

# [New Countryside Code launched to help people enjoy the outdoors](#)

A new, refreshed Countryside Code has been launched today by Natural England and Natural Resources Wales, coinciding with the 70th anniversary of the creation of the founding booklet.

With more people enjoying the outdoors than ever before, the code has been revised to help people enjoy countryside in a safe and respectful way.

The first Countryside Code booklet was published in 1951. This update – the first in over a decade – has been shaped by nearly 4,000 stakeholder responses to an online survey, which sought views on best practices for visiting the countryside and protecting the natural environment and saw a huge response.

Changes include advice on creating a welcoming environment, for example by saying hello to fellow visitors; clearer rules to underline the importance of clearing away dog poo; staying on footpaths; and not feeding livestock. It also provides advice on how to seek permissions for activities such as wild swimming.

Key changes to the Countryside Code include:

- New advice for people to ‘be nice, say hello, share the space’ as well as ‘enjoy your visit, have fun, make a memory’.
- A reminder not to feed livestock, horses or wild animals.
- To stay on marked footpaths, even if they are muddy, to protect crops and wildlife.
- Information on permissions to do certain outdoor activities, such as wild swimming.
- Clearer rules for dog walkers to take home dog poo and use their own bin if there are no public waste bins.
- A refreshed tone of voice, creating a guide for the public rather than a list of rules – recognising the significant health and wellbeing benefits of spending time in nature.
- New wording to make clear that the code applies to all our natural places, including parks and waterways, coast and countryside.

**Natural England Chair Tony Juniper said:**

The Countryside Code has been providing an excellent guide for people on how to get out and enjoy the outdoors safely for over 70 years.

With more people than ever before seeking solace in nature, this refresh could not come at a more crucial time. We want everyone to be aware of the Code, so people of all ages and backgrounds can enjoy the invaluable health and wellbeing benefits that nature

offers, while giving it the respect it deserves.

**Rural Affairs Minister Lord Gardiner said:**

With so many people visiting the countryside, the Countryside Code has never felt more relevant. Crucially it now covers all green spaces, waterways, the coast and even parks in towns and cities, so that everyone, as we lift restrictions, can enjoy a greener future.

I'd like to thank Natural England and all the many stakeholders who helped shape this updated version. It is an excellent guide and I urge visitors to nature – old and new – to follow its advice.

Ahead of the Easter weekend and the easing of some lockdown restrictions it is expected to be bumper period for visitors to the countryside. In the summer of 2020, the Countryside Code was updated to respond to issues that were being raised during lockdown, such as an increase in littering and sheep worrying by dogs. Today's refresh aims to help everyone enjoy parks and open spaces in a safe way, whilst encouraging them to look after our natural environments and the livelihoods of those who work there.

The pandemic has changed people's relationships with nature. [Evidence from Natural England](#) shows the importance of nature to people's health and wellbeing, with 85% of people surveyed saying that being in nature makes them happy.

Natural England's [People and Nature survey](#) findings however show some groups have been able to spend more time in nature than others. Promotion of the refreshed Code will aim to tackle those inequalities and encourage more inclusive access to nature for minority communities and those with diverse physical and sensory needs. This will be done via targeted stakeholder and media promotion, and through partnership work such as Natural England's work with the Mosaic Charity to encourage people from the Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic communities to access the Peak District National Park, and the [recently announced green social prescribing sites](#).

As part of today's announcement, Natural England are also setting up a long-term Countryside Code campaign to increase awareness of the Code through 2021 and beyond. The campaign will focus on encouraging behavioural change amongst public audiences to act responsibly when visiting outdoors, by respecting those who manage the land and adhering to the Code.

[The updated Countryside Code can be viewed here.](#)