



Countryside Code Refresh – invitation to participate in a Survey

Natural England has a statutory duty to produce and promote the Countryside Code to guide people visiting the countryside. It also has a duty to advise landowners and managers in relation to access on their land.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, the number of visits to the countryside increased. Much of this was to be welcomed, given the many health and wellbeing benefits provided to people through outdoor exercise and contact with nature. There were, however, a number of incidences across the country of undesirable actions and activities taking place, including damage to property and the environment. Many of these incidents came about as the result of a lack of understanding of how to engage positively with the natural environment, rather than by deliberate acts of damage.

In response, Natural England published an updated short version of the Countryside Code accompanied by a summer-long campaign to promote the safe enjoyment of the countryside, in partnership with stakeholders.

Now that we have more time to reflect over the winter period, Natural England is seeking your views on how we can refresh the Countryside Code. We plan to update the short version of the Code, aimed at visitors the countryside, as well as the longer, full version. We are planning to produce two versions of the full Code – one aimed at visitors to the countryside, and one aimed at landowners and land managers.

It is our intention that the new Code feels relevant to as wide an audience as possible and particularly for children, young people and those parts of our communities we know (e.g. from the People and Nature survey) don't access the countryside as often – such as those from low income areas, urban areas, ethnic minority backgrounds, younger people and people with long term health conditions. To help us with this ambition, we want to ensure that as many of these groups' views are collected in this refresh.

The work to refresh the Code is now getting underway, with an aim to be ready to welcome people back into the countryside in spring 2021 with greater awareness of their rights and responsibilities. Our work will essentially be divided into two phases: the refresh of the detail of the Code in time for Easter and an associated campaign running from then and beyond, throughout 2021, which will include a broader conversation with stakeholders about what a 'post-Covid' Code for the 21st century would look like and how we can, as a sector, promote more positive behaviours and awareness. Any changes will be based on the views of a range of stakeholders, some of which will be new to this work.

SURVEY QUESTIONS (after contact details)

1. We would like to know a little more about your particular interest(s) in the Countryside Code. Are you interested in the Code as...

- A farmer/farming representative (including farm advisors and land agents)
- A land owner/land manager
- A member of the public – visitor to rural / coastal areas
- A member of the public – visitor to urban greenspaces
- A representative of a specific kind of user group
- Someone who has promoted, or wishes to promote, the Code
- A representative of your community
- A professional working in the environment sector
- An employee of Natural England
- A professional working in local or national government, or for a non-departmental body that isn't Natural England
- An academic
- Other

2. Prior to this survey, did you know that Natural England has a statutory duty to:

	Yes	No	Not sure
Produce and promote the Countryside Code, to guide people visiting the countryside?			
Advise land owners and land managers in relation to access on their land.			

This section is about how aware you are of each version of the Countryside Code.

3. How aware are you of the short version of the Code?

This version was updated in July 2020, is aimed at visitors to the countryside, and is approximately 100 words long. You can view this version of the Code [here](#). (Please note that this link will open in the same window as the survey, unless you right-click and select 'open link in new tab'.)

- I was not aware of the short version of the Code before taking this survey
- I was aware of the short version of the Code before taking this survey, but I have not read it
- I was aware of the short version of the Code and have read it at least once before taking this survey

4. Are you aware of the long version of the Code?

This is the full version of the code, aimed at both visitors to the countryside and land owners and land managers, that is approximately 2000 words long. You can view this version of the Code [here](#). (Please note that this link will open in the same window as the survey, unless you right-click and select 'open link in new tab'.)

- I was not aware of the long version of the Code before taking this survey
- I was aware of the long version of the Code before taking this survey, but have not read it
- I was aware of the long version of the Code and have read it at least once before taking this survey, but this was over a year ago
- I was aware of the long version of the Code before taking this survey and have read it at least once within the last year

This section is about how you use the Code at the moment, or how you have used it in the past.

5. Have you used or promoted: (please select all that apply)?

- The long version of the Code
- The short version of the Code

6. Which types of group do you work with or promote messages to, on any subject? (please select all that apply)

- local residents
- tourists and holiday makers
- walkers and ramblers
- horse riders
- cyclists
- canoeists, paddleboarders and recreational boaters
- anglers
- people using urban parks and greenspaces
- visitors to visitor attractions (such as nature reserves, country parks, beaches etc)
- dog walkers
- people who may be new visitors to the countryside people who have historically been under-represented in the countryside (e.g. from low income areas, urban areas, ethnic minority backgrounds, younger people and people with long term health conditions)
- people with diverse physical and sensory needs
- farmers / the farming sector
- the rural communities sector
- staff in your organisation
- local government
- professional networks
- I do not / the organisation I represent does not do any promotion to any groups on any subject

7. The current strapline of the Countryside Code is 'Respect-Protect-Enjoy'. Do you agree with any of the following statements?
(You can select more than one, or none at all.)

- I think the current strapline is a great summary of the Code
- I was not really aware of the current strapline until now
- I use the current strapline in communications and promotions, at least some of the time
- I think the current strapline has good brand recognition

8. This section is about what aspects of the Code, its use and promotion you consider to be most important.

How much do you agree or disagree with the following statements?

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
I think it is important that the Code applies to all types of countryside, including urban parks and greenspaces					
The Code is an important way to encourage more inclusive access to the countryside and coast					

9. Which of the following statements do you agree with the most?

- The Code's main purpose is to welcome everyone into the countryside and natural places
- The Code's main purpose is to protect the countryside, natural places and rural communities
- These purposes are equally important

10. How much do you agree or disagree with the statements below?

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
I think that there is generally a high level of awareness amongst the general public about the Countryside Code					

I think Natural England does a good job in promoting the Code					
It is only a small minority of people who do not comply with the Countryside Code					
The Code is important to set expectations of Responsible recreation					
There is evidence that the Code has led to behavioural change					
The Code is important to Encourage consideration of people with different physical and sensory needs					

11. How important do you think the following aspects of the Code are?

To encourage people to...

	Not important	Slightly important	Important	Very important	Extremely important
Consider the local community and other people enjoying the outdoors					
Park carefully so access to gateways and driveways is clear					
Leave gates and property as you find them					
Follow paths but give way to others where it's narrow					
Leave no trace of your visit, take all your litter home					
Don't have BBQs or fires					
Keep dogs under effective control					
Dog poo – bag it and bin it					
Plan ahead, check what facilities are open, be prepared					
Follow advice and local signs and (whilst relevant) obey social distancing measures					

12. Natural England has a statutory duty to produce and promote the Countryside Code. How important do you think each aspect of Natural England's work is in relation to this duty?

	Not important	Slightly important	Important	Very important	Extremely important
Producing and updating the Code itself, i.e. agreeing Consistent wording that is endorsed by Government and partners					
Providing guidance on how to promote the Code					
Producing evidence on awareness, attitudes and behaviour of visitors to the countryside					
Evidence on awareness, attitudes and behaviour of land owners and land managers in relation to visitors to the countryside					
Supporting sector and Stakeholder facing communications					
Delivering public-facing communications / delivering a public campaign to promote the Code					
Providing advice to landowners and land managers in relation to managing access on their land					

13. Which are the most important audiences for promoting the Code to? (please select all those that you consider to be particularly important)

- local residents
- tourists and holidaymakers
- walkers and ramblers

- horse riders
- cyclists
- canoeists, paddleboarders and recreational boaters
- anglers
- people using urban parks and greenspaces
- visitors to visitor attractions (such as nature reserves, country parks, beaches etc)
- dog walkers
- people who may be new visitors to the countryside
- people who have historically been under-represented in the countryside (e.g. from low income areas, urban areas, ethnic minority backgrounds, younger people and people with long term health conditions)
- people with diverse physical and sensory needs
- farmers / the farming sector
- the rural communities sector
- staff in your organisation
- local government
- professional networks
- other

14. If there is anything else you would like to tell us about those aspects of the Code, its use and promotion, that are most important to you, please tell us here.

This section is about our work to refresh the Countryside Code. When we update the long version of the Code, we plan to produce two versions: one for visitors to the countryside and one for land owners and land managers.

15. Which of the following should be included in the version of the Code aimed at visitors to the countryside? (please select all that apply)

- encouraging visitors to consider the local community and other users
- parking
- gates
- following paths
- public Rights of Way
- access to different kinds of land (private, open access)
- access issues relating to rivers and waterbodies
- rights associated with the England Coast Path
- litter (using bins / taking litter home)
- BBQs and fires
- keeping dogs under control / on leads

- picking up and disposing of dog poo responsibly
- restrictions on where dogs are permitted (and at what times)
- planning ahead
- following advice and signs
- understanding signs and symbols (including waymarking and dealing with unhelpful or misleading signage)
- sources of information (internet, guidebooks, maps, apps)
- safety (including e.g. lack of mobile signal, proximity to farm animals or farm machinery)
- not feeding animals (livestock or wild)
- general guidance about checking the weather forecast and tide timetables
- wild swimming / open water swimming
- wild (or nearly wild) camping / camping in unauthorised areas
- cycling

16. What are the five most important activities or behaviours that should be included in the version of the Code aimed at visitors to the countryside? (please only select five from the following list)

- signposting to user group or sector specific / geographically
- specific codes of conduct
- considering the local community and other users
- parking
- gates
- following paths
- public Rights of Way
- access to different kinds of land (private, open access)
- access issues relating to rivers and waterbodies
- rights associated with the England Coast Path
- litter (using bins / taking litter home)
- BBQs and fires
- keeping dogs under control / on leads
- picking up and disposing of dog poo responsibly
- restrictions on where dogs are permitted (and at what times)
- planning ahead
- following advice and signs
- understanding signs and symbols (including waymarking and dealing with unhelpful or misleading signage)

17. Should the Countryside Code be explicitly expanded to encompass advice to visitors to all types of green and natural place, including urban parks?

- Yes
- No
- Don't know

18. Should the Countryside Code aimed at visitors to the countryside include new items aimed at

- sources of information (internet, guidebooks, maps, apps)
- safety (including e.g. lack of mobile signal, proximity to farm
- animals or farm machinery)
- not feeding animals (livestock or wild)
- general guidance about checking the weather forecast and
- tide timetables
- wild swimming / open water swimming
- wild (or nearly wild) camping / camping in unauthorised
- areas
- cycling
- signposting to user group or sector specific / geographically
- specific codes of conduct
- considering the local community and other users
- parking
- gates
- following paths
- public Rights of Way
- access to different kinds of land (private, open access)
- access issues relating to rivers and waterbodies
- rights associated with the England Coast Path
- litter (using bins / taking litter home)
- BBQs and fires
- keeping dogs under control / on leads
- picking up and disposing of dog poo responsibly
- restrictions on where dogs are permitted (and at what
- times)
- planning ahead
- following advice and signs
- understanding signs and symbols (including waymarking
- and dealing with unhelpful or misleading signage)

19. Should the Countryside Code aimed at visitors to the countryside include new items aimed at increasing wellbeing and a closer connection to the natural world?

- yes
- no
- don't know

20. If you think there are any additional activities or behaviours that should be included in the refreshed Code aimed at visitors to the countryside, what are these?

21. How important is it that the updated versions of the Code reach groups of people who might be newer to spending time in the countryside? This includes people who historically have been under-represented in the countryside, e.g. people from low income areas, urban areas, ethnic minority backgrounds, younger people and people with long-term health conditions.

- not important
- slightly important
- important
- very important
- extremely important

22. Should the Code have more emphasis on encouraging access for those with diverse physical and sensory needs?

- yes
- no
- don't know

23. Do you have any advice on how the Code could be improved to better reach and reflect the needs of new and under-represented groups and those with diverse physical and sensory needs?

24. If there are any additional activities or behaviours that should be included in the refreshed version of the Code aimed at visitors to the countryside, what are these?

Now we'd like to ask you about the updated version of the Code that will be aimed at land owners and land managers.

25. Which of the following items should be included in the refreshed version of the Code aimed at land owners and land managers? (please select all that apply)

- legal rights for the public (Rights of Way, open access)
- ensuring accessibility, including signage
- preventing and managing trespass
- encouraging greater permissive access
- gaps, gates and stiles
- management of waste

- safety (hazards, signage (e.g. for electric fencing), storage,
- stock management, occupiers' liability)
- informal guidance (e.g. relating to routes, land management practices etc)
- other

26. Which of the following statements do you agree with the most?

- I think the Code should be framed more in terms of positive behaviours (i.e. mainly focused on 'do's' rather than 'don'ts')
- I think the Code should be framed more around tackling problematic behaviours (i.e. flagging things we want people to stop doing)
- I think the balance of the Code at the moment between positive and negative framing is about right

27. If you have any final comments you would like to make about Natural England's work to refresh the Countryside Code that you have not already made in the rest of the survey, please make them here.