



Introducing

Clare Webb - Project manager for the Countryside code at Natural England

I often describe my role as being part campaign manager, part partnership builder and part countryside champion!

My job is to help more people understand how to enjoy the outdoors responsibly, whether they're visiting the countryside for the first time or have been exploring it for years. I work with a fantastic range of organisations, from conservation charities and National Parks to community groups, schools and land managers, to raise awareness of the Countryside Code. No two days are the same – one day I might be discussing behaviour change research, the next developing a new campaign or working with partners on creative ways to reach new audiences. What I enjoy most is helping people feel welcome in nature while ensuring we protect the wildlife, landscapes and communities that make these places so special.

How long has the countryside code been in existence?

The Countryside Code has been helping people enjoy the outdoors responsibly for 75 years. It was first introduced following the National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act 1949 and has evolved over time to reflect changes in how people use and enjoy the countryside. Most recently, the Code was refreshed in 2021 to make it more relevant, welcoming and inclusive for today's visitors.

The Countryside Code has had a lot of campaigns over the years. Do you have a favourite campaign character and why?

That's an easy one for me!! In 2023, we started working with Aardman and Shaun the Sheep on an engaging two-year partnership campaign to help bring the Countryside Code to life for families and young people.

Shaun is instantly recognisable, appeals to both children and adults, and has a special connection to the countryside. What made the partnership particularly successful was its ability to engage families and young people who may not otherwise come across Countryside Code messages. By using humour and storytelling, Shaun helped us make important messages about respecting nature, livestock and other people feel accessible and memorable.



How to behave in the countryside is not always obvious to people who have never been outside a city. Is there a compact guide people can use to find out more information?

Absolutely. The Countryside Code itself is designed to be a simple guide that anyone can follow.

At its heart, the Code is based on three key principles:

- Respect everyone
- Protect the environment
- Enjoy the outdoors

People can find the full Code at [The Countryside Code - GOV.UK](https://www.gov.uk/the-countryside-code) or visit the dedicated campaign website www.thecountrysidecode.org.uk, which provides practical advice, videos and downloadable resources.

There are also accessible formats available, and some resources have been translated into other languages to help reach wider audiences. As we continue to work with communities and partner organisations, we will continue exploring opportunities to make Countryside Code information available to meet the needs of different audiences.

How do you communicate the Countryside Code to young people?

We know that simply publishing guidance isn't enough, so we try to meet young people where they are.

This includes working with schools, youth organisations such as Scouts and Guides, classroom resource providers, outdoor learning groups and family-focused organisations.

Campaigns such as This Is My Code and our partnership with Shaun the Sheep have helped us introduce the Code to children and families in a more engaging way than traditional communications alone.

We're also learning from the Children's People and Nature Survey, which helps us understand how young people connect with nature and where we can improve awareness of responsible access messages.

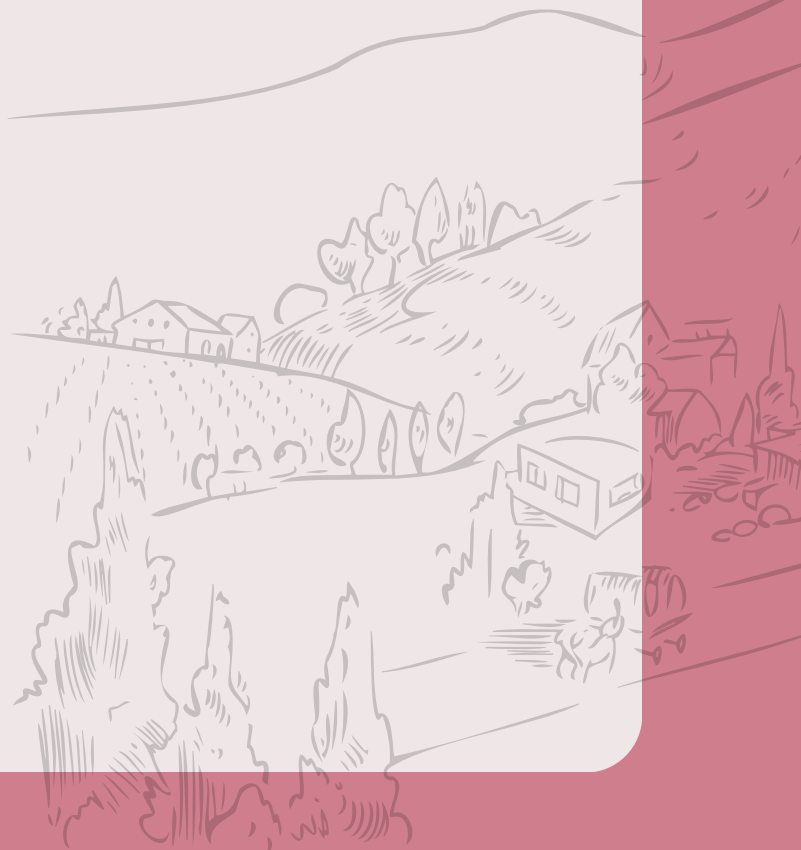
The way people visit the countryside has changed over time. Is there anything that has changed considerably over the past 30 years which has become a threat to the environment?

One of the biggest changes has been the sheer number of people accessing outdoor spaces, particularly since the pandemic. It's fantastic that more people are enjoying nature, but it has also increased pressures on some sites.

The issues we hear about most often include:

- Litter and fly-tipping.
- Disposable barbecues and wildfire risk.
- Dog fouling.
- Dogs disturbing wildlife or livestock.
- People leaving paths in sensitive habitats.
- Disturbance to ground-nesting birds and other wildlife.
- Increased pressure on popular sites during peak periods.

Most people don't intend to cause harm, which is why clear information and education through the Countryside Code remain so important. A small action by one person may seem insignificant, but when multiplied across thousands of visitors it can have a significant impact on nature and local communities.



Who would you tell if you felt someone was not following the Code, such as lighting a barbecue in a restricted area or not walking on a designated pathway?

It depends on the situation.

If there is an immediate risk to safety—for example a fire, wildfire risk or danger to people or animals—you should contact the relevant authorities, such as the fire service, land manager or emergency services if appropriate.

For less urgent issues, informing the site manager, ranger service, National Park authority, local authority or landowner can be helpful. Many protected sites, nature reserves and country parks have staff or volunteers who can provide advice and deal with problems appropriately.

It's important to remember that most people are simply unaware of the guidance rather than deliberately ignoring it. Where appropriate and safe to do so, a polite conversation can sometimes be enough to make someone aware of the issue and encourage them to do the right thing.

Find out more about the [countryside code](#)

Thank you Clare!

