

ACCESS

Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000

Issue 4

July 2004

Right of access timetable

The Countryside Agency has now issued all of the eight provisional maps for England. The three month period for any appeals to the Planning Inspectorate against the showing of land on the provisional maps for areas 3 (Central Southern); area 4 (Upper North West); area 5 (North East) and area 6 (South West) has closed. The Inspectorate must receive all appeals for area 7 (West) by midnight on 20 August 2004 and for area 8 (East England) by midnight on 7 September 2004.

The table below sets out the latest timetable for applications and notifications for restrictions to be made to the Open Access Contact Centre for areas 1, 2 and 3:

	Mapping Area 1 – – South East	Mapping Area 2 – Lower North West	Mapping Area 3 – Central Southern
Conclusive map issued	4 May 2004	2 June 2004	–
Applications for directions: date Open Access Contact Centre opened to receive applications	3 March 2004	3 March 2004	15 June 2004
Early long-term directions: date by which to apply for long-term restrictions that require an answer before access rights start	18 June 2004	18 June 2004	2 Aug 2004
Notifications for 28 day or special dog restrictions: date Open Access Contact Centre opens to receive notifications	9 Aug 2004	9 Aug 2004	2 Nov 2004
Regional Commencement: date when new rights come into force	19 Sept 2004	19 Sept 2004	Dec 2004

Launch of new Countryside Agency website – www.countrysideaccess.gov.uk

To coincide with the release of the new Countryside Code on 12 July the Countryside Agency will launch a new website that day to help the public find out what they can do and where they can go in the English countryside. The new website will also include links to the many national organisations and websites offering useful advice and information.

The website will be 'home' to the Countryside Code and will focus on promoting responsible and safe enjoyment of the countryside. The site design will feature the Code's new 'Creature Comforts' characters and countryside scenes throughout. The new access rights will be introduced via the website's top navigation 'Places to Go' and also through promotional 'zones' on the home page. These will link to a section titled 'open access' containing key messages about the new access rights and a public viewing interface to the maps held on www.openaccess.gov.uk.

The new website will include specific messages targeted for land managers – with links to information on countryside access management, guidance on access land and details of the restrictions process. A separate section for access authorities will contain relevant guidance in relation to their role and a link to their learning network. The learning network provides the opportunity to join discussion forums and will give secure access to signage templates and artwork (for example, the access symbol).

The section on the Countryside Code will include information on the history of the Code and an educational section where teachers and youth leaders will be able to register their interest in the Code's educational materials currently being prepared by FACE (Farming and Countryside Education). The Code will be available on the site in 18 different languages including English and Welsh.

Local access forum workshop

On 24 June Devon Local Access Forum, with support from the County Council, held a workshop for the seven local access forums in Cornwall, Devon, Dorset and Somerset. There were speakers from South West Tourism Ltd, the Countryside Agency and Defra. The event provided a valuable opportunity for members to discuss the work of forums and possible ways to maximise their effectiveness. Further information on the workshop can be obtained from Hilary Winter at hwinter@devon.gov.uk or Geoff Audcent at geoff.audcent@defra.gsi.gov.uk.

Decision on public places regulations

The Government has announced its decision not to make regulations on public places following a three month consultation exercise which sought views on the implications of access land being classified as a 'public place'. The decision means that land to which access is given under the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 will be treated as a 'public place' and other existing legislation will apply. Rural Affairs Minister Alun Michael has said that it is possible to make regulations at a later stage, but for now he has concluded that regulations are not necessary and, if made, could cause confusion and difficulties for landowners and for the public.

A Defra News release was issued on 17 June and is available at <http://www.defra.gov.uk/news/2004/040617b.htm>

Defra will produce guidance for landowners to explain how the various public place provisions in existing legislation relate to access land. There are also plans to meet the authorities which have responsibility for enforcing these provisions to raise awareness of the issues that are important for landowners.