



# Winter Wellness



**COMMUNITY**  
FUND

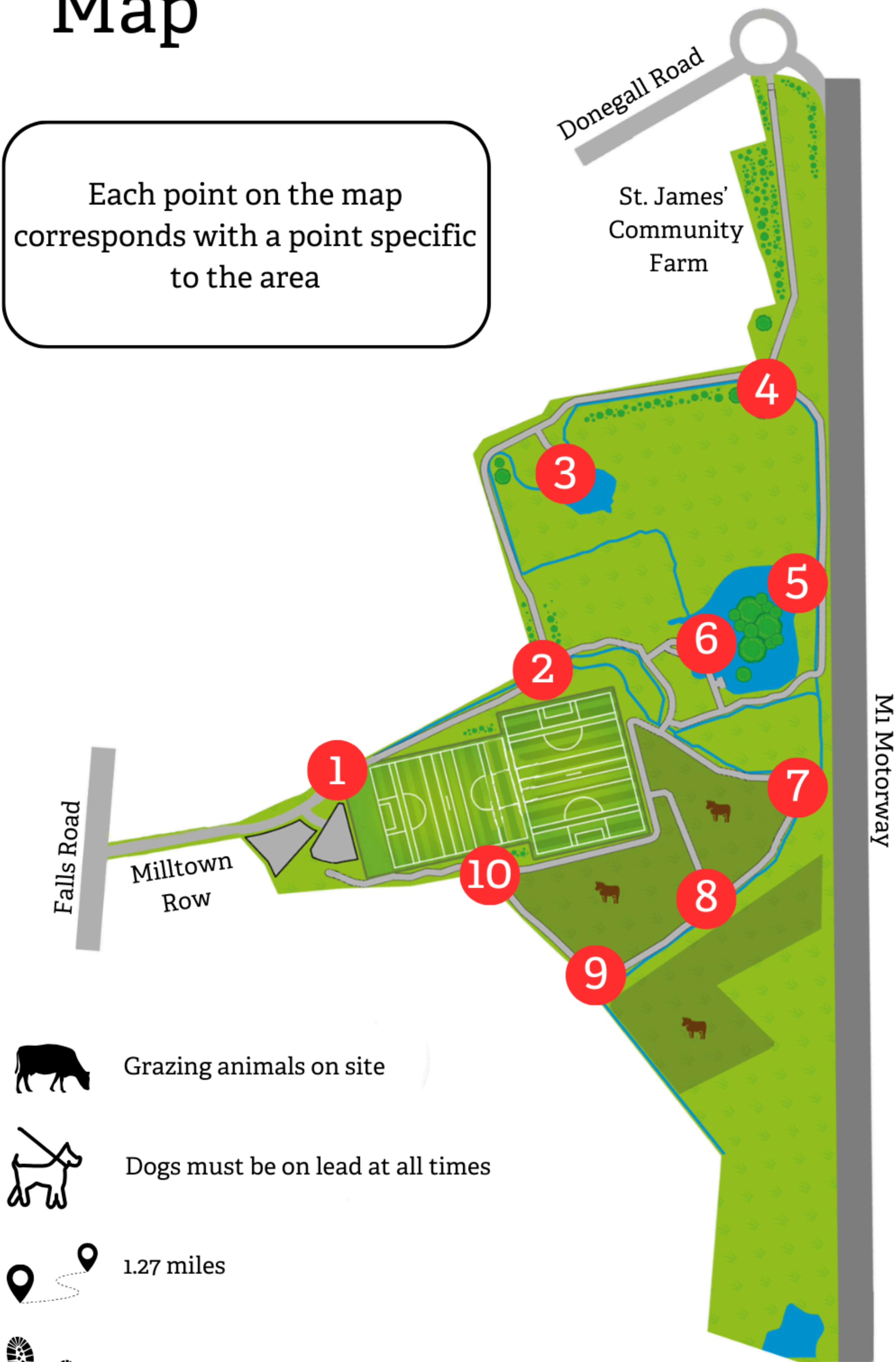


**Ulster**  
**Wildlife**



# Map

Each point on the map corresponds with a point specific to the area



Grazing animals on site



Dogs must be on lead at all times



1.27 miles



3,000 steps



Easy Terrain





## **Introduction**

This walk will help us think about our connection to the natural world.

Connecting with nature is not about what we know, it is about how we feel and our experiences.

When we feel close to nature, we see ourselves as part of the natural world rather than separate from it. We notice more, seek it out, and feel happy when we are in it.





## One

**Do you feel like you are walking into nature as you walk down this path?**

If you were distracted maybe walk down again quietly, listening and looking carefully at the stream.

How does it make you feel?





## Two

**You are standing on the Forth Meadow Community Greenway.**

This is a new EU PEACE IV-funded project to connect “Greenspaces” in north and west Belfast from Clarendon Playing Fields to the city centre.

Look at the artwork on the ground, this was created with the help of the children at Bog Meadows to show the importance of the insects living here and how all parts of the ecosystem are interconnected. Other pieces created this way can be seen all along the greenway.



Environmental art can be a valuable way to help people connect with nature.



## Three

**Look at the reedbed, it is quiet now but in months to come the birds will be returning to nest.**

Think about the tiny sedge warblers weighing in at only 10g currently in Africa preparing themselves for the journey to our reeds.



Close your eyes and picture the reeds and elephant grass of West Africa, feel the warm breeze, and imagine this small bird weighing the same as a pencil travelling 2807 miles to nest here amongst the reeds. Consider if this area was not here, where would these incredible birds go?

How does thinking about this make you feel?





## Four

**Look to the entrance of Bog Meadows. This has been designed to feel welcoming and inclusive, inviting people into a space where they can feel safe to explore and learn about nature.**

Please do pick a leaf, notice the patterns, touch the bark on the trees etc. This will enhance your experience today.

When possible, always take time to smell the flowers.





## Five

**A strong connection with nature is linked with better wellbeing.**

Think about walking down this path, does the nature around you serve as a pretty backdrop or do you feel immersed in your surroundings? What is the weather like today, is it cold or rainy? Does this affect how you enjoy the moment?

Did you know that many flowers won't develop without a period of frost?

Walk again here on a summer day, try to remember the difference. Nature immerses us in an ever-changing backdrop and can look beautiful whatever the weather.





## **Six**

**As you walk along this path you will notice the noise of the motorway.**

Roads are needed in our society, but they come with a cost to our wellbeing. There is noise and air pollution which impacts our health.

Take a minute appreciate the respite nature provides us from noisy urban environments and pollution. Notice that is possible to tune the traffic out and concentrate on the birdsong.

Did you know birds in areas like this sing louder?





## **Seven**

**Looking at water helps people feel calm.**

Evidence tells us that spending time in and around ‘blue spaces’ has higher benefits than green spaces. These include improving how you are feeling, reducing both negative thoughts and levels of stress.

There is also more to this water than meets the eye. The water may look grey today, but millions of tiny creatures live just below the surface, providing a buffet for our birds and insects. This is an entire world unknown to many of us.



Appreciating what cannot be seen helps us realise how complex and wonderful our environment is. Next time you get an opportunity to go pond dipping, do give it a go and gain a new appreciation of the complex world of ponds.



## **Eight**

**People throughout the ages have celebrated nature because being in touch with the natural world was integral to their way of life.**



Look across the field at the rushes, they are cut to make St Brigid's Day crosses. Creating this cross helps people reconnect with nature.

With its origins in the Celtic festival of Imbolc, St Brigid's Day was the festival of fertility and marked the beginning of spring. It signalled an end to the darkness of winter and ushered in a new season of hope and growth. St Brigid lived close to nature and is an inspiration to those searching for an alternative to the ways of the modern world.

There is a renewed interest in this type of celebration and people are benefitting from recreating this traditional connection.





## Nine

**Look up at the Belfast Hills, a large community of people have worked together to protect the wildlife of this land for many years.**

From the bog and heath at the top of the mountain all the way down to the wetland of Bog Meadows. They have maintained our beautiful natural heritage, helping one another by growing community connections.



The wellbeing pathway encourages helping others and giving back to nature. There is always work to be done to protect our environment, if you would like to be a part of a team to make a positive change, please get in touch and you will be greeted with a warm welcome.

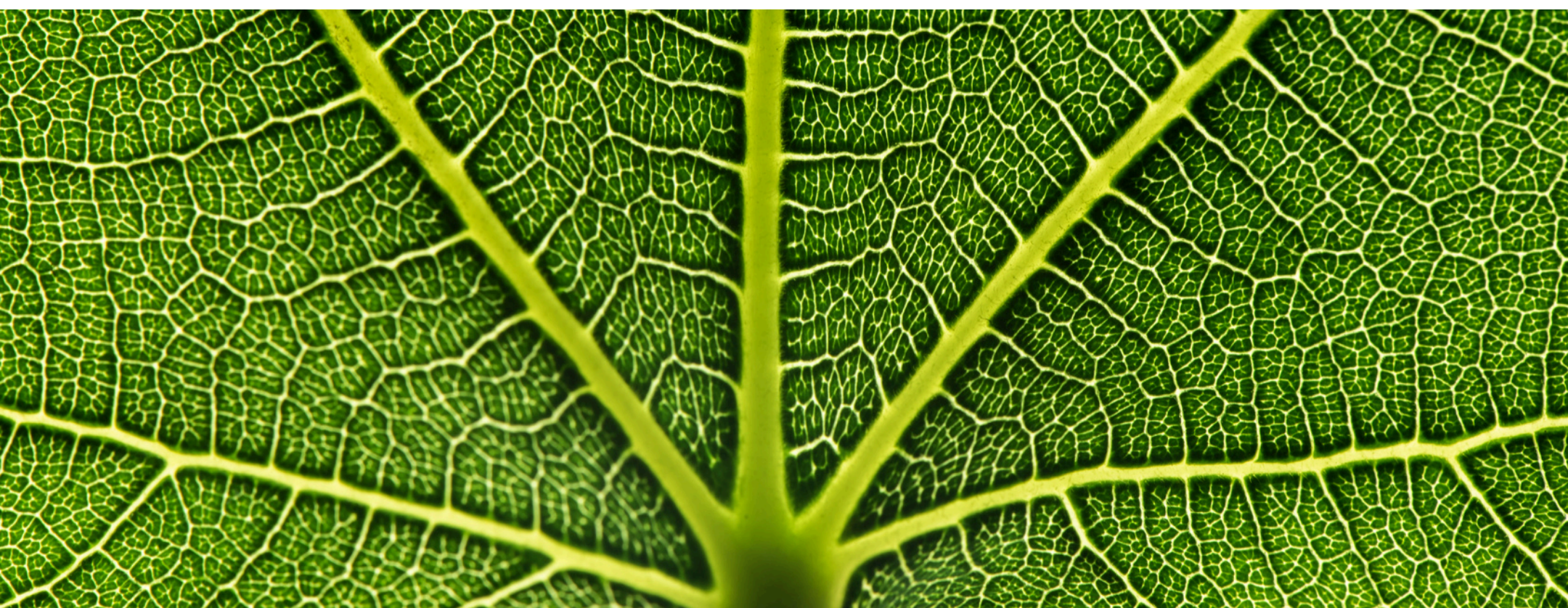


## **Ten**

**Spending time in nature can help us along the 5 Ways to Wellbeing Pathway.**



Just by doing this walk so far you have, been active, learned new things and spent time in the present. You don't need to identify different plants or know all the facts to appreciate the beauty and stimulate your senses.



Having a connection with nature grounds us, it can help us find our place in the world and have a sense of belonging.

It can give us a sense of peace, can excite, amaze, and astonish us, we just need to take the time to embrace it.



Enjoyed this self-led walk of  
Bog Meadows Nature Reserve?

You can help protect this special  
haven for wildlife by becoming a  
member of Ulster Wildlife today.

**[www.ulsterwildlife.org/join](http://www.ulsterwildlife.org/join)**



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