

## The Countryside Code: advice for land managers

### Introduction

In 2021, Natural Resources Wales (NRW) and Natural England (NE) collaborated to update [The Countryside Code: advice for visitors](#). As part of the ongoing development of the Countryside Code work, there was also a requirement to revise and update the advice for land managers. Over the past few months NRW has worked with NE to re-develop the advice and incorporate Welsh access legislation and links where required.

The new [Countryside Code: advice for land managers](#) is now available in Welsh and English on the, alongside the recently refreshed advice for visitors.

### Background to the Countryside Code

Natural Resources Wales (NRW) and Natural England (NE) both have a statutory duty under the National Parks and Countryside Act 1949 for the “*preparation and publication of a code of conduct for the guidance of persons visiting the countryside*” (section 86/86A) and a duty under the CROW Act to “*issue, and from time to time revise a code of conduct*” (section 20). The CROW 2000 Act extended for advice to include land managers: “*that the public and persons interested in access land are informed of their respective rights and obligations*”. These duties are fulfilled in part by the publication of the Countryside Code.

NRW has previously updated its [Countryside Code webpages](#) to ensure they are user friendly, compatible with different types of reader device and compliant with the [Web Accessibility Guidelines 2018](#). NRW has also developed a wider ‘Family of Codes’ to complement the Countryside Code which includes: The Dog Walking Code, Trail Users Code, Waterside Code, Canoeing Code, Angling Code and Wild Swimming Code. These Codes added strength and detail to support the Countryside Code. In 2019, a suite of [animated films](#) was commissioned and developed for use by NRW and partners to promote the Countryside Code. In 2021, NRW created a [Countryside Code toolkit](#) for partners to reach out to their own networks with Countryside Code messaging.

### Land manager guidance review and development

There has not been a significant review of the advice for land managers since it was created. With the updating of the Countryside Code in 2021, it was deemed an appropriate time to consider the same for the land manager advice albeit later in the year. In 2021, with the support from key stakeholders it was agreed to revise and re-

produce the land manager guidance and to provide the advice across public access wider than just open access as had been done previously.

NRW and NE consulted with key stakeholders, especially those with land managing interests, on the existing land managers guidance. This was done by means of an introductory workshop and following this an interactive collaboration tool asking respondents to vote on a number of statements that would help build a picture of the most important advice to include. NRW's Outdoor Access and Recreation team consulted with National Access Forum Wales (NAFW) members in order to obtain a wider Wales view which we felt was vital due to the shared nature of the code messages across England and Wales. Since then, NRW has worked closely with NE as co-owners of the code, to discuss results and observations from the consultation and virtual discussions, and to assist with drafting changes.

It is felt that the guidance needs the right balance between encouraging access and making sure land managers understand their rights and responsibilities when working in and managing the countryside. The advice has also been supported by the Health and Safety Executive.

There are a few occasions in the guidance drafted for England that have had to be adapted for suitability in Wales. These include links to websites and background information about access provision. The only substantial variance in messaging is in relation to coastal margin whereby in England, under Marine and Coastal Access Act 2009, this includes coastal access in so much as the margin is open access land. Welsh open access is not extended to include the coastal margin.

NRW recognises the current benefit of continuing to align with NE in issuing and promoting this guidance but is also aware of the ongoing work to deliver advice to Welsh Government on potential access reform in Wales and the impact that may have in the future issuing of codes and guidance.

The guidance is now available to view on the Countryside Code webpage: [Natural Resources Wales / The Countryside Code Family](#)

## Next steps

The land manager guidance will be promoted through NE and NRW's communication channels and shared with their partners to reach a wider audience.

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