



Easy Walking in the Banbridge District

Listed below are some suggestions for walks in the Banbridge District Council area please also see the Council's website on www.banbridge.gov.uk and view the Walking and Countryside Development pages for additional walks and information.

Riverside walk from Banbridge Leisure Centre to Huntly

Start	Banbridge Leisure Centre, Downshire Road, Banbridge
Distance	To Huntly Play Area – approx. 1 mile/1.6 km Following circular route to town along Lurgan Road to Leisure Centre approx. 2 mile/3.21km.
Points of Interest	The riverside walk follows the line of the former Scarva to Banbridge Branch Railway Line along the Upper River Bann. Steep steps at Dunbar Road entrance/exit.

This is a flat walk running in an urban setting along the River Bann from Leisure Centre to the play area at Huntly.

There is ample car parking at the Leisure Centre. Pick up the path from near the entrance to the Leisure Centre and follow to Huntly Play Area, or extend the walk by continuing to Dunbar Road, crossing Dunbar Bridge and following Kiln Loaning to Havelock Park and following the pleasant tree lined track around Havelock Athletic Ground.

The path continues past the play area at Huntly via a narrow path along the river leading to steep steps onto the Dunbar Road. Turn Right into this road taking a right over the Dunbar Foot Bridge – cross over River Bann. This was an old fording place across the River Bann before the Bann Bridge was built from which the town got its name. King William is said to have crossed the Upper Bann

at this point. Follow Kiln Loaning and look for the entrance to the pedestrian track around Havelock Park Athletic Ground – this is near the entrance to the road, on the Left or alternatively just continue onto the Lurgan Road, taking a Right to walk back towards the town centre. This is part of the Highway to Health Walk in Banbridge which commences at the Old Town Hall, Scarva Street. For the Heart Stroke and Chest Association’s Banbridge ‘Highways to Health Way’ see <http://www.nichsa.com/assets/banbridge.pdf> or request a leaflet from the Council’s Countryside Officer on 028 406 60617 or go to www.banbridge.com and go the ‘Walking Page’.

Solitude Park is located off Bridge Street, Banbridge and has flat, surfaced walks. It is a small, linear Park along the River. There are other access/exit points located off the Castlewellan Road, at Ashley Street and from Rathfriland Street (car park at bottom of street) or from Bridge Street (by foot only).

Laws Lane, Banbridge

Start	Either Castlewellan Road, beside DHSS office (parking at Tesco’s across road) or, from Dromore Road, opposite cemetery.
Distance	Approx. 1 mile/1.6 km (length of path)
Points of Interest	Offers some good views of town. Route has a bit of an incline – steep from Dromore Road, gentler from Castlewellan Road.

Laws Lane is a public right of way running from the Castlewellan Road to Dromore Road, Banbridge. It commences as a surfaced road from the Castlewellan Road, then becomes an unsurfaced green lane. The surface can be uneven and muddy and stout shoes are recommended. As the lane is higher than surrounding land it provides good views over the town. It can be used as a circular walk if you follow the Dromore Road back to town or the walk could be extended by crossing the Castlewellan Road and entering Solitude Park either from Tesco’s car park or via Ashley Street.

Dromore Riverside Walk - Dromore Town Park

Start	Regents Bridge, Dromore
Distance	Approx. ½ mile/0.8 km (can be extended by using other paths in park).
Points of Interest	Victorian railway viaduct which carried the former Great Northern Railway from Banbridge to Lisburn. The park and walk are located along the River Lagan.

Dromore Park is roughly 8.25 acres and is located along the River Lagan. Pedestrian access to park from Banbridge Road , or from Regents Bridge (opposite Police Station) – beside restored high cross. The park offers pleasant short strolls including a riverside walk passing Dromore Cathedral on the other bank and leading to an impressive piece of industrial archaeology the ‘great soaring viaduct’ in park.

Loughbrickland:

Start	Poyntzpass Road entrance to park (also pedestrain access from Dublin Road via very steep steps)
Distance	Several short walks in park Also waymarked historic trail of approx.2.5/4.02 km miles.
Points of Interest	Short woodland trail and Colnacran Rath at Loughbrickland House.

Loughbrickland is located just south of Banbridge on off the main A1 north/south road. The small 7 acre park is laid out in an informal manner and has a toilets, play area and and a human sundial (visit to find out more!). The park is included in a village historic trail produced by the local community association and available from Banbridge Tourist Information Centre. As part of the trail there is a short woodland trail through the grounds of Loughbrickland House. This starts at the Old Newry Road/Scarva Street junction and the gates of the house can be easily seen. The walk starts just inside the gates, beside the old gatehouse. This is an attractive walk, especially in spring when the woodland spring flowers can be seen. However, it follows uneven ground and can be muddy.

Coolnacran Fort forms an impressive feature along the woodland walk. Rath, also known locally as 'forts' or 'lis', date from the period AD 400 -1200, known as the Early Christian Period in Ireland. In past times they were protected by the superstitions surrounding them as homes of the 'Little People' or fairies. In fact they were fortified farmsteads constructed as circular shaped enclosures surrounded by one or more banks. A palisade fence would have been constructed on top of the bank as a defence against 'wolves, hostile neighbours and Vikings'. They are the most commonly found field monument with 1,700 still existing in County Down alone. Coolnacran Fort is a high status bivallate (two ringed) fort around 100 ft/30.47 m across.

Newry Canal Towpath/ Newry Canal Way

Start	Scarva Interpretative Centre, Main Street, Scarva – parking here
Distance	Scarva to Action Lake/Lough Shark (approx. 3 mile/4.82 km return). Total length of towpath approx. 20 miles.
Points of Interest	Old Newry/Portadown Canal – now disused but opened in 1742 making it one of the first canals in the British Isles.

The Newry Canal Towpath or 'Newry Canal Way' is part of a 20 mile off road, linear, off-road walk and cycle route running from Portadown to Newry and passing through the Banbridge area. The 20 mile walk or cycle is for the real enthusiast but you can choose a less strenuous stroll or cycle.

You can get onto the towpath at the Scarva Interpretative Centre, located in the pretty village of Scarva. It is a 3 mile/4.82 km (return) walk south to Acton Lake/Lough Shark, or you could walk to Poyntzpass, or walk from Scarva, north to the attractive lock keepers cottage at Moneypenny's Lock. The tearooms at Scarva serve refreshments during from Easter to the end of the summer season.

There is also a small, attractive park in Scarva with a lakeside walk and play area. To reach the park continue along Main Street, the entrance to the park is located just past Scarva Primary School. There are toilet, car parking and picnic facilities at the park.

Slieve Croob Transmitter Road

Start	Dree Hill Car Park (near Finnis, County Down – south of Dromara – off B7).
Distance	Approx. 1 mile/1.6 km to summit
Points of Interest	On a clear day – great views over NI the Galloway coast of Scotland and to the Isle of Man. .

For those who like a bit of a climb!

Located at Slieve Croob (source of the River Lagan) surfaced walk to top of Mountain (1,755 ft or 534 metres) – road about 1 mile/1.6 km in length. Mostly surfaced but last section, to summit, over rough ground – look out for the stiles as you follow the surfaced road round to its end point on the mountain. The top is marred by transmitter masts but there are the remains of an ancient cairn and great views to Belfast, and on a clear day, views extend to the coast of Scotland and the Isle of Man.

Castlewellan Forest Park – a small part of the forest park comes with the Banbridge District Council area. Banbridge District Council have provided (in conjunction with Forest Service and the Mourne Heritage Trust) a car park off the Leitrim Road, at the back entrance to the forest. Leave the car and walk down to the lake or other trails in the forest – information at car park.

Further Information

Ordnance Survey maps covering the area:

1:10,000 OSNI Banbridge Street Map and Gazetteer (incl. Dromore, Rathfriland, Gilford and District Council Area Road Map)

1:50,000 OSNI Sheet 20 Craigavon

1:50,000 OSNI Sheet 29 The Mournes

1:25,000 OSNI Slieve Croob

These are available to purchase from Banbridge Tourist Information Centre or from Ordnance Survey for NI, Colby House, Stranmillis Road, Belfast (tel: 028 9025 5755) and at some large bookshops.

Publications:

Walks in Banbridge District, Banbridge District Council (1998).

Please note Updated route cards are available to view on-line. See www.banbridge.com.

Loughbrickland Historic Trail, Loughbrickland and District Community Association

Welcome to Mourne Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (leaflet), Mourne Heritage Trust (2005) – provides map and information on the Slieve Croob area.

Newry Canal Way: An illustrated Guide to Walking the Newry Way, Countryside Access and Activities Network (available to view on line see web address for CAAN below).

If you have any queries or complaints about the walks in the district we would welcome your feedback – contact us through the Council’s website or through the Countryside Officer.

For Further Information:

Banbridge Tourist Information Centre, Newry Road, Banbridge (tel: 028 4062 3322) or email tic@banbridge.gov.uk or the Countryside Officer on 028 4066 0617

Organization	Web Address
Banbridge District Council See Walking, Countryside Development pages	www.banbridge.com
Countryside Access and Activities Network. Information on land, air and water based recreation activities in NI and info. on the Newry Canal Way.	www.countrysiderecreation.com
Forest Service Information on forest walks and activities	www.dardni.gov.uk/frames/forest01.com
Mourne Heritage Trust Information on Mourne	www.mourne.live.com

and Slieve Croob Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty plus activities and events	
Northern Ireland Tourist Board	www.nitb.com
Ordnance Survey for NI Maps sales and info.	www.osni.gov.uk
Ulster Federation of Rambling Clubs Contact addresses for local hill walking and rambling groups	www.ufrc-online.co.uk