

Joint response by the Derby and Derbyshire LAF and the Peak District LAF to the consultation by Natural England on the review of the Countryside Code:

The Derby and Derbyshire LAF and the Peak District LAF have been supporting Derbyshire County Council and the Peak District National Park Authority over the past year by providing advice on setting up Codes of Conduct to encourage responsible use of paths and trails in Derbyshire and across the Peak District National Park. This contributes to the delivery of the County Council's Rights of Way Improvement Plan and the National Park's Recreation Strategy. The joint sub group that was set up felt that the Countryside Code should underpin all of this work and therefore the two LAFs have welcomed the opportunity to comment on the review of the Countryside Code due to its relevance to the current work programme.

General comments:

- The LAF members felt that the language should be positive and that, where possible, the Code should avoid language that was too prescriptive or negative.
- There was concern that there was a fair degree of repetition of specific messages throughout the two versions and that several of the bullet points could be amalgamated – specific suggestions have been made.
- There was no guidance beyond the reference to the full explanation being on the website as to the presentation of the Code in terms of format, graphics, types of medium to be used etc. The LAF members feel this to be almost as important as the wording and urges Natural England to consider this carefully, particularly in view of the target audience (some members without a younger family were put off by the use of cartoon characters last time, others felt it gave a good message to young people).
- There are several references to reporting problems/contacting the local authority but most people would not know which local authority to contact. It was accepted that this was a difficult one to cover but the website might be able to offer a fuller explanation about contacting the relevant highway authority.

Overall messages:

- With the use of positive language in mind there was a suggestion that the order of the 3 pronged messages could be reversed to start with the "Enjoy" message.
- Within the "Enjoy" message it was felt that the wording after "plan ahead" was not needed and gave a slightly strange message

- It was felt that the sustainable transport message was lost within the respect section and could be pulled out and covered separately at the end of the document
- The LAF members welcomed the move to provide a fuller explanation for dog owners over what constitutes effective control and the potential dangers of having dogs on leads with cows and calves

Specific messages/comments:

- The two versions are attached with annotated comments and suggested changes
- Short version – there is a degree of repetition in the bullet points and LAF members consider that there is only a need for a single bullet point under each section
- Long version - In the bullet point within the 'Protect' section relating to litter and leftover food, the point was made that often food items such as orange peel and banana skins are left in the mistaken belief that they are easily biodegradable. To avoid getting into too much detail it was suggested that this message could be conveyed by means of an illustration/cartoon which included these items being in a litter bin.
- Long version - within the bullet about signage under the Enjoy section, the information only relates to definitive public rights of way and national trails. There are many other long distance routes and paths, some definitive and some permissive with their own sets of signs and the message is still the same about looking out for and following the signs. We have suggested a form of wording that reflects that there are a range of signs/waymarks to look for.

Peak District Local Access Forum
 Derby and Derbyshire Local Access Forum
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