Writing Positively About Access in Scotland
The Publication Checklist explained

Use in association with
- The Publication Checklist
- Using the Set Texts
- The Scottish Outdoor Access Code Brand Identity Guidelines

KNOW THE CODE
BEFORE YOU GO

outdooraccess-scotland.com

SCOTTISH
OUTDOOR ACCESS CODE

Contents

This publication explains the '<u>Publication Checklist</u>' in detail.

Since February 2005, Scotland has had some of the most progressive access legislation in Europe. The Land Reform (Scotland) Act 2003 Part 1 introduced a legal right of responsible access to the outdoors in Scotland and as a result, Scottish Natural Heritage were charged with developing the Scottish Outdoor Access Code. After the biggest public consultation undertaken by the organisation, the Scottish Outdoor Access Code (the Access Code) was written and produced. It details where and when access rights can be exercised as well as giving comprehensive guidance on what the rights and responsibilities are. Details of Access publications can be found at outdooraccess-scotland.com

This formalising of Scottish access arrangements has introduced the need for everyone to review and bring up to date any existing or new access-related products. Accurate representation of the content of the Access Code and in addition writing in the spirit of the Code, are key.

Who are these guidelines for?
They are aimed at anyone who's planning, writing or promoting anything which involves someone using their access rights in the outdoors in Scotland.

What do they apply to?
• Publications (leaflets, editorial articles, maps, books, travel guides etc)
• Websites
• Interpretive panels
• Information boards that include clear Scottish Outdoor Access Code behavioural messages
• Presentations
• Advertising
• Events
• Promotional merchandise

Remember that Scotland's access legislation is different to that of England and Wales.

Writing Positively about Access in Scotland

1. Does the whole leaflet or product accurately represent the content of the Scottish Outdoor Access Code?

a. Quoting from the Code and access writing tips

ACTION	COMMENTS
Do quote from the Code	The Code was written after a huge public consultation and so has been closely considered already by many people. We recommend not re-inventing the wheel, but using direct quotes from the text. This means the public will be receiving consistent information and terminology.
Do reference a quote	It may be useful to say that a quote is taken from the Scottish Outdoor Access Code – give the part number, page and paragraph reference number. This may also encourage users to delve into further content.
Don't change the meaning	Be careful not to change the meaning of a quote inadvertently or to take it out of context, by, for example, taking just a sentence rather than a whole paragraph of text. If in doubt, consult your local SNH access contact.
Repeat phrases and use consistent terminology	Repeating phrases and being consistent with language will help reinforce messages and create familiarity that should be more easily remembered. You could consider using one of the set texts – find examples in 'Using the set texts' document.

b. Is it written positively and in the spirit of the access legislation?

ACTION	COMMENTS
Be positive	Use positive words and phrases and focus on the good and positive rather than negative things. **Eg.** "Do not pick the flowers" would be better written "Please leave the flowers for others to enjoy".
Got a negative?	If there is something negative to say, try to balance it with a positive, present it as neutral information or leave it out if it's not necessary! **Eg.** • Part of the route is in need of resurfacing (negative) but we have applied for funding and hope to achieve this in the near future (positive). • Giving a route description is factual information. Users can use it to make an assessment before they set off as to whether their capabilities match the route. • Be honest! If a route is prone to flooding or gets extremely muddy, then explain this and say what is being done about it, if anything. You could also: mark the areas on the route map; suggest an alternative route for use after periods of heavy rain; suggest sturdy footwear; tell people to look out for temporary signage showing an alternative route etc.

Writing Positively about Access in Scotland

ACTION	COMMENTS
Writing for a specific audience – set the scene	Where a publication is aimed at a particular user group, eg. walkers or cyclists, SNH recommend that an introductory paragraph at the beginning of the publication giving an explanation of the Scottish Outdoor Access Code and who it applies to is a good idea. It should indicate that other users should be expected on the route.
No to Footpaths!	• Don't use the word 'footpath' as it implies it's only relevant for people on foot. • Use instead words like 'path', 'route', 'way' and 'trail' to be more inclusive of other users now allowed under the new access legislation.
Who is the route for? Distinguish between the route and the activity	Things become tricky if you start trying to pre-empt how someone might travel along a route. You might want to be inclusive, but by singling out one user group against another you could unwittingly be excluding them. **Eg.** • In a booklet of ten routes, two of them have been highlighted as being suitable for pushchairs because of the great tarmac surfacing. Does this then lead the pushchair user to consider that the other eight routes aren't suitable for pushchairs because it doesn't say? And if so, is this just because the surfacing isn't tarmac, or because there are steps or for some other reason? See how easy it is to run in to problems! By giving a description of the route (or by providing contact details for the ranger service or access officer in the area who would know more information) people have the opportunity to make their own judgment as to whether the route is suitable for themselves or not. The alternative might lead to having to list all the different users who you think the route is suitable for, but even in each category of users there will be vastly differing abilities and levels of fitness.
Walk, cycle, ride – be inclusive	• If talking about a **physical route** on the ground that's suitable for multiple users (eg. walkers, cyclists, horse riders), terminology should be as inclusive and general as possible. Use words like 'follow', 'continue' or 'go along' rather than more specific terms like 'walk along' which wouldn't be appropriate if you were on a bike. • If writing specifically for an **activity or user group**, eg. walking or walkers, then phrases like "you can spread the walk over five days" or "walking the route can take between three and five days …" or you don't need to be an experienced long distance walker …" etc. are appropriate. Make text more inclusive and personal by: **Eg.** • Changing 'Walkers rights and responsibilities' to 'Your rights and responsibilities …' • Changing "In winter hikers escape flying pests …" can be amended to "In winter there are fewer flying pests …"

Writing Positively about Access in Scotland

ACTION	COMMENTS
Naming your route	Route names should be considered. It should be easy if the route is new and a new name is being chosen – choose a neutral name that doesn't indicate a preference for the type of user, eg. "High mountain trail" or "Circular river route". For existing names such as "River Walk" and "Forest Bike Route", these are now out of date and should be considered to be re-named if the opportunity arises, for example to a more neutral "River Trail" or "Forest Route" so that the name doesn't indicate it's for use by one particular user or another.
Plain English	It's good to keep language simple and avoid jargon – unless there's a special reason for not doing this or specialist words or jargon are explained or fulfil a specific purpose. More information is available from the Plain English Campaign at plainenglish.co.uk

Acronyms	SSSI, NNR, SAC. Will your reader know the abbreviation? Write them out in full at least once, eg.
	• Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI)
	• National Nature Reserve (NNR)
	• Special Area of Conservation (SAC)
	  or Scottish Agricultural College (SAC)
	  or Scottish Arts Council (SAC)

Reference other Codes of conduct and other information sources	It's good to refer to other local leaflets or information sources developed for specific user groups, such as: • Dog walkers (produced by SNH) • Off-road cycling (produced by Scottish Cycling) • Horse riding (produced by the British Horse Society Scotland) • Canoeing (produced by the Scottish Canoe Association) • Hillphones (produced by SNH) gives advice about hillwalking and stalking More details provided on outdooraccess-scotland.com
Information for groups	You might want to raise awareness of the risk of cumulative impact in popular or fragile areas.
Credit your partners!	Credit your partners! It's positive to: • Make people aware if you've worked in a partnership. On a site with problems, such as say, unwanted motorbike use, promoting the fact you've been working with the local scrambling club to reach agreements could provide valuable peer pressure to help combat problems. • Say who your funders were – for money or work in kind.

Writing Positively about Access in Scotland

Land Reform (Scotland) Act 2003 See also, the right of responsible access	• The new legislation is the Land Reform (Scotland) Act 2003. It can subsequently be called 'the Act'. • An introductory text could be: "In February 2005, the Land Reform (Scotland) Act 2003 came into effect and gave Scotland some of the most progressive access legislation in Europe, giving everyone a statutory right of responsible access to most land and inland water."
Scottish Outdoor Access Code or the Access Code or the Code	• When referring to the "Scottish Outdoor Access Code", write it in full the first time you use it, followed by 'the Access Code' or 'the Code' in brackets. Subsequent mention can then be simply 'the Access Code' or 'the Code'. • Always use initial capitals – Scottish Outdoor Access Code, the Access Code or the Code. • For a **general public** audience, SNH does not usually use the acronym "SOAC" – it has far more meaning to use the full name "Scottish Outdoor Access Code". • **What is the Scottish Outdoor Access Code?** It's a guidance document giving detailed advice on the responsibilities of people exercising access rights and of those managing land and water. It provides a practical guide to help everyone make informed decisions about what best to do in every day situations and provides the starting point for short promotional codes and more detailed advice.
No to the Country Code!	• The 'Country Code' has been replaced in Scotland by the 'Scottish Outdoor Access Code', ie. the Country Code no longer exists in Scotland. Please update any existing information by removing references to the Country Code and replacing with information on the Scottish Outdoor Access Code. • The Country Code no longer exists in England and Wales either. Their new guidance is called the 'Countryside Code'. Find out more from • England: countrysideaccess.gov.uk/things_to_know/countryside_code • Wales: codcefngwlad.org.uk
The Right to Roam and talking historically	In Scotland there has been a longstanding tradition of access on hill ground and this led to a general presumption that people were free to be there – provided they respected others' interests. This tradition became what people refer to as the Right to Roam but this was never a statutory right, ie. recognised by law. Access to the high hills was generally unrestricted, although limitations existed on some of the lower hills in central Scotland. Provision for access on low ground near where most people lived was poor and was why there was a need for a new legislative approach. The emphasis of the new statutory right of responsible access brought in by the Land Reform (Scotland) Act 2003 is on **how** rather than on **where** people exercise their access rights. This emphasis can be seen in the content of the Scottish Outdoor Access Code.

Writing Positively about Access in Scotland

RECOMMENDED TERMINOLOGY AND PHRASES

The right of responsible access – suggested terminology	• The Land Reform (Scotland) Act 2003 gives people the right of responsible access to most land and inland water in Scotland. • Everyone in Scotland has the right to be on most land and inland water providing they act responsibly.
Dogs	• For general wording in relation to dogs please use "keep your dog under **proper control**". • If text refers to a specific location or situation as is highlighted in the Code (eg. in fields of cows or horses, or areas of ground nesting birds), then use "**on a short lead or under close control**". If there's room it's good to use the whole appropriate sentence from the Access Code. • The leaflet "What the Scottish Outdoor Access Code means for dog owners" contains a definition of 'close control': "'Under close control' means that your dog responds to your commands and is kept close at heel. If he can lie down or return to you on command, your dog would then be under close control. If you're not sure that your dog can do this, the responsible thing is to keep him on a short lead."
Fires / Lighting fires	• Guard against all risk of fire. • Guard against fire. • Or if more space, some version or exact text from the Code including "remove all traces of an open fire". • The message on publicity in summer 2007 reads "Do you need an open fire? Use a stove or leave no trace of any camp fire. Never cut down or damage trees".
Litter	"[Please] Take your litter away with you" or "[Please] take away all your litter".

1.c. Does the leaflet give a balanced view showing the rights and responsibilities of both the public and land managers?

Give a balanced view	It's important that everyone understands that both the public and land managers have rights and responsibilities under the new access legislation. If a member of the public or a land manager comes across a problem in the countryside they need to know that a good starting point for getting it sorted out is the Access Code. Using the set texts endorsed by the National Access Forum (see 'Using the set texts') present this balanced view which is why it is requested that they are not edited or amended.

Writing Positively about Access in Scotland

2. Is it written by the most appropriate organisation or group with consultation with other interested parties where appropriate?	• Site specific or location based publications, eg. codes of good practice for a particular site should be arrived at through local consultation with relevant local groups. For example, a leaflet on a local woodland might have input from local residents, the local wildlife group, the local authority ranger service. • Activity-specific and national-specific products should include appropriate national consultation.
3. Are contact details provided so people can get in touch to give feedback or order more copies of leaflets?	• Details could be for the author or publisher of the leaflet or for someone who might manage the routes, such as the local authority Access Officer or Ranger Service. Details could include a website or email address, telephone number, postal address etc.
4. Do photographs or illustrations represent positive images of access?	• Choose photos or illustrations that show the positive aspects of access (unless there's a special reason not to!). • Showing photos of people using the resource responsibly in the photo is also encouraging and positive.

5. Does the product contain usable maps and meaningful route descriptions and distances?	Features to consider:
	• **Maps** – it's good practice to include a north point. Give explanations for all lines and colours in the key and have a meaningful scale? Consideration should also be given to colour schemes and waymarking (on the map and on the ground). Consider for example that approximately 1 in 12 men in the UK find it difficult to distinguish between the colours red and green.
	• **Orientation** – think about any map you may be producing and how it will be used. It's usually helpful to site an interpretive panel with a map in the same orientation as the site (making sure North is clearly marked). Getting a map panel the wrong way round in situ can make navigating from it very difficult for some people.
	• **Route descriptions** – The access legislation puts the responsibility on the person taking the recreation to decide whether they are being responsible or not by using a particular route. By giving a route description, a person can make an initial assessment as to whether they think it may or may not be suitable for their use. You could include for example, information on:
	  • **Surfacing**: eg. tarmac, unsurfaced woodland path, grass, etc.
	  • **Gradient**: eg. flat, undulating, steep (more technical descriptions, such as 1 in 5 (1:5 or show the gradient in a diagram and 'up' or 'down' may be appropriate information for someone in a motorised wheelchair).
	  • **Location**: eg. steep, unfenced cliffs, river bank, exposed moorland.
	  • **Obstacles**: eg. steps, narrow bridges, single file paths, kissing gates, stiles.
	Clarify statements with reasoning (positive or negative) such as "route has gates with bolts that can be opened from your horse", etc. Make it as positive as possible and not just a list of obstacles!

Writing Positively about Access in Scotland

- **Distances and times** – you might want to consider who your product is aimed at and whether it would be useful to have both imperial (miles and yards) or metric (kilometres and metres) distances (consider older adults and children).

  Be clear about whether a distance given is for a one way or return journey for a linear route, or perhaps mention that the route is circular.

  Some people also like to give an approximation of how long it might take to complete a route, say for walking, but with the new access legislation applying to a wider audience, this may not be so useful, unless, for example the time is stated is as being applicable to walkers. This also doesn't take into account the different speeds that people walk at, or how many stops they may make along the way, so it may be useful to give both a distance and an approximate time.

- **Route waymarking** – beware of what waymarkers will look like in situ. In the majority of cases, the use of symbols to prohibit specific modes of access will not be compliant with the Land Reform (Scotland) Act and the use of prohibition signs (red circle with red diagonal slash) cannot be used. (See "Advisory Signage for Outdoor Access, Good practice Principles" 11pp, 2007). It's available on the Paths For All website pathsforall.org.uk – search for "signage manual".

6. Is it important for the publication to state that access legislation in Scotland is different to England and Wales?	• Consider who the target audience is for your product or publication – are they local people or tourists from England, Wales or further abroad? If they are tourists then it's probably very important that they know Scotland has different access legislation. • Scottish Natural Heritage use the phrase "Remember, access law in Scotland is different to that in England and Wales" on promotional material.
7. Have you included one of the set text examples or the Branding Strip and the three key principles in an editorial context?	One of the easiest ways to represent the Access Code in a publication is to use one of the 'Set Texts'. However, if you're writing an editorial article and incorporate the three key principles into the article, then you may use the branding strip on its own to support the article. The three key principles can be found on pages 1 and 2 of the Scottish Outdoor Access Code (find it at outdooraccess-scotland.com), they are: • Take responsibility for your own actions • Respect the interests of other people • Care for the environment

8. Project Planning

Before deciding to produce any access-related product, consider whether you REALLY need it. You should be clear about what the benefits of producing the product will be and for whom – what is the justification and how will you evaluate it?

Have you got the right product for the right purpose with the right content?

a. The right product?

You might already have an idea of what it is that you want to produce and
what it's for, but consider starting with some planning and researching as it might:
- clarify that you don't really need the product
- enhance and improve your initial plans
- be a springboard to a different, more appropriate or innovative idea altogether.

b. Use research to find the right purpose and content

The project aims and objectives should help guide the written content of your product and the results of background research should provide additional material or direction. **"Promoting Paths for People – a marketing guide and toolkit"** Paths for All Partnership – pathsforall.org.uk – is a great resource taking a marketing approach to researching your audiences and their needs and wants, looking at promotion, taking action and evaluation and it can be applied to a variety of topics. Initially, consideration should be given to:
- Who is our target audience and what do we know about them? (what is their age, sex, mobility, interests, where do they come from and why and how do they travel, are they currently visitors of ours or do we need to research the wider general public to try and recruit new visitors etc).
- What information do they need/want (balanced with what you'd like to tell them) – opening times, car parking, map of the area, travel information, is there a café, any scientific information, do you want to interpret a route or landscape or give some historical information?
- What will they use the product for – information before they arrive, navigation on site, a quiz to fill in?
- What format should this be in – leaflet, book, information sheet, CD, teacher's pack, novelty merchandise, etc?
- Translations – might you require any copies in different languages, or do you want to promote staff with special skills such as those who can speak foreign languages or who are specially trained in disability awareness, sign language, etc?

A **Project Action Plan** should include what's in the table below.

Background	How did we get to this point?
Aims	What do we want the project to really achieve?
Objectives	These should be SMART (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic and Time specific).
Evaluation	How will we measure whether we've met the objectives (above) – ie. has the project been a success?
Target audiences	Who is the project or product for?
Key messages	What are the key things we want to say to each of the target audiences?
Communication channels	How will we communicate the key messages to the target audiences?
Time planning	Draw up a list of deadlines in the order they need to happen.
Budget	How much money we have to spend and what will we spend it on?

Other considerations

c. The purpose should influence the written content

Will your product communicate information **and** interpretation? Consider when people need certain information, before they visit or once they've arrived? This may influence what type of product you need.

Information presents a series of facts. These could be opening times, prices, car parking and public transport information, toilet and café facilities, mobile phone reception in the area, access to buildings and information on route surfaces and gradients etc.

A lot of this could be supplied in a simple flyer as 'pre-visit information' for visitors and widely distributed. Reference could be made to a much more detailed on-line resource, or to staff who could provide detailed information, for anyone needing further information or advice. For a disabled visitor, this type of information can be indispensible when planning a journey or visit. For example, there is no 'standard' design for a disabled toilet facility in the UK and every site is likely to have different facilities and layout. Therefore, providing a floor plan with dimensions would be very positive so that an individual can make a judgement as to the suitability for their own requirement.

Information can also include any behavioural messages that you want to tell people. They could include short term, seasonal or site specific messages. For example:

- Please don't take your dog into a field where there are lambs, calves or other young animals,
- Take care, this is an important wildlife breeding site from **[insert date]** to **[insert date]**. Dogs running free can disturb breeding wildlife and their young. Please keep dogs on a short lead or under close control. Don't linger if you're causing alarm to wildlife. Thank you.
- Please take care. The seals around the island can be dangerous if approached, its cliffs and steep slopes are unfenced and its viewpoints take you right to the edge!

Giving positive behavioural information at the start of a trail or on a pre-visit leaflet can help people plan their trip and make an informed decision about whether they want to visit that site at that time of the year.

Interpretation should aim to increase people's understanding and enjoyment in relation to some aspect of the world around them. Aim to inspire and tell a story . . .

Further information and a bibliography on planning and writing for interpretation can be found at: snh.org.uk/wwo/Interpretation/default.html

9. Disability and working towards 'least restrictive access'

Did you know that at any one time, around 20% of the UK population are disabled or have a long-term illness (approximately 12 million people)? If you include other 'less-able' people such as temporarily disabled people, those with a medical condition, older people, pregnant women, etc this amounts to nearly half of the population at any one time.

a. The legislation
The Disability Discrimination Act of 1995 and the Disability Equality Duty of 2005 aim to ensure that disabled people are treated in a fair and equal way. The Disability Equality Duty puts a legal duty on all public sector organisations to promote equality of opportunity for disabled people.

b. Disability legislation and the outdoors
It is likely that all countryside services will fall within the legislation in terms of walks, events, programmes, paths and information. For example, land managers are likely to be 'service providers' if they actively promote paths or specific functions such as mountain biking, horse riding, gymkhanas, fishing, etc.

If you have public funding or are already a public body then you will definitely have a requirement. If you are contracting with a public body you will have an obligation to that public body's Disability Equality Scheme.

c. Guidelines, standards and good practice
To 'comply' with the DDA, services and facilities must meet current codes of good practice. There are regulations for the built environment but not the countryside apart from BS5709 for gaps, gates and stiles. Scottish Natural Heritage is aiming to meet the **BT Countryside for All Good Practice Guide** standards. Find them on the Fieldfare Trust website: fieldfare.org.uk

When sites or services are unable to reach the BT Countryside for All standards in the 'wider countryside' for example, the **principle of least restrictive access** is a useful approach. This principle emphasises the need to ensure that practical works on sites and service provision should restrict the access of a minimum number of people. In other words facilities should be provided which have the highest possible standard of accessibility.

d. Providing Information and interpretation
You may find it useful to assess what the key experiences are for your site or routes for different visitors and look for ways to publicise this information and make the key experiences possible. This is a different approach from the traditional 'What can we do for disabled people' way of thinking. There is a need to balance what is 'appropriate' for each site, facility or service according to a range of factors such as: likely demand, site sensitivity including its ability to cope with visitors, feasibility and local and regional context.

Further information can be found at:
Legislation dotheduty.org and equalityhumanrights.com

Planning pre-visit Information for disabled visitors
"By all Reasonable means: Inclusive access to the outdoors for disabled people" sensorytrust.org.uk

Interpretation snh.org.uk/wwo/Interpretation/pdf/access.pdf

10. Design Basics

What size, shape and colour will your product be and what will it be made of? Is it available in large print and clearly laid out?

Any product should consider good design. Having a well-designed product should increase the enjoyment of visitors who take access to your site or routes. For a heavily used site, it would be reasonable for an organisation to produce information in a variety of different formats to communicate to different users. These might be a standard leaflet, the leaflet printed in large print (14 point or above), making the text available in large print, or on audio or in Braille, etc. It is unlikely to be reasonable to expect a small community group to do the same for a less used site.

However, it is reasonable to expect the text of leaflets to be accessible.

Visit rnib.org.uk and click on the "Good design" tab.

DESIGN TOPIC BASICS	GUIDELINE
Font style	Open and clear, no italics or 'serifs'.
Recommended fonts	SNH recommend using Futura or Arial.
Font size	Preferably 12 point, based on fonts similar to those mentioned above. Further information on large print is given below.
Text over pictures	Generally not advised. People with a visual impairment find it much easier to read text on a plain background. Text over pictures also creates problems if used on the internet as it confuses screen readers (equipment used by visually impaired people to read text on the internet screen).
Consider the location	If your product is going to be outside, consider what would be the most appropriate colour. Do you want it to blend in with the environment or to attract attention?
Colours	Most people who are colour blind cannot distinguish between red and green – colours that are commonly used on waymarkers and route maps.
Colour contrast	Should be high – ie. black on white or yellow.
Pictures and diagrams	Should be clear and simple.
Bike treads, bicycles, boot prints, horses hoof prints as design ideas or symbols	Using single symbols or icons can be ambiguous to other users – unless the leaflet, for example, is designed for a particular user group. For general leaflets for a range of users, it would be appropriate to include a range of symbols or graphic design ideas, though even this approach could be seen to exclude some users, eg. those with pushchairs or wheelchairs or those with different abilities.
White space	When setting out the product, make sure there's lots of 'white space' so that it looks clear and uncluttered.
Create impact	Consider highlighting important information or grouping it together to give it more impact.

Large print	Large print is recommended at a font size of 14 or above. It may be acceptable to provide information in large print in an undesigned format, plain text on a plain background in addition to a designed leaflet. If a standard leaflet is available in large print it should say so on it – in large print! Providing the large print copy could be as easy as printing off individual copies on a request basis.
Displaying a leaflet – 'racking' requirements	Think about what will be visible on a leaflet if it will be displayed in a rack. For example, you will probably want to have the title at the top.
Recommended links to further information	RNIB – rnib.org.uk BT Countryside for All – fieldfare.org.uk

Bibliography

"Active Travel – how to produce active travel directions for your visitors and staff", Sustrans, 2006 (12pp)
sustrans.org.uk