

# PARC NATUREL RÉGIONAL DES CAPS ET MARAIS D'OPALE

## LONGFOSSÉ : HOUSSOYE FOOTPATH



Welcome to the Houssoye footpath in Longfossé. This village in the Boulonnais countryside lies at the foot of a chalk down, a place of remarkable geological and natural interest. The local council and the Parc Naturel Régional des Caps et Marais d'Opale have created this footpath so that people from near and far can explore this natural heritage along the sunken pathways lined with lime trees and hornbeams, some of which are hundreds of years old.

*This family-friendly walk is just one of the actions taken as part of the Boulonnais bocage landscape plan coordinated by the Parc Naturel Régional. The Houssoye footpath is a Cross-Channel Geopark site of particular geological significance. It is a means of discovering the diversity of our landscapes, local plant and animal life, and the rural crafts and know-how stemming from the region's geology.*

5,6KM  
1H30

### THE GUARDIANS OF THE PATH

You will not fail to notice the many pollarded trees along the path. These are oak, hornbeam, ash and sometimes willow trees whose branches are regularly cut back to the trunk to keep them at the same height.

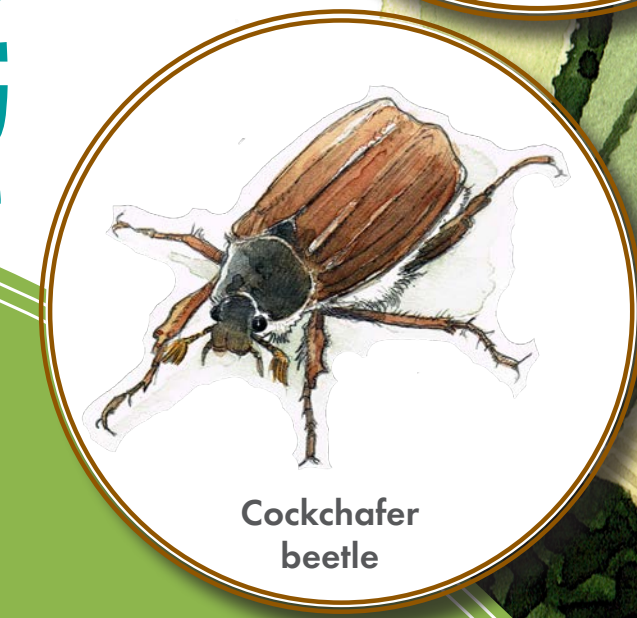
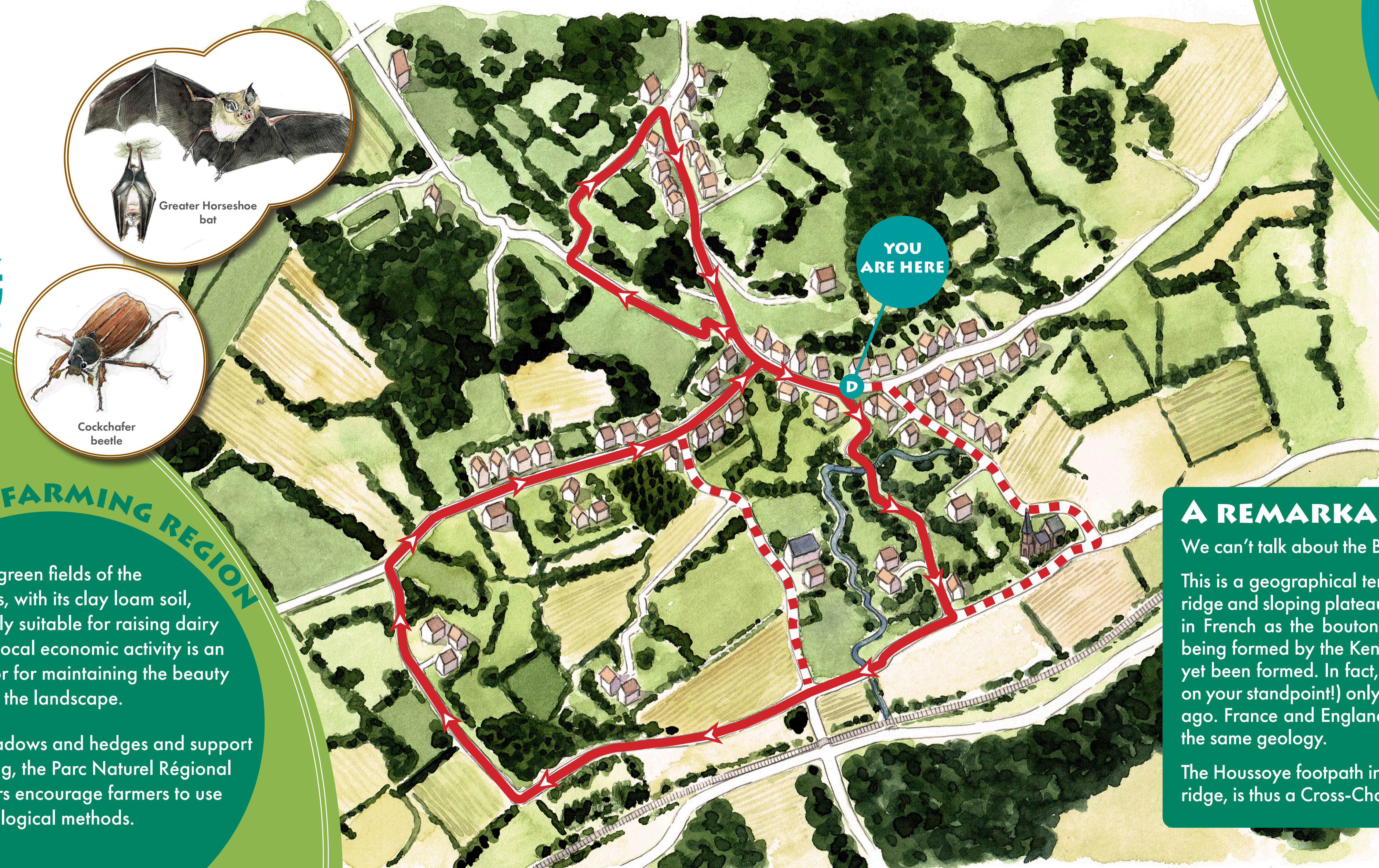
This hard pruning gives them their characteristic shape, a round head crowned with thin branches. In French they are nicknamed "trognés" (faces) or "touses" in the local dialect.

This traditional method has been used by tenant farmers for years: every nine years at the end of their lease, they would prune the trees to make wood for their fires, handles for their tools, or fodder for their cattle.



### THE BOCACHE - A VALUABLE FEATURE OF THE LANDSCAPE

The countryside behind the port of Boulogne-sur-Mer has been shaped by farmers since the Middle Ages. A land mainly devoted to dairy-farming, it forms a patchwork of pastures separated by hedgerows. This network of hedges and fields is home to an outstanding biological diversity. A wide array of plant and animal species have made it their permanent habitat, a breeding ground, or a stopping point. Among the most emblematic species to be found there are the Northern Little Owl, the Great Spotted Woodpecker, the Greater Horseshoe bat, and the Cockchafer beetle.



### LIVESTOCK FARMING REGION

The green fields of the Boulonnais, with its clay loam soil, are particularly suitable for raising dairy livestock. This local economic activity is an important factor for maintaining the beauty of the landscape.

To protect the meadows and hedges and support livestock farming, the Parc Naturel Régional and its partners encourage farmers to use ecological methods.



### A REMARKABLE GEOLOGICAL HERITAGE

We can't talk about the Bocage Boulonnais without mentioning the cuesta!

This is a geographical term used to describe the land relief composed of a ridge and sloping plateau. The erosion of this anticline created a dip, known in French as the boutonnière du Boulonnais (buttonhole), the other side being formed by the Kent Weald. At that time the English Channel had not yet been formed. In fact, the Strait (Pas) of Calais (or of Dover depending on your standpoint!) only became a permanent seaway a mere 8000 years ago. France and England not only share the same history and culture, but the same geology.

The Houssoye footpath in the village of Longfossé, on the slope of the chalk ridge, is thus a Cross-Channel Geopark site of particular geological importance.



■■■■■ Tarmacked road: an easier route if the path is too muddy in wet weather.

An integral part of the Bocage Boulonnais landscape plan, this project was co-funded by the European Regional Development Fund (FEDER).



Direction régionale de l'environnement, de l'aménagement et du logement

