



**THE BIG NORTHUMBERLAND
GEAR CHANGE**

**Creative
walking
book**

#gearchanger

Are you looking for motivation to get out and about? These creative walking activities will help put a spring in your step!

What is The Big Northumberland Gear Change?

The Big Northumberland Gear Change is a local campaign to encourage us all to slow down and adopt more sustainable ways of moving around the county by walking, cycling and using public transport more often.

Reducing our reliance on cars is crucial to achieving Northumberland's net zero target by 2030. With only 13% of all journeys in Northumberland made on foot or by bike and with a third of all trips made in the county less than 5km, there is plenty of potential for us all to ditch our cars some or all of the time in favour of healthier, greener and happier ways of getting around.

What are these creative walking activities all about?

These activities are designed to inspire you to get out and explore your local area and discover the wonderful things within walking distance of your home.

Leaving the car behind is not only great for the environment, but your wallet and health too. Walking has been shown to have an incredible positive impact on both physical and mental health and best of all it is completely free!

These activities are suitable for everyone and adaptable for all ages and levels of mobility. Take inspiration, adapt them to your needs and take the first steps towards lasting lifestyle changes.

We'd like to say a big thank you to the #WalkCreate Project for allowing us to reproduce and adapt some of their activities from *The Walkbook: Recipes for Walking & Wellbeing*. You can find more creative walks at their website:

www.walkcreate.gla.ac.uk

Creative walk 1

Compass walks

Explore from your front door.

If you usually get straight in your car this activity can be a great way to explore your local area, you might even be surprised by what you find within walking distance in your neighbourhood.

Start from your front door, or other chosen spot, and find north on a compass or phone app. Walk for 10 minutes sticking as close to that same direction as possible. You can repeat this for each compass point and can increase the time to 20 or 30 minutes depending on how far you would like to go.

You may find a new favourite route to walk the dog or a shop that you never realised was within walking distance.

Once you have completed the compass from your front door, you could try the same exercise from the office or your child's school.

Why not send us some pictures of your walk [#bngc #gearchangers](https://twitter.com/bngc) so we can share with our followers.



Creative walk 2

Short cuts & hideaways



Every town in Northumberland has its own unique personality and interesting features. Share your favourite short cuts and hideaways from across the county.

Do you know the secret routes that take you from A to B quicker? Ever wondered what happens if you follow that lane or take that path you have always wanted to explore?

Tell us about the stepping stones, the alleyways and the cut throughs that make your town or village special. Post a picture on social media with [#bngc #gearchangers](https://twitter.com/bngc) and show us the hidden gems of your neighbourhood.

Creative walk 3

Chalk walk

Notice the little things in nature and leave a trail for others to follow...

You will need: A nature identification guide or app, chalk, a keen eye!

Suggested apps:

PictureThis | iNaturalist | Woodland Trust - for trees | Seek by iNaturalist



Next time you are on a walk take a piece of chalk along and mark things that you notice in nature along the way.

Perhaps you will find a buttercup growing from the crack in the pavement, or maybe you'll find a great spot to stand to watch ducks on a pond. Use a nature identification guide or app to find out the names of the plants and wildlife you notice along your walk, find a spot close by on a pavement or wall and chalk the name.

Remember to stay safe and keep your chalking to public areas, but be creative –

there may be a spot just off the path where an unusual flower is growing, or you notice a nest being built under a foot bridge.

Anyone who crosses that path after you will be able to share in the small joys of the nature that you found and may even add their own notes next time they go for a walk.

This activity takes inspiration from *Walking and Chalking*, artist Claire Collison's contribution to *The Walkbook: Recipes for Walking & Wellbeing*.

Creative walk 4

Find joy in routine

A walk for those bored of the same old route...

Do you walk the same route to work or school every day and feel tired of the repetition? Here are some ways to change your perspective when you can't change your route:

1. Look again with fresh eyes

Are there people you see everyday on your walk? Or a cat that always sits in a particular spot? Find comfort in the predictability of your route, of knowing where to cross the road and when to turn a corner and appreciate those things that are always there.

2. Spot daily differences

Perhaps it's noticing the difference in the weather from one day to the next, smelling the scent of blossoms or hearing birds in the trees. Take a moment to see how different each day can be in so many little ways.

3. Change it up

Try walking on the other side of the street or take a slight detour from your usual path. How does this change your perspective and how you feel on your walk?

4. Share it!

Your route might be an inspiration to others; why not share it [@bngc #gearchangers](#)

This activity takes inspiration from *Finding Pleasure in Repetition*, artist Harriette Meynell's contribution to *The Walkbook: Recipes for Walking & Wellbeing*.

Creative walk 5

Take a stroll down memory lane



Photo Blyth Station, exterior © Ben Brooksbank - geograph.org.uk/p/1838435

Think of a walk that means something to you. It could be a favourite place from your childhood or a walk you took on a holiday...

What can you remember about that walk? Think about the sounds you could hear, the feel of the ground beneath your feet and the smell of the air.

Were there any landmarks you remember, or any particular traditions associated with your walk? Perhaps you always did that walk on Christmas day or stopped at a shop for an ice cream on the way home.

Put yourself back into that walk, remember how it made you feel and what made it so memorable to you. Swap memories with a friend, write them down or draw a map of your walk.

Is there a place close to you that you could go to capture some of those feelings? Perhaps there is a beach or woodland close by that is similar to the walk in your memory, or maybe it was the people you walked with that made it special.

This activity takes inspiration from Walks to Remember: 'With memory I was there', artist Louise Ann Wilson's contribution to The Walkbook: Recipes for Walking & Wellbeing.

Creative walk 6 Mindful walking

Spending time outdoors can help us to wind down from the stresses and strains of everyday life...

You don't need to be seated or close your eyes to be mindful, you can practice being in the present moment anywhere you go. Here is a short exercise for mindful walking from our BNGC podcast episodes:

- Start out with a few slow deep breaths - breath in for 5 hold for 3 and out for 7 – 5 breaths.
- Walk at your normal pace – whatever feels comfortable and safe, feel the natural way your body moves, look at the sky, feel the weather and spend a moment taking everything in.
- Bring your attention to the way your feet feel inside your socks and shoes, to the way your heel hits the ground, and your weight shifts onto the ball of your foot.
- Bring your attention up through your legs, notice any heaviness or tightness in your muscles.
- It is natural for your mind to wander if it does, gently bring your attention back to your body and breath.
- Shift your awareness to your environment, notice the colours, sounds and smells around you. It can be a little overwhelming if you are somewhere busy so take your time and pay attention to what feels comfortable for you while staying connected to your inner body experience.
- Bring your attention back to your body and take a few slow deep breaths, spend a few moments noticing the firmness of your feet on the ground

Do you feel any different for having a few mindful minutes?

You can find the full podcasts on our website www.northumberlandgearchange.co.uk





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