

Wildlife Paths



Discover

Nature Trails

in the
Falkirk Council Area



easy to use

*map and 6
suggested
locations*

*something for
everyone*

Discover Nature Trails in the Falkirk Council area

Enjoy nature in the Falkirk area and discover some hidden wildlife gems. A variety of interests are covered, from the Forth Estuary to woodlands and rivers.



Access to Nature

The natural environment of Falkirk is very varied and has some special wildlife and habitats. In winter, the shoreline of the Forth Estuary in Falkirk is home to very large numbers of birds, some of which are rare (see Kinneil foreshore

route). There are also great examples of old woodland and parkland estates (see Pineapple and Callendar Wood routes).

Other habitats of interest include the rivers, canals and places recently improved for wildlife, such as Bonnyfield Nature Park and Abbotshaugh Community Woodland.

There are a variety of routes included here to suit different interests and abilities. Some are on surfaced paths, however, parts of the route may be unsurfaced, inclined or otherwise less accessible, so please do read the route descriptions carefully. Also, please remember that paths through parks and countryside

Carron Glen are nature hotspots with a variety of rare plants.

To help protect local wildlife, the Falkirk Biodiversity Action Plan was published in 2001. 'Biodiversity' simply means the variety of life, and refers to the wildlife all around us. If you enjoy the wildlife you see on your chosen route, and would like further information, please contact the Local Biodiversity Officer on 01324 504863.

Falkirk Nature Facts

The Falkirk area contains large areas of natural habitats and many places of wildlife interest. Some very rare species are found here, such as Great Crested Newts (see Pineapple route) and Bean Geese on the Slammanan Plateau, the only place in Scotland these birds are found. The Forth Estuary is home to large numbers of over-wintering birds, and places like

"Leave only footprints; Take only photographs"

may not be as accessible as tarmac paths in towns.

Which site should I visit?

Simply read through the following suggested routes and choose one which suits your own interests, needs and abilities.

Some sites have options for further exploration, such as Bonnyfield and Abbotshaugh.

Callendar Wood offers the best facilities for visitors. Other sites such as The Pineapple offer only car parking facilities.

Due to the sensitivity of some wildlife and habitats to disturbance please:

- ***Keep to the path***
- ***Do not allow dogs to disturb wildlife***
- ***Clean up after your dog***
- ***Take litter home with you***
- ***Remember that it is usually illegal to pick wild flowers or plants.***



Finding Your Way

A Map

Take a close look at the map for each site. These should be all you need to find the site and get around. OS Explorer map 349 covers most of the area.

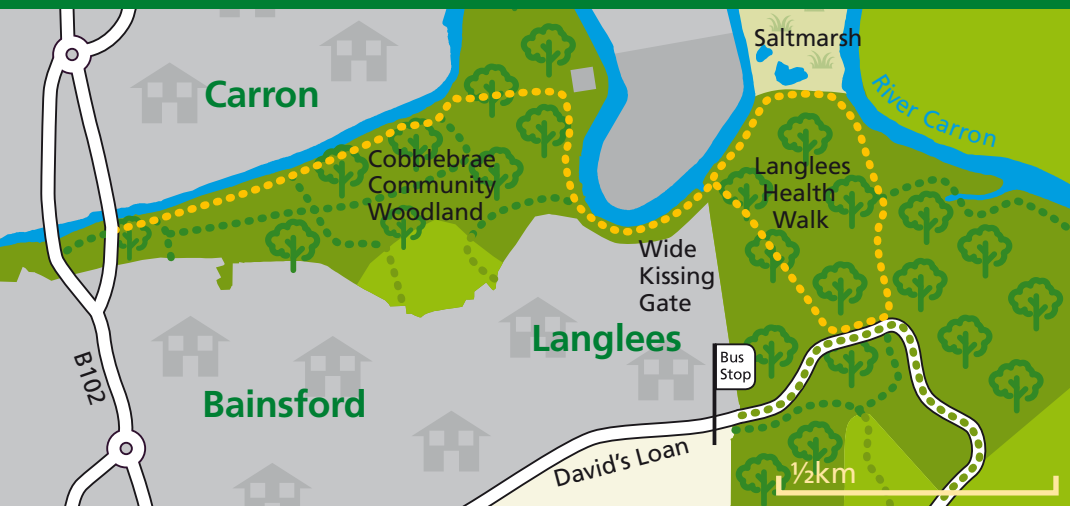
Signs

Look out for sign posts and interpretation boards giving more information as you go along the path.

It's Up To You

This leaflet gives details of six locations, with information on green transport options, path surfaces, gradients, parking and facilities. A description of the wildlife you are likely to encounter is also given. Simply choose a route to visit depending on your interest and your own abilities.

No.1 Abbotshaugh Community Woodland



Steeped in history, the site of Abbotshaugh Community Woodland, on the south bank of the River Carron, has seen many changes in the surrounding landscape over the last 500 years. From historic sea ports to agricultural land, the area is now a mosaic of planted woodland with remnant hedgerows, grassland and saltmarsh habitats. A booklet describing the story of the area is being produced in 2006. For copies ring (01324) 504863.

Habitats and Species of Interest

Season of Interest: All Year

Woodland/scrub - Provides a home for Roe deer, foxes, buzzards, kestrels, teasels and other plants. Much of this woodland has been

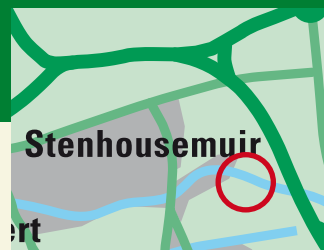
recently planted and will be managed to create a naturally regenerating, mature woodland for the future.

Saltmarsh – a rare habitat type frequently inundated with tidal sea water and containing plants such as sea aster.

The River Carron flows into the Forth Estuary near here. Plants and animals living in this area are specially adapted to the changing mix of saltwater and freshwater. Otters can be seen on the river and occasional seals can be spotted coming in from the Forth.

Route

The Langlees Health Walk provides an easily accessible circular route through the Community Woodland. From



the end of David's Loan, follow this signposted route through areas of recently planted and more mature woodland, where buzzards can often be seen perched on fence posts. Roe deer breed in the woodland and can be seen crossing the path.

The saltmarsh is protected as a Site of Interest for Nature Conservation and can be seen to the side of the path in a meander of the River Carron. The path follows the banks of the Carron for a short distance, then splits. Either return to David's Loan, or continue along the riverside path linking to Cobblebrae Community Woodland.



In recent years as improvements have been made to the woodland areas, breeding populations of roe deer and buzzards have increased, which is a good indicator of general environmental quality.



Access Information

Bus: YES – Regular service

Train: Falkirk Grahamston Stn - 2km

Cycle: The Forth & Clyde Canal link is due for upgrade

Car: No designated parking

Distance

●●● Suggested route - 4km (2½ miles)

●●● Other routes available (see map)

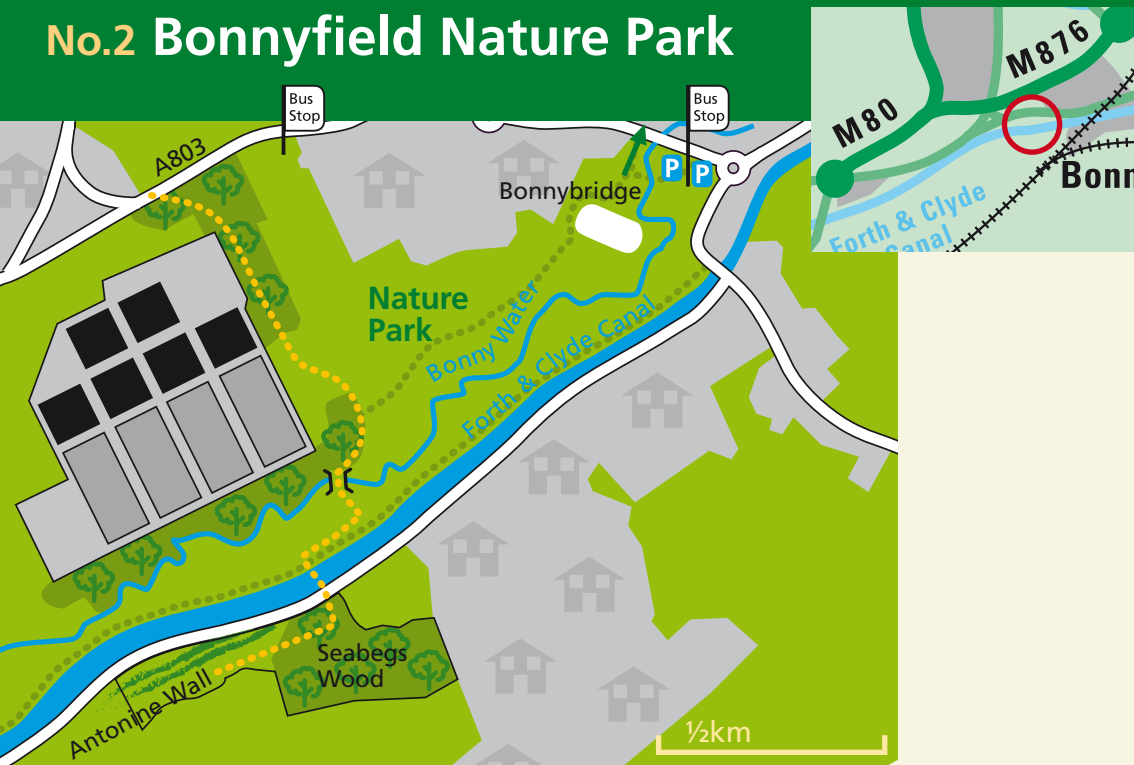
Path Information

The yellow route is easily accessible and surfaced, and mainly level with gentle gradients. Some other routes are unsurfaced, with rough, muddy or uneven sections.

Facilities

Toilets, refreshments and other facilities are available at the Dawson Centre, David's Loan (01324 501470) and in nearby Carron and Bainsford.

No.2 Bonnyfield Nature Park



Once the site of a sand and gravel quarry, Bonnyfield Nature Park, near Bonnybridge, has transformed into a valuable site for biodiversity. A mosaic of habitat types, including deciduous woodland, woody shrubs, species rich grassland, seasonal and permanent ponds and running water, the site supports a wide variety of species.

Woodlands and scrub provide a rich habitat especially for birds and insects. Birds tend to be at the top of the 'food chain' in the wild, so a good mixed population of birds can be a general indicator of the biodiversity in an area.

Habitats and Species of Interest

Seasons of Interest

Spring/summer – wildflowers, insects and bats.

Autumn - deciduous tree colour.

All year – birds and mammals.

Woodland/scrub – Much of the woodland and scrub habitat has regenerated naturally. This is good for wildlife as it provides a range of ages of plants, cover and protection.

Water, Wetlands & ponds – The Bonny Water flows through the site and there are some permanent

ponds and seasonal wetlands.

Grassland – There are areas of species-rich grassland throughout the park and locally rare plants such as Harebell and Ox-eye daisy.

Route

The yellow route can be accessed from the Bonnybridge to Kilsyth Road (A803), opposite the bypass from Dennyloanhead. The wide tarmac path follows the western edge of the Nature Park crossing the Bonny Water via a narrow bridge. A steep, rough path leads uphill, giving access to the Forth & Clyde towpath. The towpath overlooks the Nature Park and provides a return route to Bonnybridge. Alternatively, the path to the right (west) leads to an underpass, offering an extension to Seabegs Wood and the Antonine Wall. The underpass is too narrow for wheelchairs and can be wet. Remember a torch!

Access Information

Bus: YES – Regular service

Train: NO

Cycle: YES – Forth & Clyde Canal

Parking: YES (see map)

Distance

●●● Suggested route - 4km (2½ miles)

●●● Other paths available in Nature Park and along Canal towpath.

Path Information

Suggested route is gently sloping, mainly on tarmac. An informal network of unsurfaced paths (due for upgrade) leads off from this route. The bridge over the Bonny Water is very narrow, but due for replacement. Path is steep and very uneven between bridge and canal. Underpass to Seabegs Wood is too narrow for wheelchairs and can be wet. Remember a torch!

Facilities

Shops, services and wheelchair accessible Superloo in nearby Bonnybridge. No facilities on site.

No.3 Callendar Park & Wood



Callendar Wood has an amazing variety of wildlife and is close to Falkirk town centre. Callendar Wood is over 500 years old, with significant areas of Ancient woodland.

Habitat and Species of interest

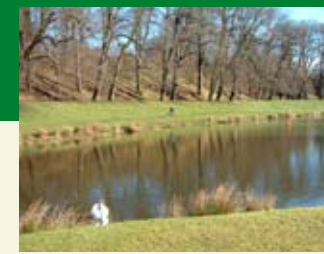
Seasons of Interest: All year Summer for Wildflower meadow

Ancient woodland, particularly semi-natural oakwood still exist within the site. Under current management by Forestry Commission Scotland, invasive Rhododendron is being controlled to encourage native regeneration. Species such as Wood sorrel, Wood anemone,

Lesser celandine, Primroses, Bluebells, Dog violet and ferns such as Lemon-scented fern can be found in the woodland. There are areas of coniferous and mixed woodland, with Larch, Scots Pine and Yew.



The wildflower meadow planted on Henry's Hill will help attract butterflies such as the Red Admiral, Ringlet, Small copper, Orange tip and Peacock.



A variety of wildlife, including Green and Great spotted woodpeckers, Kestrels, Jays Buzzards, Sparrowhawks, Foxes, and Roe deer can also be found in the woodland.

Route

From Callendar House, follow the path to the end of the loch, then through the gate onto a forest track. Turn immediately right, following the yellow marker posts past the Mausoleum through the woodland for approx. 1 mile. The path joins a wider track, with Kemper Avenue visible through the trees. Leaving the marked path, turn left, and left again, heading up to a grassy hill. This is a wildflower meadow, flowering during the summer. Continue downhill, rejoin the marked path and return to Callendar House through the park.

Further information from Forestry Commission Scotland 01555 660190.

Access Information

Bus: YES – Bus station (1/2 km)
Local bus to park also.

Train: YES – Falkirk High Station (1/2 km)

Cycle: YES – Union canal (1/2 km)

Car Park: YES

Distance

- Loch route - 1km (2/3 miles)
- Woodland route 5km (3 miles)
- Other paths available throughout the park and wood

Path Information

The path around the loch is easily accessible, surfaced, with a few short, gentle inclines.

Paths in the woodland are surfaced, but rough and uneven in places. There is a long moderate incline with some steeper sections.

Facilities

Wheelchair accessible toilet, playpark, shops, museum, gallery, tearoom, boating pond and golf course are available in the park.

No.4 Kinneil Foreshore



The Forth estuary is a very special place for wildlife, home in the winter months to high numbers of rare birds. With a short coastal route and great views of birds feeding on the mudflats of the Forth Estuary, Kinneil Foreshore attracts a diversity of species.

Habitats and Species of Interest

Seasons of Interest: All year, particularly Winter

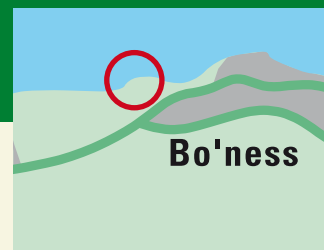
The Forth Estuary is internationally important for breeding and overwintering birds. Large flocks of birds feed on crustaceans in the tidal mudflats. Kinneil foreshore is part of the Firth of Forth Special Protected Area.

Shelduck and large numbers of Knot, Redshank, Dunlin, Wigeon, Teal, Mallard, and Great Crested Grebe feed on the mudflats in the area. Goldeneye and Pintail as well as Oystercatcher, Ringed Plover and Lapwing can also be seen.

A list of other species that can also be seen is available from Scottish Wildlife Trust in the leaflet 'Bird Watching at Kinneil Hide'. The hide further along the shore at Kinneil provides a vantage point for birdwatching. Contact 01324 504863 for access information.

Route

From the car park at Snab Lane, follow the path downhill towards railway. Follow the path alongside the railway for a short distance, then across the level crossing. From here, a network of paths runs throughout the woodland and foreshore area. The inner circular route through the woods (marked in black) is on reasonably wide surfaced paths, with some gentle to moderate gradients and short wet or muddy sections after rain. The outer route (yellow) along the foreshore is mostly



level, although unsurfaced (grass or earth) and uneven and muddy in places. NOTE: The adjacent island is tidal and is inaccessible at high tide.

The best time to watch waders feeding is just after high tide when the mudflats are exposed. The estuary provides an important refuge for birds when food and shelter is scarce. Please be careful not to disturb the birds, particularly at high tide.

Dog owners - Please don't allow your dog to chase birds and other wildlife.



Knot migrate from their breeding grounds on the Arctic tundra to overwinter on estuaries, where they feed on shellfish and worms. Kinneil and the Forth Estuary support internationally important numbers of Knot.

Access Information

Bus: YES – Regular service

Train: NO

Cycle: YES – Sustrans Route 76 very near by.

Car Park: YES

Distance

●●● Suggested route - 3km (1¾ miles)

●●● Easier option - 2½km (1½ miles)

●●● Other paths available

Path Information

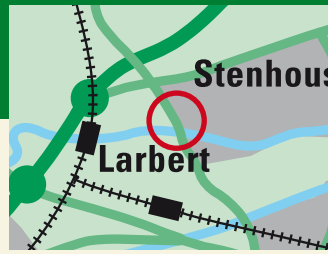
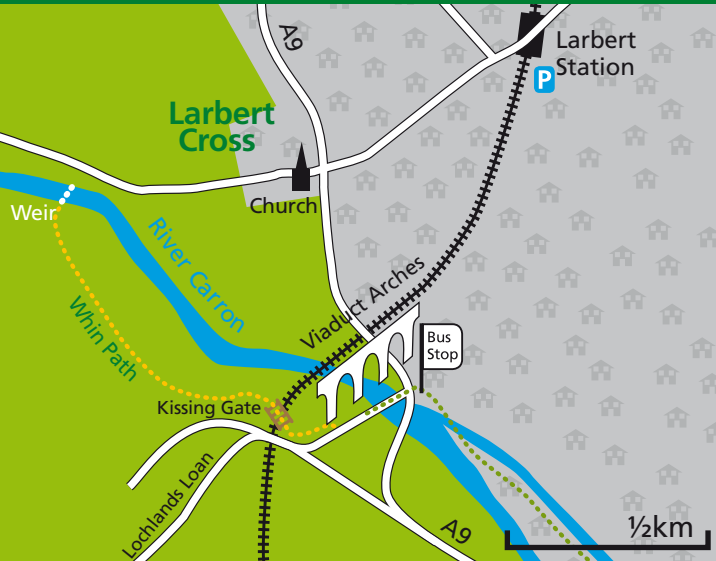
The route is easily accessible. Access to the foreshore is via a level crossing and wide kissing gates designed for wheelchair access. The path has a mostly gentle gradient with some moderately steep sections.

Benches are available at various points along the routes.

Facilities

Toilets, shops, and other facilities are available in Bo'ness, as well as attractions such as Bo'ness & Kinneil Railway and Blackness Castle.

No.5 Larbert – River Carron



A local salmon success story! Leaping salmon probably conjure up images of Highland streams for many, but salmon can once again be seen making their way up the River Carron to spawn. A path leading uphill under the viaduct at Larbert provides a good vantage point of the weir, where salmon can be seen leaping over the rocks in the autumn months.

Habitats and Species of Interest

Seasons of Interest: Autumn for salmon, especially after heavy rain.

The River Carron is a salmon success story. In the past, heavy industrial pollution in the River



Atlantic salmon are migratory fish which spend their early lives in freshwater rivers. Migration of the young salmon out from the river to the sea normally occurs around May, when they are about two years old. They then spend most of their adult lives at sea where they grow very quickly in the rich feeding grounds of the North Atlantic. The adults then return to freshwater rivers to spawn, swimming up clean rivers like the Carron in the autumn.

Carron has had a disastrous impact on the wildlife which relies on the river. In recent times, with water quality improvements and a re-stocking programme, the salmon have returned during the spawning season to reach the upper stretches, which is a great indicator of the recovering health of the river environment.

NB: Fishing is available by permit only. Contact Paul Bissett on 01324 556966 for details.

Route

A short 300m path starts at Lochlands Loan, just off the A9, under the viaduct arches. The path is through a kissing gate immediately to the right as you turn onto Lochlands Loan. Continue along this path for 300m to reach a vantage point above the weir, with views to the river and church.

Access Information

Bus: YES – Regular Service

Train: YES – Larbert (1/2km);
Camelon (1 1/2km)

Cycle: On road

Car Park: YES

Distance

●●● Suggested route - 1km (1/2 miles)

●●● Other paths available in local area

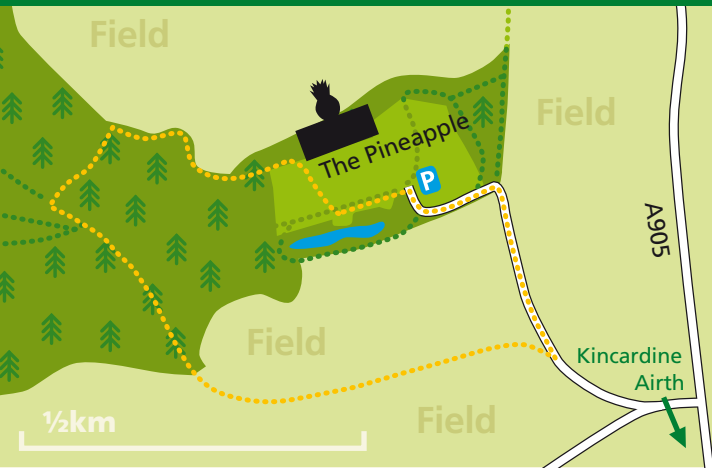
Path Information

The path to the weir is surfaced, and is reached through a kissing gate. Benches are available at the weir, with steps leading down to a closer vantage point. Care should be taken to stay well back from the rivers edge, for safety and to avoid disturbing the salmon.

Facilities

Available in nearby Larbert and Camelon.

No.6 The Pineapple



Dating from around 1761, The Pineapple is a fascinating building, built as the centre piece of the walled gardens for John Murray, 4th Earl of Dunmore. As well as its historical interest, the site is home to a variety of native and exotic species.

Habitats and Species of Interest

Seasons of Interest: All year

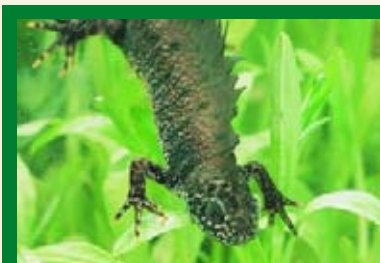
The pond at the Pineapple is particularly significant, because a population of Great Crested Newts have been found there – a species which is very rare in the UK. A variety of dragonflies are also thought to breed on the pond.

Exotic trees such as Monkey Puzzle, Douglas Fir and Giant



Redwood – some around 150 years old, were brought to the estate as specimen trees. Other unusual varieties, such as Southern Beech, Limes and Sycamores can also be found.

Pipestrelle and Long-eared bats can be found in the woodland areas, as well as Great spotted and Green Woodpeckers, and Buzzards. Smaller birds, such as Blue tits, Great tits, Coal tits, Long-tail tits and Marsh tits can also be found.



The Great Crested Newt is only found at a few sites in the Falkirk area - one of these is the Pineapple. It is the rarest and most protected species of newt in Scotland.



Route

From the car park, enter the walled garden through the large gate. Cross the grass uphill towards The Pineapple. Exit the garden at the top of the hill, through the small gate in the garden wall, to the left of The Pineapple. Follow the path downhill to your left, through woodland. The path meets a wider forest track at the bottom of the hill. Turn left, following the sign. Continue straight along this track, through woodland. Follow the signposted track across the fields until you reach the vehicle track. Turn left, heading back towards the car park, being aware of vehicles. Just before the car park, a narrow path leads down to the ponds and the dipping platform, where Great Crested Newts are thought to breed. Return to the car park.

Access Information

Bus: NO

Train: NO

Cycle: On road – Sustrans routes nearby

Car Park: YES

Distance

●●● Suggested route - 2km (1½ miles)

●●● Other routes

Path Info

Wide, mainly unsurfaced path, rutted and muddy in places. Some steps at rear of Pineapple. Path is clear and well signposted.

Facilities

Local shops and other facilities are available nearby in Airth. There are no toilets at the Pineapple itself.

Falkirk Area Map



Map Key

- Route locations
- █ Main roads
- ⋮ Train Lines
- Population centres
- Falkirk Council Area

Getting there

By foot

If you live nearby

By Rail

Nearest train stations are at Larbert, Falkirk Grahamston, Falkirk High.

By bike

Cycle route info from www.sustrans.org.uk, 0845 1130065

By bus

Bus info 01324 504724

By car

See location maps

Thank you

To all organisations, landowners and local communities for their co-operation and support.

Further information

This booklet has been produced by Falkirk Council.

Other booklets available include:

Green Travel Map

Birdwatching at Kinneil Hide

Guide to walks in Callendar Woods

Please contact Falkirk Council's Biodiversity Officer, Development Services, 01324 504863.



Falkirk Council
Development Services