak Trail (NCN 54) terminates near Cromford and there is a new route north from Matlock (NCN 680). However, apart from Darley Park at the southern end, there is no National Cycle Network within the World Heritage Site.

The World Heritage Site at Ironbridge is similar to the Derwent Valley site. It is based on industrial heritage, lies within river valleys, offers a number of attractions and has a similar number of visitors per year. The major difference is that the National Cycle Network runs throughout the Ironbridge site but is very obviously absent from the Derwent Valley.

The Derwent Valley Trust is calling for a high quality traffic free cycleway to be built through the World Heritage Site to enable Derbyshire to deliver on its "most connected cycling county" goal and for all the commuting and tourism benefits that the route would provide. The economic case for the route is already established and shows a Very Good 4.8:1 return on investment.

Surely the UK Government would want to demonstrate their commitment to cycle travel by providing good quality access to, and through, all the UNESCO World Heritage Sites in the country? And, surely Derbyshire won't be able to claim to be the most connected cycling county when the only English World Heritage Site without good cycling provision is within Derbyshire?

Derwent Valley Mills World Heritage Site

The Derwent Valley saw the birth of the factory system, when new types of building were erected to house the new technology for spinning cotton developed by Richard Arkwright in the late 18th century.

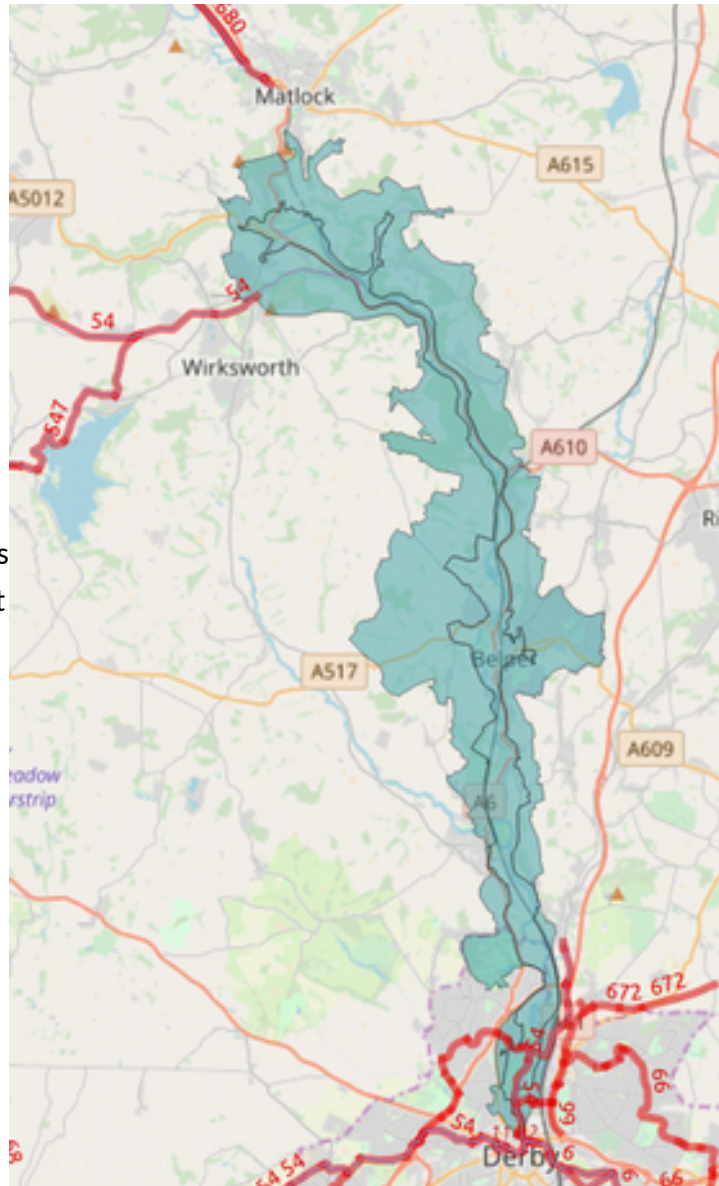
In the Derwent Valley for the first time there was large-scale industrial production in a hitherto rural landscape. The need to provide housing and other facilities for workers and managers resulted in the creation of the first modern industrial settlements.

The Site is 15 miles from North to South. Access via National Cycle Routes is from the southern end at Derby and from the High Peak Trail at High Peak Junction near Cromford.

There are no National Cycle Network routes through the Heritage Site with the exception of a small section at the southern end.

The existing cycle route between Matlock and Rowsley is part of the National Cycle Network (route 680) but this only provides improved access to the northernmost part of the Heritage Site and does not provide a route through the Site allowing visitors to use cycles to visit the many attractions.

The World Heritage Site attractions currently attract over 500,000 visitors per year including 55% from beyond the local area. An attractive cycle route would be a visitor attraction in its own right as well as providing a sustainable way of visiting the attractions spread throughout the site.



Comparison with Ironbridge

The Ironbridge UNESCO World Heritage Site has a number of similarities with the Derwent Valley. Both are inscribed due to their industrial heritage, both lie within river valleys and tend to be “linear” in form. The Ironbridge site is smaller than Derwent Valley (Approx 5km end to end for Ironbridge as against 23km for the Derwent Valley). The numbers of visitors per year are similar with Ironbridge attracting about 600,000 per year and the Derwent Valley 500,000 visits per year.



The major difference between the 2 Sites is that Ironbridge is very well connected to the National Cycle Network both for journeys to the site and for visitors to use the cycle network to travel within the site.

The Derwent Valley site has no significant National Cycle Routes within the site and thus cycling is not an option for travel between the attractions for most visitors.

English Heritage Sites

The Heritage sites fall into 2 kinds; those for a particular place (e.g. Tower of London) and those that cover a significant area (e.g. The Lake District). For the smaller sites, visitors need to be able to travel to the site by cycle and then walk around the attraction.

For the larger sites, good connection to the National Cycle Network is essential both for visitors to reach parts of the site and for visitors to then travel around the site by cycle.

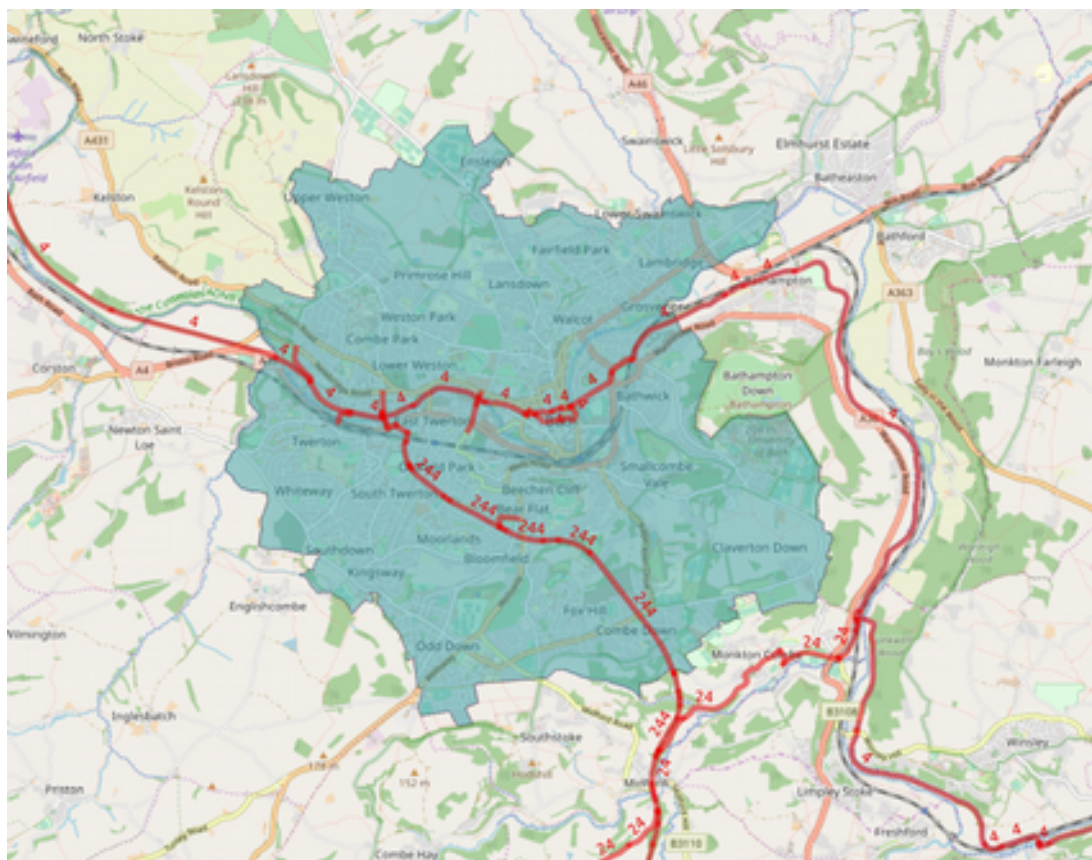
In some cases, visitors will arrive by car with cycles on a rack but should still be able to make use of good quality cycle routes to move around the Site.

The following maps show the smaller Heritage Sites (marked in green) with the National Cycle Network in the local area shown in red.

Larger Sites

Bath

An excellent network of cycle routes including National Routes 4, 24 and 244. The routes also include use of an old railway tunnel to allow easy access to the city centre.

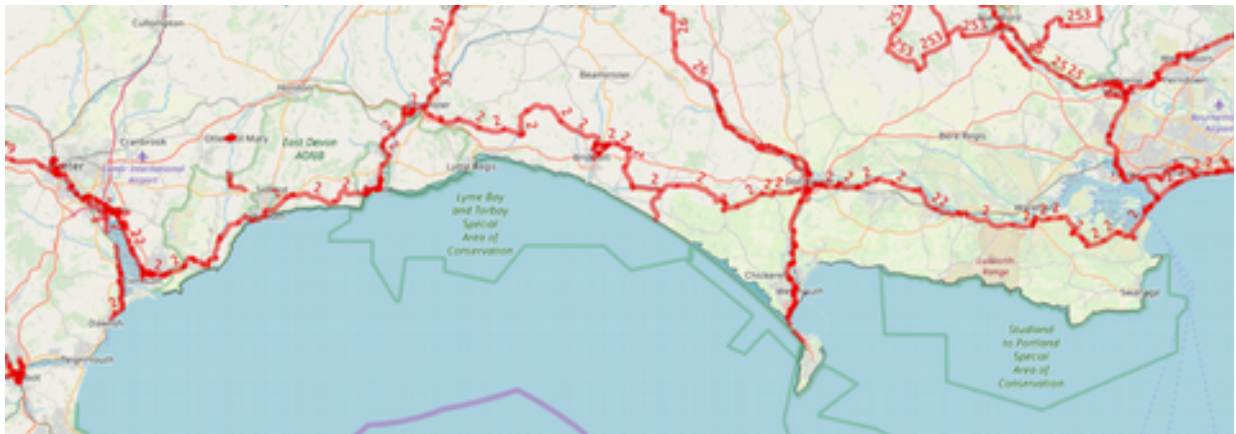


Cornwall and West Devon mining

This Site covers a large area of two counties and consists of many sites showing historical mining activities. However, the individual sites are generally well connected to the National Cycle Network

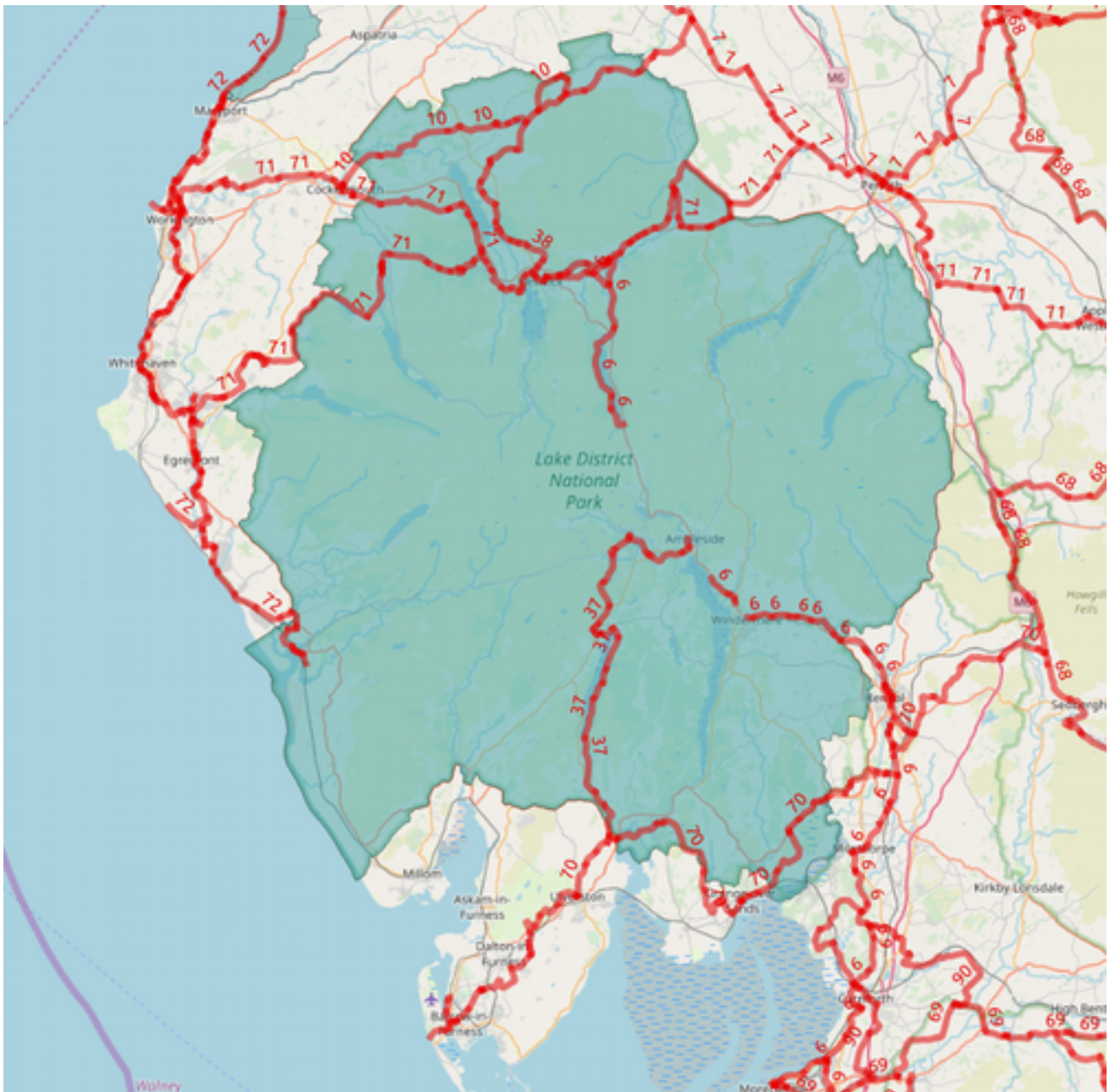


Dorset and East Devon coast



A large area of coastline to which National Cycle Route 2 provides easy travel between the various parts of the coastline.

The English Lake District



Excellent linkages by cycle to the surrounding towns as well as routes into the Site. Connections between the north and the south could be more joined up but the area is well served with cycle routes.

The C2C Sustrans Challenge route runs through the Heritage Site (route 71).

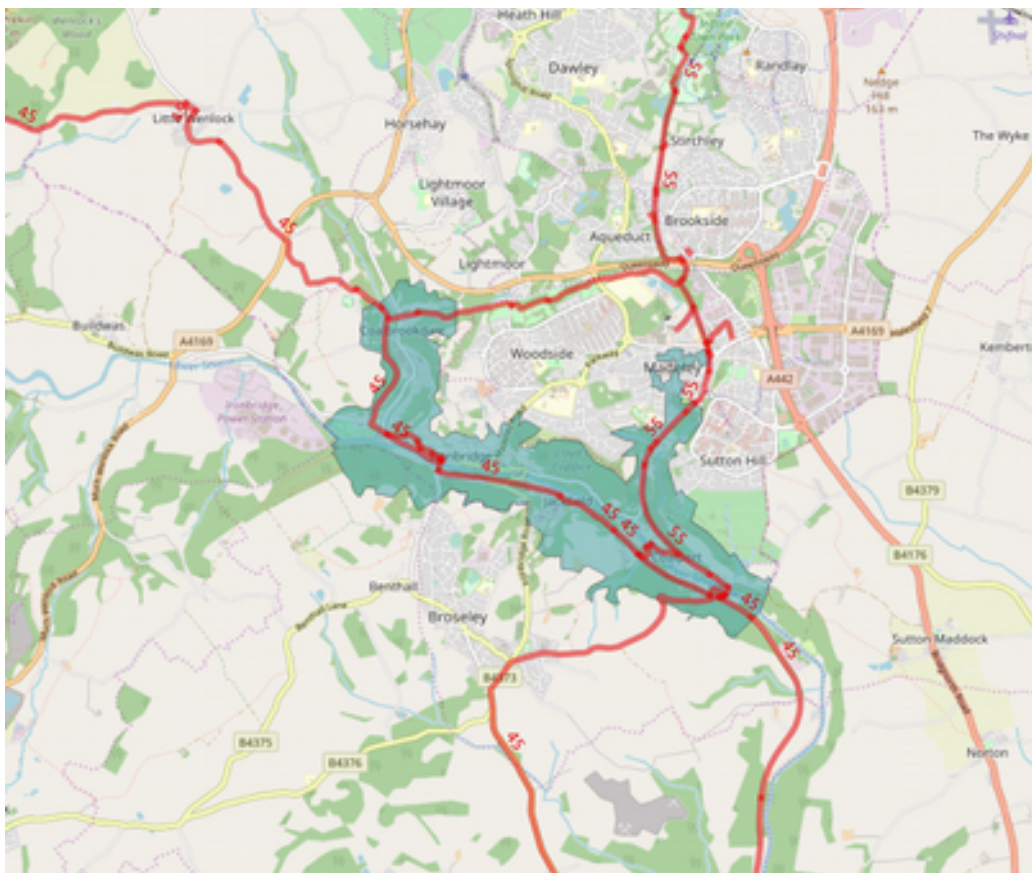
Hadrian's Wall (and other Roman frontiers)

Well served by cycle connections to the settlements along the route of the wall as well as to the north and south. Hadrian's Wall is the location of a Sustrans Challenge Route (Hadrian's Cycleway) advertised as "A ride through some of England's most dramatic and wild countryside, taking in magnificent coastal views, breathtaking countryside and Roman forts."



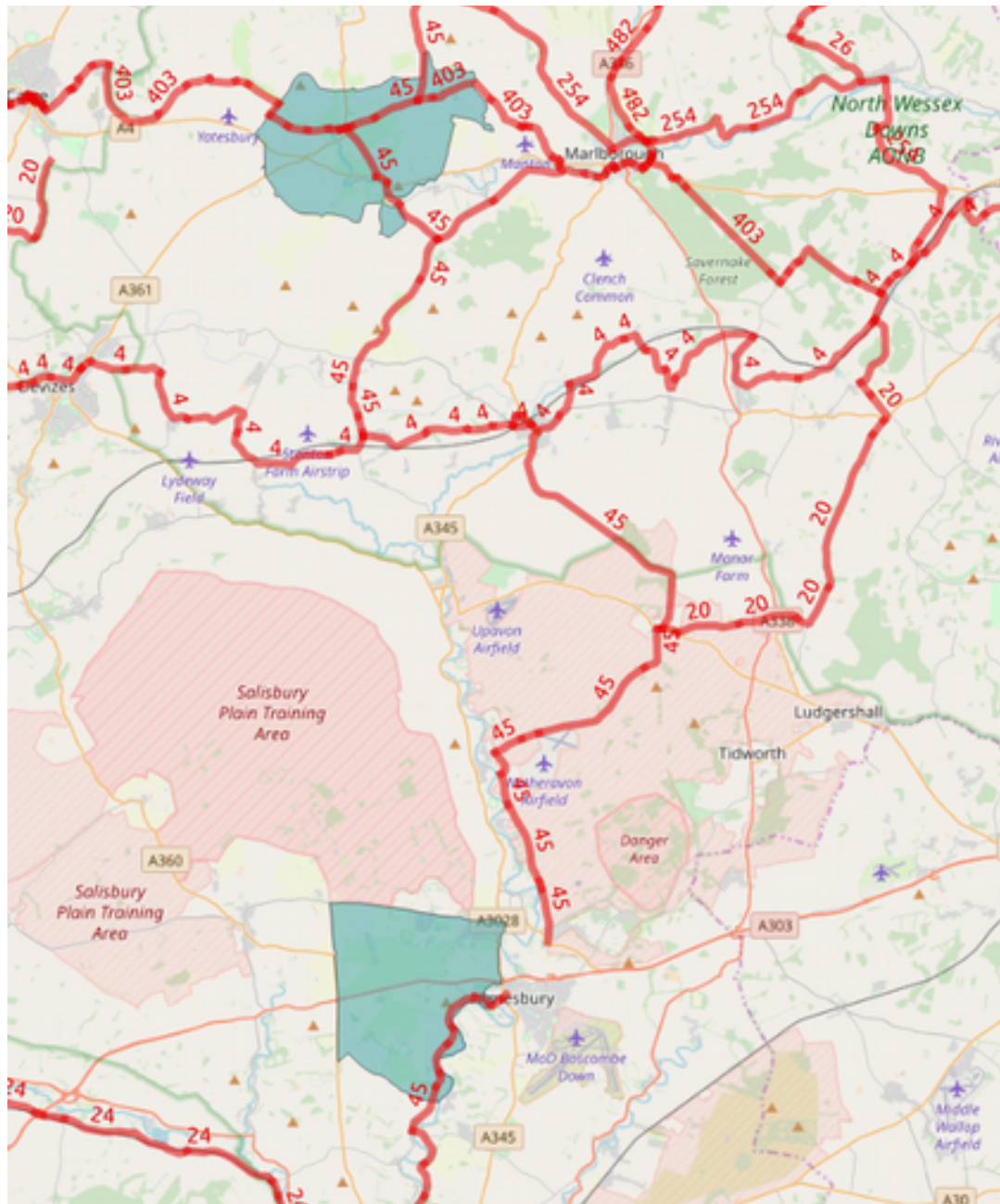
Ironbridge

Very good connections to reach the Site location and then National Cycle Network routes along the river valleys within the Site.



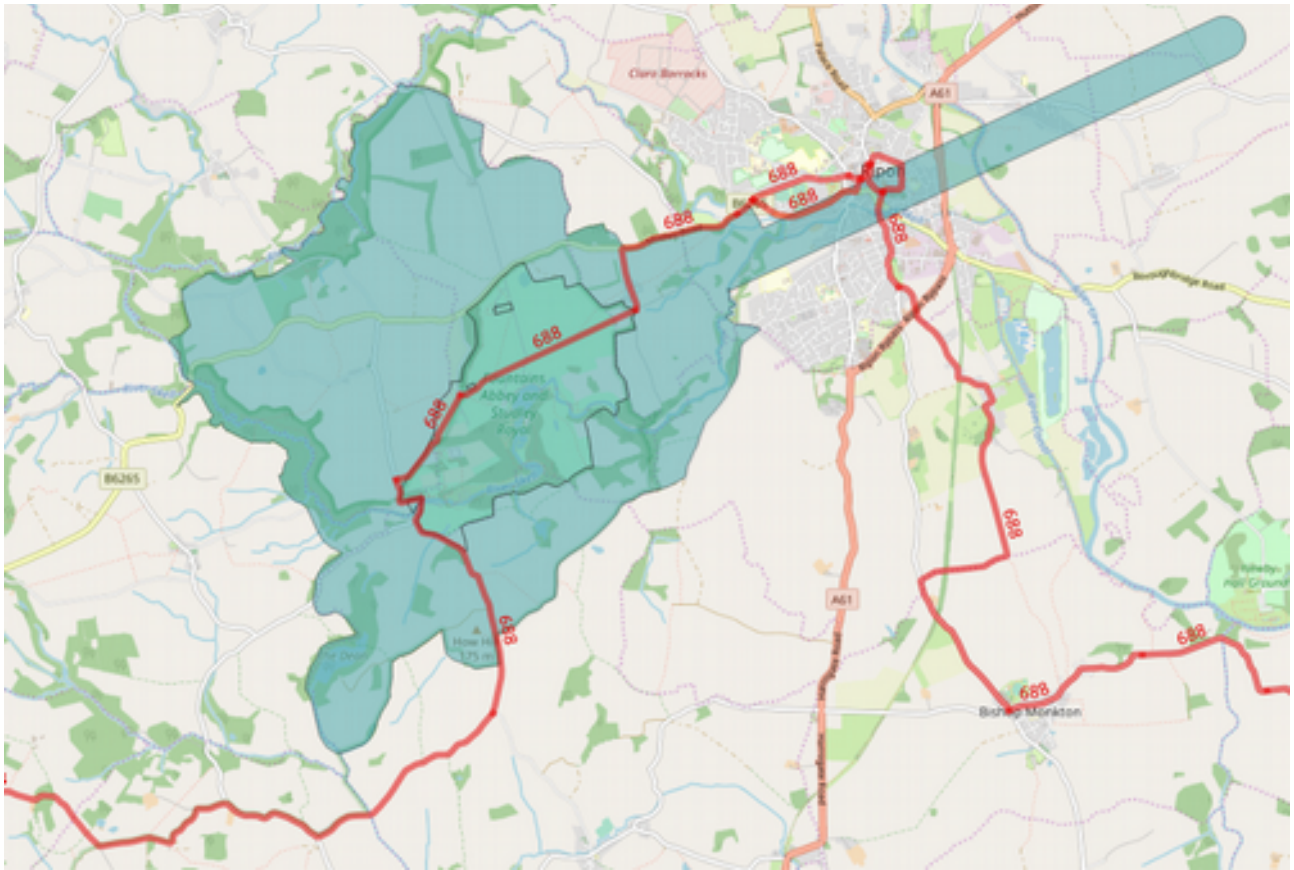
Stonehenge, Avebury

Although classified as a single World Heritage Site, it actually consists of two separated locations each of which are small and would generally be visited on foot. However, cycle links to access each site are excellent and also provide a suitable cycle route between the two locations.



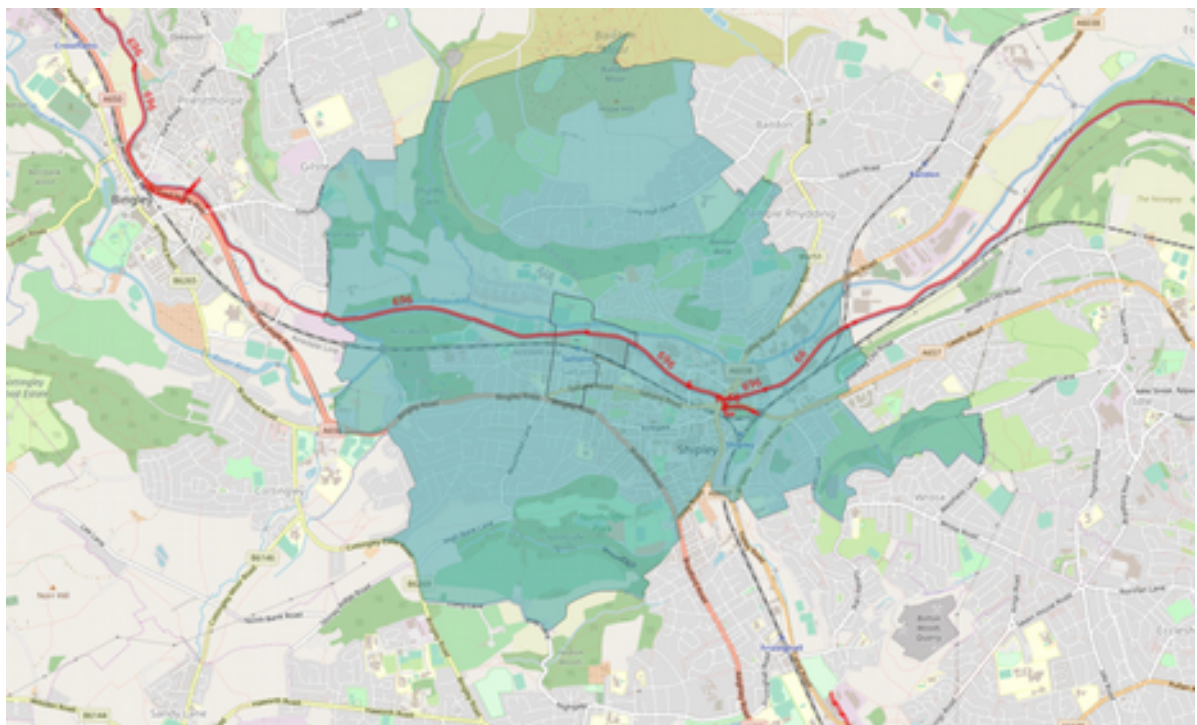
Studley Royal Park (Fountains Abbey)

National Cycle Route 688 connects to the site from the east and west as well as running directly through the middle of the site providing excellent access.



Saltaire

The National Cycle Network runs directly through the middle of the Site along the route of the canal and provides excellent connections to the nearby city of Bradford as well as longer routes to connect to Leeds.

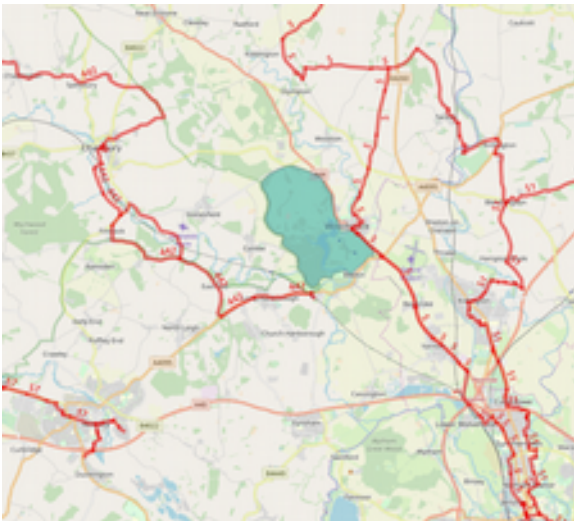


Smaller Sites

The smaller sites are those sites where visitors would typically walk around the Site. Connection of the Site to the National Cycle Network is desirable.

With the exception of Kew Gardens it can be seen that all the smaller sites have good connections to the cycle network. In particular, London sites (including Kew) also benefit from the extensive London cycle network independent of the National Cycle Network.

Blenheim Palace



Canterbury Cathedral



Durham



Greenwich



Westminster



Kew Gardens



Tower of London



Liverpool



Further Information

The Derwent Valley Trust – a charity to promote the history, arts, wildlife and leisure opportunities that surround the River Derwent through Derbyshire. <https://derwentvalleytrust.org.uk/>

The Derwent Valley Cycleway – a project of the Derwent Valley Trust to establish a traffic free cycleway between Derby and Baslow. <https://derwentvalleycycleway.org.uk/>

World Heritage Sites in the UK. <https://www.unesco.org.uk/designation/world-heritage-sites/>

The economic case for the Derwent Valley Cycleway
http://www.derwentvalleycycleway.org.uk/documents/DVC-Value_for_Money.pdf

A detailed analysis of the benefits for the Derwent Valley Cycleway
https://www.derwentvalleycycleway.org.uk/documents/Derwent_Valley_Cycleway.pdf

The Derbyshire Cycling Plan <https://www.activederbyshire.org.uk/uploads/the-derbyshire-cycling-plan-2016---2030.pdf>