

National Access Forum - Scotland



Signs relating to access, and locked gates

Summary messages on good practice

Background

Discussion at the National Access Forum considered possible approaches which could be taken to ensure that locked gates and access-related signs comply with the principles of the Code. This suggested that there may be scope for co-ordinated effort by relevant full and corresponding forum members to convey simple guidelines about good practice to their sector through the most appropriate communication channels - which might include newsletters, e-bulletins (or other online promotion) and other approaches. The potential audiences for these messages could be very diverse, including land managing public bodies, developers, golf course managers and householders as well as the rural land management interests that have been most closely engaged with the forum.

The forum agreed to compile a range of concise messages summarising good practice in relation to locked gates and signs which could be used as appropriate, along with links to existing guidance if further detail is required. The aim is that these messages should also:

- encourage liaison with access authorities and local access forums as needed
- highlight issues in the design of selective barriers and signs, and
- address inappropriate use of nature conservation and privacy zones to deter access.

Crisp and succinct 'headline' messages may not be able to avoid all potential ambiguity, but should be adequate for many situations and could therefore achieve a step forward at a strategic level. The suggested messages in this note are intended to provide a starting point, are neither prescriptive nor exhaustive and will not all be appropriate to any given audience. Indeed it would probably not be desirable to use all of these together, as the aim is to provide short, memorable messages which can substitute to some extent for more detailed guidance.

The first of these messages summarises the broad context for the use of signs and may provide a useful general introduction, but there is otherwise no particular sequence or hierarchy (the numbering is just for ease of reference).

Summary messages -

1. Signs must not restrict public access to [*summary of where access rights apply as appropriate to audience*]. If necessary however, short-term signs can be used to ask people to avoid areas where land management operations such as [*examples appropriate to audience*] are taking place, and to suggest alternative routes. Some suggested sign templates can be found at <http://www.outdooraccess-scotland.com/Access-management-guidance/signs>
2. Keep signs simple, with short messages and large clear print so that as many people as possible can read them, including those who are partially-sighted.
3. Where restrictions on motor vehicles are needed, use specific wording such as 'no unauthorised vehicles' or 'no motorcycles', rather than general messages such as 'private', 'keep out', 'no access' or 'no entry'.
4. If it is necessary to lock a gate across a well-used path or track, provide an alternative gap or gate for non-motorised users like walkers, riders, cyclists, and wheelchair users if the route is usable in a wheelchair.
5. No action is usually needed to encourage people to keep a sensible distance from houses and avoid private gardens. If necessary, help people get to places they want to reach using helpful directional signs (eg. "Path to beach") or way-marking.
6. Any requests relating to dogs should comply with the relevant guidance in the Scottish Outdoor Access Code (see paragraph 3.54-56). These requests should normally ask for dogs to be "on a short lead or close at heel" rather than just "on a lead". It can be helpful to include the reason for the request (eg. "ground-nesting birds between April and July") and indicate nearby areas where dogs can be off-lead.
7. Any requests intended to protect wildlife should comply with the Scottish Outdoor Access Code. If this is not adequate or further help is needed, speak to your local access officer http://www.outdooraccess-scotland.com/sites/default/files//docs/scottish_access_officer_contact_list.pdf or local Scottish Natural Heritage office (<http://www.snh.gov.uk/contact-us/>). [*Possible addition if relevant:* Guidance on managing access with dogs to safeguard breeding birds in protected areas can be found at: http://www.outdooraccess-scotland.com/sites/default/files//docs/managing_access_with_dogs_in_protected_areas_to_safeguard_breeding_birds.pdf
8. Further guidance on access management can be found at <http://www.outdooraccess-scotland.com/> . Your local access officer can also provide help and advice - contact details can be found as above.

Links to existing guidance

The definitive starting point is of course the Scottish Outdoor Access Code:

<http://www.outdooraccess-scotland.com/>

The 'Access management guidance' pages of the Code website provide a single point of entry to a wide range of guidance on responsible access management. Key specific sources which can be accessed by this route include:

- Signage guidance for outdoor access: a guide to good practice Paths for All Partnership/SNH http://www.outdooraccess-scotland.com/sites/default/files//docs/signage_guidance_for_outdoor_access.pdf
General guidance on a wide range of access-related signs.
- Signs Guidance for Farmers and other Land Managers: using advisory signs to inform the public about your day-to-day land management operations
Natural Heritage Management Series, SNH (2006) <http://www.snh.gov.uk/publications-data-and-research/publications/search-the-catalogue/publication-detail/?id=515>
- Guidance on signs linked to land management operations, but including a number of relevant common principles. This is accompanied by sign templates for various situations: <http://www.outdooraccess-scotland.com/Access-management-guidance/signs>
- Stalking and public access: signs guidance for land managers (developed by the National Access Forum); accessed via <http://www.snh.gov.uk/docs/A342190.pdf>
- Public Access and Land Management
Natural Heritage Management Series, SNH (2007) <http://www.outdooraccess-scotland.com/Access-management-guidance/visitor-planning>
- Towards responsible use: influencing recreational behaviour in the countryside
Natural Heritage Management Series, SNH (2004) <http://www.snh.gov.uk/publications-data-and-research/publications/search-the-catalogue/publication-detail/?id=103>
- Commercial access to the Outdoors in Scotland: guidance on local management
http://www.outdooraccess-scotland.com/sites/default/files//docs/commercial_access_to_the_outdoors_in_scotland_-_guidance_on_local_management_-_19_march_2014.pdf
- Communication not Conflict - how communication techniques can be used to prevent or solve conflicts between groups of people using the outdoors for different recreational pursuits <http://www.snh.gov.uk/publications-data-and-research/publications/search-the-catalogue/publication-detail/?id=102>

May 2012