



Learning and Skills: Position Statement: 005

Introduction

Natural Resources Wales (NRW) welcomes well-managed, self-led¹ visits by groups and individuals of all ages and abilities. Learning in the natural environment provides many benefits, including improved mental and physical wellbeing, bringing curriculum subjects to life and providing opportunities for skills development, research and project work. We want to encourage learning about the natural environment and sustainable management of our natural resources. Here, we've outlined how we can achieve this.

Definition

Learning and skills visits to NRW managed land by individuals or groups which include activities where learning or study takes place in or about the natural environment for developing further knowledge and skills. These are categorised as follows:

| Individual study or project work | Educational walks | Outdoor learning | Organised programmes and events |
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| Study, research and project work – either standalone or repeat visits | Led group walks on NRW managed land, including sponsored walks and guided walks | Using the natural environment as a resource for learning – including activities such as field studies and natural play | Activities such as fire building, outdoor cooking, cutting and removing natural material |

Please note: *Surveying and Monitoring is not covered by this statement*

Where you can go without needing our permission

Visitors are legally allowed to carry out individual project or study work, educational walks and outdoor learning on Rights of Way or Open Access Land, unless for commercial gain. However, please be aware that our sites are very popular and, as many are operational, they can sometimes be closed at little or short notice. To ensure a safe and enjoyable visit, it's best to contact us in advance so your visit can be booked onto the site.

¹ Self-led means the group is organised and managed by its own group leader or an individual who has full responsibility throughout the visit

By getting in touch, we can also guide you to learning resources and site-specific health and safety information for your visit. A learning provider may also operate on the site and can lead your visit for a charge.

When you'll need permission from us

- You'll need our permission if you're carrying out any educational activity for commercial gain – whether for you or an organisation. This may also incur a charge.
- For any educational activity where you intend to use a protected area, or places where you don't have a right of access.
- If you need a barrier key to access a site.
- Organised programmes and events always need our permission.

How we support learning and skills visits

- We will follow our Guiding Principles ([link](#)) for community involvement with land that we manage.
- Our website provides detailed information about all our major sites to support educational visits.
- If our permission is needed or we're aware of your visit, we'll make sure you're informed of any known hazards that may apply on the day of your visit. We'll also give you a copy of the site information note for your risk assessment.
- We manage our land to provide safe and accessible sites for learning and skills development, while complying with the UK Woodland Assurance Standard. This may involve removing built structures, materials, plots or other items that have been set up as part of your project or visit. Please let us know if you intend to leave anything on site so we can be mindful of it.

What you'll need to do

- Follow the [Countryside Code](#), especially taking care not to leave any trace of your visit – this includes taking all your litter home and avoiding polluting land and water courses.
- Take note of the Outdoor Education Advisers Panel's guidance for [Educational Visits Coordinators](#).
- Have suitable qualifications and insurance to lead your educational activity; we may ask you to provide us with evidence of this.
- Arrange relevant wellbeing, health and safety plans to ensure the safety of your group. Outdoor spaces can be hazardous environments if visits are not appropriately planned, so you'll need to consider visitors' clothing, first aid provision and a responsible adult-to-participant ratio.
- Adhere to all our signs. NRW managed land is often a working environment and failure to follow safety signs can be dangerous for both groups and land managers. You should avoid areas where work is in progress and keep the group together at all times.

- Apply in good time if you think you need permission from us. For organised programs and events, you will require a longer lead in time.
- Follow NRW guidance on fire lighting see the Open Fires Position Statement. Fires must be managed carefully to limit their impact on the natural environment.
- If you are thinking of cutting and removing natural material, see our Dens, Ropes and Swings Position Statement to prevent damage to habitats and disturbance to species.
- Follow our '[Keep It Clean](#)' guidelines to protect against the spread of invasive species and biosecurity threats. Picking and transporting plant matter can increase the risk of contamination hugely.
- Take care not to damage vegetation. This is particularly important in sensitive areas such as ancient semi-natural woodland, sand dunes and marsh habitats. Please be aware that some species are protected against picking, uprooting, damage and sale.
- Always be careful not to disturb birds or animals. They are particularly vulnerable during the breeding season, when they are with young and in winter.

How you can apply for permission

To apply for permission to use NRW managed land for learning and skills activities, please contact the regional team in your area. Their contact details can be found in the following document:

[NRW managed land permissions contact sheet](#)

Who to contact for more information

- NRW website, education: <http://naturalresources.wales/people-and-communities/education-and-skills/?lang=en>
- Outdoor Learning Wales: www.outdoorlearningwales.org
- The Real World Learning Cymru Partnership: www.realworldlearningcymru.org
- Education Visit Guidance, Welsh Government: <http://gov.wales/topics/educationandskills/allsectorpolicies/healthandsafety/educationvisits/?lang=en>
- The Institute of Outdoor Learning: www.outdoor-learning.org
- Outdoor Education Advisers Panel: www.oeap.info
- HSE: <http://www.hse.gov.uk/services/education/school-trips.htm>