

Know the Code before you go

Enjoy Scotland's outdoors. It's a great place that contributes to your quality of life, your health and your awareness and enjoyment of your surroundings. Everyone has the right to be on most land and inland water for recreation, education and for going from place to place providing they act responsibly. These rights and responsibilities are explained in the Scottish Outdoor Access Code.

Know your access rights

Access rights cover many activities, including for example:

- informal activities, such as picnicking, photography and sightseeing;
- active pursuits, including walking, cycling, riding, canoeing and wild camping;
- taking part in recreational and educational events;
- simply going from one place to another.

These access rights don't apply to any kind of motorised activity (unless for disabled access) or to hunting, shooting or fishing.

Access rights can be exercised over most of Scotland, from urban parks and path networks to our hills and forests, and from farmland and field margins to our beaches, lochs and rivers. However, access rights don't apply everywhere, such as in buildings or their immediate surroundings, or in houses or their gardens, or most land in which crops are growing.

Know the Code...

Access rights come with responsibilities which are fully explained in the Scottish Outdoor Access Code, though the main thing is to **use common sense**. You need to **take responsibility for your own actions, respect the interests of others and care for the environment** – what does all this mean?

When you're in the outdoors, you need to:

- **Take responsibility for your own actions** - The outdoors is a great place to enjoy but it's also a working environment and has many natural hazards. Make sure you are aware of these and act safely, follow any reasonable advice and respect the needs of other people enjoying or working in the outdoors.
- **Respect people's privacy and peace of mind** - Privacy is important for everyone. Avoid causing alarm to people, especially at night, by keeping a reasonable distance from houses and private gardens, or by using paths or tracks.
- **Help farmers, landowners and others to work safely and effectively** - Keep a safe distance from any work and watch for signs that tell you dangerous activities are being carried out, such as tree felling or crop spraying. You can also help by:
 - leaving gates as you find them;
 - not blocking or obstructing an entrance or track;
 - looking for alternative routes before entering a field containing animals;
 - not feeding animals;
 - using local advice so that you can take account of shooting and stalking;
 - not damaging fences or walls; and by
 - avoiding damage to crops by using paths and tracks, by using the margins of the field, or by going over ground that hasn't been planted.



- **Care for the environment** – Our environment contributes greatly to everyone's quality of life and health. It's important that you:
 - follow any reasonable advice and information;
 - take your litter home;
 - treat places with care, leaving them as you find them;
 - don't recklessly disturb or intentionally damage wildlife or historic places.
- **Keep your dog under proper control** – If you have a dog with you, it's very important that it doesn't worry livestock or alarm others. Don't let it into fields with calves or lambs, and keep it on a short lead or under close control when you're in a field with other animals. **If cattle react aggressively to your dog, let go of it immediately and take the safest route out of the field.** Take care to ensure that you or your dog don't disturb breeding birds. Pick up your dog's faeces if it defecates in any place where it is likely to cause concern to other people.
- **Take extra care if you are organising a group, an event or running a business** – Consult the full Code or our website for information about your responsibilities.



If you're a farmer, landowner or someone else managing the outdoors, you need to think about the needs of people enjoying the outdoors. You need to:

- **Respect access rights** – Access rights extend to most of Scotland so don't unreasonably obstruct people on your land or water. Only lock gates when it's essential for animal health or safety and don't put a fence across a path without putting in a gate to allow access. Providing paths and tracks is a good way of integrating access and land management.
- **Act reasonably when asking people to avoid a particular area whilst you're working** - People respond best to polite and reasonable requests, so keep safety measures in place for the minimum time, tell people about alternative routes and explain why the original route shouldn't be used. Remove information that is not up to date.
- **Work with your local authority and other bodies to help integrate access and land management** - Showing people that they're welcome and working with your local authority, or your national park authority, and others will help you successfully manage access over your land and help care for the environment.



If you're responsible for places where access rights don't apply, such as a farmyard or land surrounding a building, respect rights of way and any customary access, and work with your local authority, or your national park authority, and others to help improve and manage access.



Find out more about your access rights and responsibilities - and also about rights of way and customary access - by picking up the Scottish Outdoor Access Code or visiting www.outdooraccess-scotland.com. If you are having access problems - get in touch with your local authority or national park authority (see your local phone book). If you would like to have a copy of the full Code phone Scottish Natural Heritage on 01738 458545 or email pubs@snh.gov.uk. Look out for other approved guidance which carries the Access Code logo.

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horse riding: George Logan/SNH

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