



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 to 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.

To help us gather this feedback, I'd like to invite you to participate in an online survey [https://defragroup.eu.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_9sosQ0YInPyfv3T] which will take approximately 25 minutes. You are under absolutely no obligation to take part in this survey, nor to answer every question if you do decide to take part. The responses will be anonymised and aggregated in the analysis, so it will not be possible to identify an individual participant from their responses following analysis. Only the anonymised, aggregated results will be shared and you can withdraw your data up until the time it is analysed. You can request this before 1st February 2021 by emailing countryside.code@naturalengland.org.uk. There is more information about the survey and how we will handle your data should you choose to participate in the introduction to the survey itself, and in the accompanying [privacy notice](#).

The survey will be open until close of play on Monday 11th January 2021.

Please don't hesitate to get in touch through the Countryside Code mail box if you have any questions. We will be in touch again in the New Year to update you on the survey and our plans to share the key findings with you.