

Peak District Local Access Forum

Date: 15 October 2025

Item: 9

Title: Access Update

Author: Sue Smith

Purpose of the Report

The purpose of the report is to provide an update on issues related to access in the Peak District.

Defra Access Funding

The funding for Year 4 of the programme has now been confirmed as £255.9k and projects are underway. This includes a focus on access to nature for all and for the delivery of accessible facilities and routes, information, and equipment to complement that.

Access Funding

The means by which donations can be given and funding raised for works to improve access is now delivered through the Peak District Foundation's Path and Trails Appeal. An update was provided to the Forum meeting in October 2024.

The Authority's Access Fund continues to receive income from the Miles without Stiles handbook sales and has funding ring-fenced for production of the next handbook, and enhancing accessibility at Mam Tor and Long Causeway. Its balance is £10.7k.

Monitoring

A randomised 5% survey of the rights of way network has provided a pass rate of 85.64% of footpaths and other rights of way in the National Park being easy to use. The survey included signposting, waymarking, condition of the path, structures, and obstructions and was undertaken by Rangers and Ranger volunteers using a field-based app.

Countryside Code

The response provided by the Forum to Natural England's stakeholder survey on a review of the Countryside Code is attached in Appendix 1.

Recommendation

- 1. That the report be noted.**

Appendix 1

 The logo for the Peak District Local Access Forum. It features a stylized green mountain range with a blue river winding through it, all contained within a circular frame. Below the circle is a green rectangular box with the text 'PEAK DISTRICT LOCAL ACCESS FORUM' in white capital letters.	Peak District Local Access Forum c/o Peak District National Park Authority Aldern House, Baslow Road, Bakewell Derbyshire DE45 1AE Email: PDLAF@peakdistrict.gov.uk
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Natural England – Countryside Code Consultation

By email consultations@naturalengland.org.uk

27 September 2025

Dear Natural England,

The Peak District Local Access Forum have asked me to respond on their behalf to the Countryside Code consultation, but the online form is not really appropriate for our feedback. I hope you can accept this response.

Our belief is that the code needs to have a significant change of emphasis, rather than just tweaking. The current code is too much about following rules, blindly, and also its a bit patronising when it purports to tell us how to enjoy the countryside - the whole focus is not really right, especially in 2025 when people are more questioning.

Our suggestion is that the first message should be

UNDERSTAND

If people understand WHY they should do certain things, they will be far more likely to try to comply. The suggestion is that the current strap line is replaced with something such as:

Understand - Share – Treasure

Understand - the countryside is a working environment, and if visitors understand that, and things such as the negative impact of dogs running free in sheep fields, or dog poo in a hay harvest, or the impact of litter etc, they are much more likely to try to follow the advice and rules.

Share - the countryside is for use by a whole variety of users, from farmers to walkers, from cyclists to canoeists. We need to focus on being good neighbours with other users etc.

Treasure - our countryside is a jewel in the UK crown - we need to treasure it and treat it as the precious thing it is. We should be proud of our countryside, with all its diverse uses and users, and we should look after it and improve it.

The above message would be far better to teach in schools, as its not based on rules to follow, but on appreciating our countryside. It would fit well with e.g. the forest school

approach. It could be taught by asking kids to eg role play and put themselves in the shoes of a farmer dealing with dogs chasing his sheep, a walker struggling over a bad stile, a mountain rescue team giving up their evening to rescue a numpty etc.

The Countryside Code is a long term project, getting the message across from childhood - we need the public to be brought up thinking of the countryside as a valued british institution, something to cherish, something to value, something to be proud of.

Most of the "detail" in the current code would still apply, but the emphasis would be different - more about encouraging understanding and instilling a love of our countryside in all its richness.

Kind regards,

Jeremy Kenyon
Peak District Local Access Forum