Access land is land on which there is a right to walk, sightsee, picnic, birdwatch, climb and run. The right was introduced under the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000. Access land includes mountain, moor, heath, down and registered common land. Access land is managed for upland farming and shooting. These activities are part of the management; such fires are restricted by law and are only allowed between October and mid-April.

The routes in this leaflet have been devised to help you experience the right to walk on access land within the North Pennines Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB). Walking on access land is a very different experience to following public rights of way. It means that you are free to explore interesting features, such as streams and hill tops, and that you can decide your own route. By using the suggested routes and following the advice given in this leaflet, you can be confident that you are helping to minimise disturbance to some of England’s most important wildlife habitats.

This leaflet helps you to enjoy open access and gives advice on where to find essential up to date information. You can walk, sightsee, bird-watch, picnic, run and climb on access land. Dogs and cattle

Dogs on Access Land

The right of access on land extend to walking with dogs. However, they must be on a fixed lead no more than 2m long between 1st March and 31st July to limit disturbance to ground nesting birds. They must also be on a short fixed lead at any time near livestock and nesting birds. Please follow local information signs.

Dogs and cattle

Cattle may be inquisitive and approach you, especially if you have a dog. Avoid walking through a herd of cattle and never come between a cow and her calf. If you have a dog with you and feel threatened by cattle, let the dog go and retreat. In any other circumstances, dogs must be kept on a short lead near livestock.

Dogs and cattle

Ground nesting birds when threatened will display defensive behaviour such as flapping their wings, feigning injury and distracting people away from nests. It is best to ignore anything unusual that a bird is doing and continue walking, giving the area a wide berth.

Access land is managed for upland farming and shooting. These activities have helped to form the landscape which we consider so important today. Please respect the role of the people who depend on access land for their livelihoods. Bear in mind that controlled fires on access land may be used as part of the management; such fires are restricted by law and are only allowed between October and mid-April.

Some areas are restricted

Access land is not necessarily available for you to walk on at all times. Permanent restrictions may be in place for a wide range of reasons, including nature conservation, land management, and public safety. In addition, local restrictions may be in force. Details of restrictions including those relating to dogs may be found at www.countrysideaccess.gov.uk or call 0845 100 3298. Information on local restrictions may also be posted at the main access points or in local information signs.

The right of access on foot also applies to wheelchair users. On access land used for the rearing and shooting of grouse, there is likely to be a total exclusion on dogs. Visit www.countrysideaccess.gov.uk or ring 0845 100 3298 for current information. There is no new right for cyclists or horseriders to leave a bridleway and go onto access land. There is no right to camp, store vehicles (except on byways open to all traffic) or to light or cause fires or swim in any non-tidal rivers. Existing access rights are unaffected.

Wildlife and Landscape

The North Pennines Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) is one of the finest landscapes in the country. It was designated in 1988 and at almost 2,000 sq. kilometers is the second largest of the 40 AONBs and is one of the most peaceful and unspoilt places in England. It is nationally and internationally important for its upland habitats, geology and wildlife, with much of the area being internationally designated. The North Pennines AONB became Britain’s first European Geopark in 2003 in recognition of its internationally important geology. A year later it became a founding member of the UNESCO Global Geoparks Network. For more information call 01388 528801 or visit www.northpennines.org.uk.

With rights…

...come responsibilities

You are welcome to explore access land in the North Pennines but please remember that most of the area is privately owned, is internationally important for wildlife and is a home and place of work for many people. Please exercise your rights responsibly.

You should always follow local restrictions and signs and follow the Moorland Visitor’s Code.

The Moorland Visitor’s Code

Be safe—plan ahead and follow any signs.
Keep dogs under close control.
Prevent uncontrolled moorland fires.
Protect plants and animals, and take your litter home.
Leave gates and property as you find them.
Consider other people.

Be careful. Access land may involve rough and challenging terrain. Keep your eyes open for hidden holes and old mine workings.

Safety on Access Land

Access land in the North Pennines is remote and often challenging terrain. Your walk will require forward planning to ensure that you keep safe. Be careful. Access land in open country may be less than off paths.

Take a map and compass (and know how to use them!), spare food, drink and clothing.
Tell somebody where you are going and when you will return.
If you are inexperienced or unsure of your own ability, never walk alone.
Check the weather forecast, but be aware that the weather in upland areas can change quickly.
Keep an eye out for potential dangers such as mine and quarry workings.

Access land in the North Pennines AONB is designated a Special Protection Area and Site of Special Scientific Interest, in recognition of its internationally important habitats and species.

The access land of the North Pennines is important for many special birds, including black grouse, merlin, golden plover, curlew, and ring ouzel. Seventy-five percent of the remaining upland moorland in the world is found in Britain, making conservation of the moors the North Pennines a critical objective.

Ground nesting birds when threatened will display defensive behaviour such as flapping their wings, feigning injury and distracting people away from nests. It is best to ignore anything unusual that a bird is doing and continue walking, giving the area a wide berth.

Access land is managed for upland farming and shooting. These activities have helped to form the landscape which we consider so important today. Please respect the role of the people who depend on access land for their livelihoods. Bear in mind that controlled fires on access land may be used as part of the management; such fires are restricted by law and are only allowed between October and mid-April.

Access land is land on which there is a right to walk, sightsee, picnic, birdwatch, climb and run. The right was introduced under the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000. Access land includes mountain, moor, heath, down and registered common land. The North Pennines Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty is a strategic alliance of almost 30 public, statutory and voluntary sector bodies with an interest in the future of the AONB. The work of the Partnership is carried out by a small AONB Staff Unit, guided by the statutory AONB Management Plan. The Staff Unit takes action to conserve and enhance the natural beauty of the area and helps to co-ordinate the work of others.

Access land is managed for upland farming and shooting. These activities have helped to form the landscape which we consider so important today. Please respect the role of the people who depend on access land for their livelihoods. Bear in mind that controlled fires on access land may be used as part of the management; such fires are restricted by law and are only allowed between October and mid-April.

Where you can go, what you can do

You can walk, sightsee, bird-watch, picnic, run and climb on access land. There is no new right for cyclists or hikers to leave a bridleway and go onto access land. There is no right to camp, drive vehicles (except on byways open to all traffic) or to light or cause fires or swim in any non-tidal rivers. Existing access rights are unaffected.

Please use the public rights of way network or other signposted routes to get to and from access land – look out for the access symbol:

When you see this symbol it shows that land may be open for public access on foot. Access rights for other activities may also exist.

This symbol shows there are no public access rights beyond the point where it is displayed. (Public rights of way are not affected). The right of access on foot also applies to wheelchair users. Where reasonable, gates have been provided to allow access, although please note that access land is often very rough terrain.

There is no new right for cyclists or horseriders to leave a bridleway and go onto access land. There is no right to camp, store vehicles (except on byways open to all traffic) or to light or cause fires or swim in any non-tidal rivers. Existing access rights are unaffected.

Some basic rules

There is no right of access to quarries and active mineral workings, Ministry of Defence training areas while they are in active use and land within 20m of a house or building, even if it is mapped as access land.

Access land is not necessarily available for you to walk on at all times. Permanent restrictions may be in place for a wide range of reasons, including nature conservation, land management, and public safety. In addition, local restrictions may be in force. Details of restrictions including those relating to dogs can be found at www.countrysideaccess.gov.uk or call 0845 100 3298. Information on local restrictions may also be posted at the main access points or in local information signs.

The routes in this leaflet have been devised to help you experience the right to walk on access land within the North Pennines Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB). Walking on access land is a very different experience to following public rights of way. It means that you are free to explore interesting features, such as streams and hill tops, and that you can decide your own route. By using the suggested routes and following the advice given in this leaflet, you can be confident that you are helping to minimise disturbance to some of England’s most important wildlife habitats. The route descriptions are brief, reflecting the spirit of open access, which is the right to wander responsibly over large areas.

This leaflet helps you to enjoy open access and gives advice on where to find essential up to date information. You can walk, sightsee, bird-watch, picnic, run and climb on access land. Dogs and cattle

Dogs on Access Land

The right of access on land extend to walking with dogs. However, they must be on a fixed lead no more than 2m long between 1st March and 31st July to limit disturbance to ground nesting birds. They must also be on a short fixed lead at any time near livestock and nesting birds. Please follow local information signs.

On access land used for the rearing and shooting of grouse, there is likely to be a total exclusion on dogs. Visit www.countrysideaccess.gov.uk or ring 0845 100 3298 for current information.

Dogs may also be excluded for up to 6 weeks a year on land used for lambing and in areas important for ground nesting birds.

Dog restrictions do not apply to trained guide/hearing dogs and dogs on the land with the landowner’s permission.

Your rights to take dogs on public rights of way are unaffected by access land restrictions, but dogs must be kept under close control on public rights of way, preferably on a fixed short lead.

Dogs and cattle

Cattle may be inquisitive and approach you, especially if you have a dog. Avoid walking through a herd of cattle and never come between a cow and her calf. If you have a dog with you and feel threatened by cattle, let the dog go and retreat. In any other circumstances, dogs must be kept on a short lead near livestock.
Ordnance Survey Explorer series maps
The Explorer series of maps printed after May 2005 will show access land. The main maps that cover the AONB are OL19, OL31, and OL43, other areas of the AONB are covered by maps OL5, OL30, OL307 and OL315.

Visit www.countrysideaccess.gov.uk for current information on any restrictions to walk on access land, and for general countryside access information.

Access Helpline (0845 100 3298) gives current information, including any restrictions.

Primary and Secondary Information Points
The Primary Information Points shown on the map and additional secondary information points provide general information on access land, and may include information on local restrictions.

Contact the relevant County Council for further information or to report a problem on access land:
- Cumbria County Council 01228 601022
- Durham County Council 0191 3706000
- Northumberland County Council 01670 533000

Full time Rangers and Voluntary Wardens and other access staff are helping to manage access land within the North Pennines.

To find out more about the North Pennines AONB/UNESCO European and Global Geopark, visit www.northpennines.org.uk or call 01388 528801.

For accommodation, places to visit and things to do in the North Pennines, ring 01388 528801 to request a North Pennines Discovery Guide, or contact a Tourist Information Centre.

If you are intending to walk on access land, it is important that you have up-to-date information about what you can do and where you can go. Use:

Self-guided Walks
The walks shown on the area map and described here have been devised to allow you to explore access land responsibly and with confidence.

- You will need an Ordnance Survey map to follow these routes on the ground, as this leaflet is not detailed enough to use alone.
- The routes may be subject to restrictions at certain times of year, please check before attempting to walk them.
- Access land is difficult terrain - note that these are not easy or surfaced routes.
- The access land that these routes cross is managed for grouse. As a result, dogs are permanently restricted. All these routes cross sections of open country on which dogs are not allowed.

Route 1: Cumbria Ridge
Start: Blencarn Finish: Slaggyford or Hallbankgate
Approx distance: 201⁄2 miles, 33 kilometres
From Blencarn follow the bridleway east north east to the ridge, then the footpath north west to Cross Fell summit. Follow the ridge north west to Hartside. From Hartside follow the ridge north to Gillinghogg Gate. Head north west down the bridleway to Skapford. The bird breeding season runs between 1 March and 31 July. Outside the season you can follow the ridge from Gillinghogg north across Cold Fell to Hallbankgate (25 miles or 40 km). Please do not walk this section during the breeding season when disturbance to birds is a real risk.

Route 2: Whinfell Moor
Start: Whinfell Moor Rigg or Saddleworth Rigg Finish: Catling Cawney
Approx distance: 8 miles, 9.5 kilometres
Head north west along the west side of the boundary from the AB66 beyond Willyshaw Rigg to Whinfell Mus. Pass the west shore of Whinfell Lough and around the west and north shores of Wind Lough. Head north west along the boundary before turning north past Whinfell Crags along the boundary to Catling Cawney.

Route 3: Ninebanks and Acton Moor
Start/finish: Ninebanks Youth Hostel
Approx distance: 9 miles, 15 kilometres
From the Youth Hostel – follow the road to Acton Moor – then the public right of way south to the footpath – then the public right of way south east to the cairn and along Muggleswick Common to the Youth Hostel via the moor tracks and public rights of way.

Route 4: Edmundbyers and Muggleswick Common
Start/finish: Edmundbyers Youth Hostel
Approx distance: 7 miles, 12 kilometres
From the Youth Hostel – follow the public right of way south west to the Muggleswick road – then the public right of way west to Crags – then the public right of way west south to Smelby Shaw Reservoir – then the same route west to Hopehope reservoir – then the public right of way west to the Youth Hostel via the moor tracks and public rights of way.

Route 5: Langdon Beck and Harwood Common
Start/finish: Langdon Beck Youth Hostel
Approx distance: 18 miles, 29 kilometres
From the Youth Hostel – follow the Pennine Way west to Cauldon Scout – head north along the surfaced track to the car park – then the public right of way around Harwood Common – then the public right of way south east to Meldon Hill – then the public right of way west and beyond on to the public right of way to Hope Hill – follow the road to Harwood and the track to Greenhills – return to the Youth Hostel via the public rights of way.

Route 6: Dutton and High Cup Nick
Start/finish: Dutton
Approx distance: 15 miles, 24 kilometres
From Dutton, follow the Pennine Way north around the west of Dutton Pike and Bowleaton. Head west at Knock Fell across Dutton Fell to Meldon Hill. Head south to join the Pennine Way at Maae Beck, returning to Dutton across the north side of High Cup Nick.