



SCOTTISH CANOE ASSOCIATION

Paddlers' Access Code

- Access Advice for Paddlers in Scotland -

Paddlers' Access Code

The Land Reform (Scotland) Act provides a statutory right of access to most land and inland water. Access rights come with responsibilities and the Scottish Outdoor Access Code explains how access rights should be exercised in a responsible manner.

With the Act and Code now in place, Scotland has a framework for access that is amongst the best in Europe, and a vital part of that framework is a much greater emphasis on helping people to understand their rights and responsibilities.

This leaflet sets out to help paddlers understand the parts of the Scottish Outdoor Access Code that are most relevant to canoeing and explains how you can best enjoy your statutory rights of access by paddling responsibly.

The full version of the Scottish Outdoor Access Code can be obtained from the Scottish Natural Heritage Publications Department on 01738 458 545, or pubs@snh.gov.uk or at: www.outdooraccess-scotland.com.

Key Principles

As paddlers, your main responsibilities are to:

- *care for the environment;*
- *take responsibility for your own actions;*
- *respect the interests of other people.*

These key principles apply equally to paddlers, anglers, other water users and land managers; in fact everyone who either works or takes recreation in the outdoors should follow them. If you follow these key principles and apply a healthy dose of common sense then you shouldn't go far wrong.



Enjoying Responsible Access on Land

A little forethought before paddling can ensure that you can get to and from the water without compromising the interests of others.

Respect people's privacy by keeping a sensible distance from houses and private gardens. It's also important to be discreet when changing or going to the toilet. If you are wild camping choose a spot well away from roads and buildings and be sure to remove all trace of your camp. Check the SCA website for our advice on wild camping and human sanitation.

Help landowners and farmers to work safely and effectively by thinking about your options when crossing land. Leave any gates as you find them and be careful not to damage fences or walls. Check for alternatives before entering fields with animals. Avoid causing damage in fields with crops by following the edge of the field or any paths, tracks or tractor tramlines. Watch for signs highlighting hazards and follow any reasonable guidance.

Drive and park carefully, particularly in rural areas. Remember that the boats on your roof let everyone know you are paddlers and it is easy for the actions of a few to give everyone a bad name. Access rights only apply to non-motorised activities so don't drive or park on private roads without permission.

Enjoying Responsible Access on the Water

Access rights apply to most land and inland water such as rivers, lochs, canals and reservoirs. It is important to think about your actions and respect other people's rights and interests when paddling. Friendly communication can go a long way to understanding each others' position and avoiding problems developing.

- Respect the needs of anglers by avoiding pools they are fishing in. When close to anglers keep as quiet as possible and avoid unnecessary splashing.
- Care for the environment and strive not to damage or disturb animals, vegetation or man made structures; especially during sensitive times of year (see SCA website). Don't pollute the water. You can help care for the environment by leaving the outdoors cleaner than you found it and reporting any pollution or suspicious activity to the relevant authorities.
- Make sure the water you plan to paddle on is appropriate for your activity and the numbers involved.

Rivers

Keep an eye out for anglers. If you see someone fishing, think about how you can best pass them with the least disturbance. Whenever possible, stop upstream and attract the angler's attention before passing. If they have a line in the water, wait for a signal to proceed and then follow any route indicated if safe and practicable to do so. An angler should point to the side they wish you to pass by on. Anglers wading in the water may want you to paddle behind them.

Lochs

If anglers are present, keep a safe distance to avoid interfering with their activity. If the water forms part of an intensively used commercial fishery always speak to the land manager before going on the water.

Sea

Our coastline provides valuable habitat for nesting birds and other wildlife. Take extra care to avoid causing damage or disturbance and follow the guidance in the SCA's Sea Kayaking Guide to Good Environmental Practice.

Canals

On canals be aware of other traffic and give way to motorised craft. Remember access rights do not apply to passage through locks and lifts. On some canals, access is managed and you may be required to register your activity with the operator. Follow any regulations or local guidance.

Reservoirs and Hydro Schemes

For your own safety, avoid going close to water intake points, spillways or other hydro infrastructure. "Stay clear stay safe". Remember that water levels can change quickly and without warning, and the tow can be stronger than you think when the water level is high.

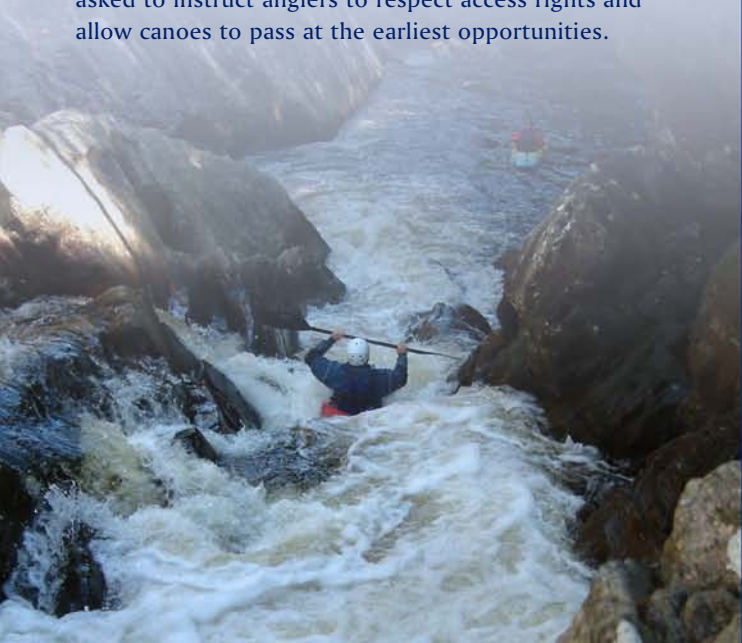


Access Authorities' Responsibilities

Access Authorities (Local and National Park Authorities) have a responsibility to uphold access rights. If you feel you are challenged unreasonably, or otherwise prevented or discouraged from enjoying your access rights, you should report it to the SCA Access Officer who will take the issue up with the relevant local authority or national park Access Officer.

Land Managers' Responsibilities

Land managers should respect access rights in their day to day work. Sometimes for health and safety or animal welfare reasons they may have to lock gates or suggest alternative routes around areas of work. Co-operating with reasonable requests helps land managers to work safely. Those who manage water are asked to instruct anglers to respect access rights and allow canoes to pass at the earliest opportunities.



Know the Code before you go...

Enjoy Scotland's outdoors - responsibly!

Everyone has the right to be on most land and inland water providing they act responsibly. Your access rights and responsibilities are explained fully in the Scottish Outdoor Access Code.

Whether you're in the outdoors or managing the outdoors, the key things are to:

- *take responsibility for your own actions*
- *respect the interests of other people*
- *care for the environment*

For further information visit:
www.outdooraccess-scotland.com
or call 01738 458545 for
a free copy of the full Code.



Getting Help and Information

You can find more information on the Land Reform (Scotland) Act 2003 and the Scottish Outdoor Access Code, as well as contact details for Access Officers, at
www.outdooraccess-scotland.com

The Association of Salmon Fishery Boards provide details of fishing seasons at
www.asfb.org.uk

Further advice and information is also available from the SCA at
www.canoescotland.com

Grant support from



Produced by: The Scottish Canoe Association (Aug 2006)

Tel: 0131 317 7314

www.canoescotland.com