



Understanding the Countryside Code

Suggested time for activity 10 hours plus to complete all the activities

Location Indoors or outdoors

Context

These activities explain the purpose of the Countryside Code and how it has changed over time. They ask learners to consider their own views of the countryside and encourages them to consider and respect the opinions and beliefs of other users. Learners are then encouraged to consider the Countryside Code of the future.

Natural Resources Wales' purpose is to pursue sustainable management of natural resources in all of its work. This means looking after air, land, water, wildlife, plants and soil to improve Wales' well-being, and provide a better future for everyone.

Curriculum for Wales

Humanities

- **What matters** - Enquiry, exploration and investigation inspire curiosity about the world, its past, present and future.

- **What matters** - Events and human experiences are complex, and are perceived, interpreted and represented in different ways.

- **What matters** - Human societies are complex and diverse, and shaped by human actions and beliefs.

Languages, Literacy and Communication

- **What matters** - Expressing ourselves through languages is key to communication

- **What matters** - Literature fires imagination and inspires creativity

Mathematics and Numeracy

- **What matters** - The number system is used to represent and compare relationships between numbers and quantities.

Digital Competence Framework

Completing these activities provides opportunities to meet the following strands of the Digital Competence Framework.

Interacting and collaborating

- Communication
- Collaboration

Producing

- Sourcing, searching and planning digital content.
- Creating digital content



Objectives

Learners will be able to:

- Understand how people view the countryside.
- Consider conflicts between countryside users and identify possible solutions to ensure harmonious use of the countryside in Wales.
- Look at how the Code has been promoted over time and consider how it could be promoted in the future.
- Understand how and why people's use of the countryside has changed.
- Explain what The Countryside Code includes and understand in more detail The Land Managers Code and The Dog Walking Code.

Resources and equipment

No specialist equipment is needed as all activities are discussion based, however some IT packages may be useful for specific activities.

- [Information note - Understanding the Countryside Code](#)
- [PowerPoint - History of the Countryside Code](#)
- [Activity plan - Understanding the Countryside Code - How we can be responsible visitors](#)
- [Campaigning for nature - Running a social media campaign](#)
- [Information note - Walking dogs in the countryside](#)
- [Resource cards - Applying the Countryside Code role-play](#)
- [Natural Resources Wales / Delivering the Digital Competence Framework through nature](#)
- [Natural Resources Wales / Wildfires](#)
- [Countryside Code](#)
- [The Dog Walking Code](#)
- [The Land Managers Code](#)

Activity one - How well do your learners know the Code?

YouGov and The Ramblers conducted an online survey in March 2023 of 4,284 people across Britain to research into the benefits and barriers to visiting the countryside. It included a section about knowledge of the Countryside Code.

Overall, fewer than a third of respondents were confident of their knowledge of the Countryside Code (in England and Wales) or the Scottish Outdoor Access Code. The level of knowledge varied with age.

Age	Knowledge level
18-24	17%
25-34	16%
35-44	23%
45-54	29%
55+	39%



- a. Ask your learners to plot the data onto a bar chart. Can they explain what it shows and discuss their findings?
- b. Can they explain why the knowledge levels increase as a person gets older?
- c. Ask learners to estimate what % of under 18s had knowledge of the Countryside Code? Do they think it will be less than or higher than 18-24 year olds?
- d. Using our '[Campaigning for nature - Running a social media campaign](#)' resources, challenge your learners to plan a social media campaign to raise awareness of the Code in their setting or geographical area amongst under 18s.

Activity two - Collating people's views

- a. Ask learners to write down ten words that they associate with the countryside and then share with the group. This could also be done using collaboration apps such as Word Clouds or Collaborative Whiteboards. Which words occur most often? Are they positive or negative? Is there a pattern?
- b. Ask learners to carry out the same activity collating words from their parents or grandparents. Are the words the same or different? Why do your learners think people have different opinions of the countryside? What can influence how a person feels/thinks? Consider factors such as gender, age and experience.
- c. Working in small groups ask your learners to design a questionnaire to find out people's views about access to the countryside. Keep the questions simple to make it easy to analyse and ensure the types of question posed are varied. It is good practice to ask some 'closed' response questions to collect yes and no answers which can be collated and turned into numerical data and easily analysed. Such as *Do you enjoy visiting the countryside?* Yes or No. 'Open' response questions can gather opinions and thoughts from the respondent. An example being *What is it you enjoy about visiting the countryside?* This activity could be completed over several sessions and could go into more detail. For example, learners could focus on the different types of questions, examine questionnaire construction, analyse the data gathered and present their data. Each group should aim to get four to five responses. This could be done digitally using an app such as Google Forms or as a more traditional paper-based exercise. Responses can then be analysed and presented.

Activity three - Visitor conflicts and solutions

- a. This activity involves learners empathising or putting themselves in the shoes of another person. Building on from the previous activity, ask learners to explain their understanding of the word empathy. Learners could work in pairs to discuss the following:
 - Put yourself into the shoes of a land manager - what do you think the main issues are when managing people accessing the countryside? What solutions can you come up with? What can you do to communicate with other visitors how best to visit in a way that causes minimal conflict or harm?
 - Put yourself in the role of a trail user crossing farmland - what are the main issues faced while using the trails? How should you behave responsibly while using the trail?
 - Put yourself in the position of a Conservation Officer trying to protect rare habitats and species - what are the main issues you would need to manage regarding accessing the countryside? What solutions can you come up with? What can you do to communicate with other visitors how best to visit in a way that causes minimal conflict or harm to the rare habitats and species?
- b. Using a range of newspapers or digital news websites over one week, such as tabloid, broadsheet, local and national, ask learners to identify the issues that are facing people who live and work in the countryside. Can they find examples of harmony or conflict in the countryside?
- c. What are the current issues facing people who live and work in the countryside? In what ways does the Countryside Code reduce conflict between groups of people?



- d. Using the [Resource cards - Applying the Countryside Code](#) role-play, divide roles between learners. Working in groups if needed, hold a mock public meeting around the scenario. The meeting has been called by local landowners, who are concerned about potential problems visitors might cause. Can learners discuss the problems and come up with solutions and a way forward that suits all stakeholders?

Activity four - Promoting the Countryside Code

Use our [Information note - History of the Countryside Code](#) and the PowerPoint - History of the Countryside Code to complete some or all these tasks depending on age and ability. The presentation features posters and films of the Code from different eras.

Ask your learners to:

- Explain which is their favourite poster or film and which is their least favourite and provide reasons why.
- Decide which poster or film promotes the Code the best and share their reasons why.
- Describe how the vocabulary used in the Code has changed over time for example:
 - 1951 'Respect the life of the Countryside'
 - 2021 'Respect everyone'
 - Be considerate to those living in, working in and enjoying the countryside
 - Be nice, say hello, share the space
- Ask learners to suggest how the messages could be put across and to a wider audience. What techniques might be used in the future to raise awareness of the Countryside Code?

Activity five - How and why has people's use of the countryside changed?

- Using the additional data and statistics section (Page 8) of the [Information note - History of the Countryside Code](#) as a starting point, ask learners to consider how has the UK changed since the Code was first developed? Consider aspects such as population, wealth, living standards, car ownership, public transport, digital media and technological advances - all have had an impact on the general public's use of the countryside.
- Learners can then research and present how and why leisure activities have changed since the 1950s.
- Guide learners to identify if the issues that triggered the development of the Countryside Code are still relevant today?

Consider factors such as:

- UK population growth.
- New laws to protect landscape and wildlife, such as the 1981 Wildlife and Countryside Act and the 2000 Countryside and Rights of Way Act.
- Changes in interests and activity tastes.
- Technological developments have enabled electronic route finding, improved outdoor clothing and equipment.
- Active travel campaigns, encouraging people to use their cars less and walk and cycle more. Walking is increasing in popularity.
- The UK obesity crisis - what role does spending time in the outdoors play in helping to tackle the issue?
- Increased awareness of mental health issues and the role that spending time in the outdoors can play in helping to improve mental health.
- More awareness of the Equality Act 2010. Those with limited mobility have greater access to the countryside because the Act ensures all people must be able to access the countryside for leisure and recreation.



- The impact of the Covid pandemic. The lockdown restrictions reconnected many people with walking and highlighted the benefits of being outdoors as it was one of a few activities allowed outside the home.

Activity six - Walking dogs in the countryside

- a. Using the [Information note - Walking dogs in the countryside](#) along with [The Dog Walking Code](#) (an activity code that sits within The Countryside Code family) and additional research, ask learners to interview people about views on walking dogs in the countryside and write up their findings in the style of a newspaper article.
- b. Follow this by asking learners to design a poster or electronic image to encourage responsible dog walking or to debate some of the main points that [The Dog Walking Code](#) addresses.

Activity seven - The Code, land managers and landowners

Landowners and land managers oversee the day to day running, use and conservation of the land they are responsible for. They vary from private landowners who have footpaths crossing their gardens or land, tenant farmers who rent and work the land and paid employees who work for private estates ensuring they are running effectively and are profitable. Land can also be managed by charities such as the National Trust and organisations such as Natural Resources Wales who manage areas of countryside on behalf of the Welsh Government.

- a. The [Land Managers Code](#) provides advice for land managers to help visitors follow the Countryside Code and ensures they understand their rights and responsibilities. Ask your learners to investigate what land managers should be doing to ensure their land is accessible and safe.
- b. Is there anything your learners feel is missing from the Land Managers Code?
- c. Should the cost of maintaining and adhering to the Land Managers Code fall on land managers?
- d. Is it the land managers that need educating or the general public?
- e. Should it be up to farmers and land managers to decide what works best for their farm or land?
- f. Does the [Land Managers Code](#) unite rural communities and visitors by focusing on a shared appreciation of the countryside?
- g. Can people experience nature safely whilst supporting land managers and avoiding damage to property, livestock and examples of anti-social behaviour such as littering?

Activity eight - Regulating behaviour in the countryside

“We regard the Country Code as a core around which will grow a body of information about the countryside. As knowledge spreads, there should be much less damage often done by sheer thoughtlessness in well intentioned people. By all these means we hope there will be a deepening respect and friendliness between countryman and townsman”

Quote from the designers of the original Countryside Code, 1951

One member of the House of Lords described it as ‘the best four pennyworth of commonsense he had ever read’!

The Countryside Code is a form of soft regulation (guidance that encourages good behaviour rather than enforces it) although some elements are underpinned by legislation such as laws about fly-tipping and dog waste, and a farmer’s legal right to shoot dogs that are worrying sheep.

- a. Ask learners to work in groups and discuss if they think the pressure on the countryside is greater or less than it was when the Countryside Code was first introduced in 1951 and to give reasons for their opinion.
- b. Are there any issues that merit ‘harder’ regulation? What ‘harder’ alternatives could there be, or do we need to think differently about tactics to encourage behaviour change? Do your learners think these would work / could be enforced?



For example

- People who drop litter can be fined or face prosecution in court. Authorised officers have the power to issue a fixed penalty charge of up to £150 for a litter offence, as an alternative to prosecution. If the offender is prosecuted and convicted in court, the fine could rise to £2,500 (Keep Britain Tidy).
 - Deliberate fire setting is a crime. It is against the law and can result in life imprisonment. This criminal act is known as arson. Section 4 Criminal Damage Act 1971 sets out a maximum penalty of life imprisonment for aggravated arson. (Natural Resources Wales).
- c. Ask your learners to share their thoughts/raise awareness through a social media campaign or enviro vlog using these resources [Natural Resources Wales / Delivering the Digital Competence Framework through nature](#)

For more resources on Wildfire see here: [Natural Resources Wales / Wildfires](#)

Activity nine - The future of the Code

The Countryside Code will continue to evolve to fit the changing population.

- a. Using our [Information note - History of the Countryside Code](#) and the [PowerPoint- History of the Countryside Code](#) learners can look back on some of the past promotional videos and posters.
- b. Brainstorm with learners what the Countryside Code of 2051 should look like.
- c. Then ask learners to design a graphic, poster or video to accompany its promotion.

Suggested key questions

- What do people think and feel about the countryside and why does this vary?
- How and why has the Countryside Code changed over time?
- How has the Countryside Code been promoted over time and why have these methods changed?
- What does today's Countryside Code aim to do and how should the code change in the future?

Adapting for different needs/abilities

More support

- Use [Information note - History of the Countryside Code](#) and the [PowerPoint - History of the Countryside Code](#) as the main teaching resource to discuss with learners how and why the Code has changed over time.
- Omit activities 6, 8 and 9.

More challenge

- Consider some of the negative behaviour people might show in the countryside such as dropping litter, lighting BBQ's or fires and straying off the path. Why might visitors do these things? Consider what does or could work to prevent visitors to the countryside from carrying out these activities.
- Debate whether everyone can enjoy the natural world in harmony with wildlife, the environment and the people who work within it?



Follow up activity/extension

- Encourage learners to watch TV programmes that have a countryside focus such as Countryfile, Ffermio, Springwatch, Coast and Countryside, Down on the Farm, Ranger Hamza's Eco Quest, Kim a Côt a Twrch, Cefn Gwlad or Ein byd bach ni. What can they learn about the countryside today from watching these programmes?
- Is there an activity not covered by the Countryside Code Family? Ask learners to design their own Code for an activity not covered.
- Research Countryside Code equivalents that other countries have and compare and contrast with the Countryside Code of England and Wales.

Other resources

Natural Resources Wales (NRW) is responsible for content affiliated to their own accounts. However, it should be noted that NRW is not responsible for the content, standard or reliability of all of the websites or resources linked in this activity plan.

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Ramblers Cymru: [Ramblers Cymru - Ramblers](#)

Country Land and Business Association: [cla.org.uk](#)

NFU Cymru: [nfu-cymru.org.uk](#)

Farmers Union of Wales: [fuw.org.uk](#)

Learning in, learning about, and learning for the natural environment.

Looking for more learning resources, information and data?

Please contact: education@naturalresourceswales.gov.uk or go to <https://naturalresources.wales/learning>

Alternative format; large print or another language, please contact: enquiries@naturalresourceswales.gov.uk 0300 065 3000

