

# Open Access

*Your new rights to countryside access in the Leeds area*



The new Open Access rights came into effect in the Leeds area on Monday 31st October 2005.

You can now visit several areas of open countryside on foot where the public were not allowed before. Much of this land is recognised for its wildlife and landscape value, and while we hope that you enjoy your visit, we expect you to treat all of these places with care and respect.

With your new rights also come responsibilities – this leaflet gives a brief summary of the rules and regulations about open access and how it affects you.

## What is 'open access'?

---

As of October 31st 2005, the public now have greater access to natural areas in and around Leeds. Under the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000, people will have access on foot to designated access land throughout the area. You have the 'right to roam' wherever you please over these areas of land.

Access land includes registered common land, open country (land wholly or mainly made up of mountain, moor, heath or down) and any other land voluntarily dedicated by its owner for permanent access. You will see the symbol above if you are on or entering access land.









You will be able to see which areas you now have access to on maps produced by the Countryside Agency. These are available on their website ([www.countrysideaccess.gov.uk](http://www.countrysideaccess.gov.uk)), alongside further information about open access.

## Excepted land

---

Certain areas will remain unaffected by the new access rights even if they are shown as access land on the new maps. This excepted land will be shown by the access symbol with a line through it, and includes:



-  Land ploughed or drilled during the past year to grow crops or trees
-  Buildings and any enclosed areas around them, such as gardens and farmyards
-  Livestock pens
-  Land within 20 metres of a house, or a building used for housing livestock.
-  Active quarries and mineral workings
-  Railways, airfields and structures such as substations and masts
-  Golf courses and racecourses
-  Land where military bylaws apply

## Conservation

---

Much of the land that you will have access to under the new rules has great importance for wildlife and landscape conservation. Please treat all wildlife habitats and landscape features with respect – behave responsibly and follow the Countryside Code.

## What can I do on access land?







---

Greater access rights for the public should be able to happily coexist with nature conservation. With your new rights to access on foot you can enjoy activities like walking, running, sightseeing, birdwatching, and picnicking, all of which have minimal impact on the countryside.

## What can't I do on access land?

---

Certain activities are not included in the new access rights, such as:

-  Horseriding, cycling or driving any vehicle
-  Organised games or commercial activities
-  Bringing any animal other than a dog onto access land
-  Camping
-  Removing stones, fallen wood or plants from the area
-  Swimming, boating, windsurfing, hanggliding and paragliding

## Dogs on access land

---

Although you will usually be allowed to walk dogs on access land there are certain limitations that you will need to be aware of. Your dog must be kept on a fixed lead no more than 2 metres long when you take it onto access land between 1st March and 31st July, and at any time near livestock. This will minimise any disturbance to livestock and ground-nesting birds during the main breeding season.

## Local access restrictions

---

Landowners will be able to restrict the use of the new access rights on any area of land for up to 28 days each year, but not on public or bank holidays or most weekends. They will have to give advance notice, but it is a good idea to check access restrictions before you set out on your walk (see [www.countrysideaccess.gov.uk](http://www.countrysideaccess.gov.uk) for details, or ask at your local tourist information office).

## Safety

---

Access land is not necessarily safe and you will be expected to take care of yourself and any children or dogs that you take with you. The landowner will not be liable if you are injured by natural features such as uneven ground, or have an accident in reservoirs or streams, or climbing over a wall or fence. However, if you find that a stile or gate is unsafe, or that the landowner's activities are deliberately or recklessly putting you at risk, you should contact Leeds City Council.