



The Scottish Outdoor Access Code (SOAC)

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Aim

To familiarise members with their rights and responsibilities under the Scottish Outdoor Access Code



Agenda

- What is the Scottish Outdoor Access Code?
- Your rights and responsibilities under SOAC
- True or False?
- What to do if you are denied access
- Where can you get more information?
- Conclusion



What is the Scottish Outdoor Access Code?

- Land Reform (Scotland) Act 2003
- Statutory framework of public access rights to most land and inland water
- SOAC - your rights and responsibilities under the Act
- Managed by Scottish Natural Heritage (SNH) and reviewed regularly
- Access management:
 - National Access Forum – advisory body
 - Local authority and National Parks – Local Access Forums



Your rights and responsibilities under SOAC

- 3 principles
- **Take responsibility for your own actions**
 - Be aware of natural hazards
 - Take care of yourselves and others
- **Respect the interests of others**
 - Respect the needs of others enjoying or working outdoors
 - Follow any reasonable advice from land managers
 - Respect people's privacy and peace of mind, particularly at night
 - Keep a reasonable distance from houses
- **Care for the environment**
 - Treat the environment with care
 - Take your rubbish home and pick up litter
 - Don't disturb or damage wildlife or historic places
 - Keep your dog under control



Responsible Access Rights

- Access rights apply to:
 - Urban parks
 - Hills and woods
 - Most grass fields and margins
 - Beaches
 - Lochs, rivers and canals



Activities

- Informal pastimes:
 - Walking
 - Camping
 - Picnicking
 - Sightseeing
- Active pursuits:
 - Cycling
 - Mountaineering
 - Canoeing
 - Horse riding
- Dog walking
- Recreational and educational trips
- Getting from one place to another



Exemptions

- Places and activities not covered by responsible access rights include:
 - Buildings and their immediate surroundings
 - Houses and their gardens
 - Crops
 - Motorised activities – except disabled access
 - Hunting, shooting and fishing

TRUE or FALSE?



Wild Camping

- You can camp anywhere that access rights apply
- **FALSE**
 - Access rights extend to wild camping - lightweight, done in small numbers and only for two or three nights in any one place.
 - Avoid causing problems for local people and land managers by not camping in enclosed fields of crops or farm animals and by keeping well away from buildings, roads or historic structures.
 - Leave no trace by:
 - Taking away all your litter
 - Removing all traces of your tent pitch and of any open fires
 - not causing any pollution
- **Except for East Loch Lomond from 1 March to 31 October!**



Wild Camping

- Litter
- Lighting fires
 - Use a stove
 - Keep it small
 - Do not cut live trees
 - Remove all traces
- Human waste



Golf Courses

- You can cross a golf course
- **TRUE**
- You can only exercise access rights to cross over a golf course
- In exercising access rights:
 - Keep off tees and greens
 - Do not interfere with golf games
 - Allow players to play their shot before crossing a fairway
 - Stand still when close to a player about to play
 - Follow paths where they exist
 - Keep your dog on a short lead



Deer Stalking

- You must stay off the hills when deer stalking is taking place
- **FALSE**
 - Deer management can take place during many months of the year but the most sensitive time is the stag stalking season from 1 July to 20 October
 - Minimise disturbance by taking reasonable steps to find out where stalking is taking place (such as by using the Heading for the Scottish Hills website) and by taking account of advice on alternative routes
 - Stick to paths and ridge lines
 - Take account of reasonable advice that you receive on the day from a sign or a stalker
 - Avoid crossing land where stalking is taking place
 - Stalking does not normally take place on Sundays



Grouse Shooting

- You can walk on grouse moors even when shooting is taking place
- **TRUE**
- The grouse shooting season runs from 12 August to 10 December.
- Minimise disturbance by being alert to the possibility of shooting on grouse moors and taking account of advice on alternative routes.
- Avoid crossing land where a shoot is taking place until it is safe to do so.



Gates

- Always close gates, even if they are open when you find them
- **FALSE**
- Use a gate where one has been provided and leave it as you find it.
- Do not climb over gates, fences, dykes or hedges unless there is no reasonable alternative nearby.
- If you have to climb over a fence, avoid causing any damage by doing so near to a post.
- Climb a gate at the hinge end.



Playing Fields and Sports Pitches

- You can access school playing fields and sports pitches when they are not in use
- **FALSE**
- Access rights do not apply to land next to a school and which is used by the school (such as school playing fields)
- You can exercise access rights on any sports pitch, playing field or other areas set out for a recreational purpose (such as for archery or other target sports) while it is not in use.
- In crossing over a sports pitch or playing field, take care not to damage the playing surface

What to do if you are denied access

- Record details – who, where, when
- Report to local Council Access Officer
- If you do not get a satisfactory response, you can escalate to the Mountaineering Council of Scotland Access Officer



Where can you get more information?

- Enjoy Scotland's Outdoors leaflet



- www.outdooraccess-scotland.com

Conclusion

- Scotland has some of the best public access legislation in the world
- Its is important that you understand your rights and responsibilities under SOAC
- Take responsibility for your own actions
- Respect the interests of other people
- Care for the environment

