

Cycling

Where you can cycle in the countryside

- Public roads, including unclassified roads
- **Bridleways** – there are 29,000kms available to use. They are open to walkers and horse riders as well as cyclists, provided cyclists give way to both these users.
- **Byways** open to all traffic (also known as ‘BOATs’ or byways). These are usually unsurfaced tracks. As well as walkers and horse riders, you may meet occasional vehicles that also have right of access.
- **Roads** used as public paths (RUPPs). These will soon become known as ‘restricted byways’.
- **Towpaths** – a British Waterways cycling permit is required for cyclists wishing to use their canal towpaths.
- Designated **cycle paths**.
- The National Cycle Network
- **Cycle tracks** designated under the Cycle Tracks Act 1984.

Where you cannot go

- On footpaths, unless a landowner has given permission. This is the case, for example, on parts of the National Cycle Network.
- On disused railway lines, unless they have been waymarked and designated as cycle paths.
- Across open land unless special permission has been granted. There may be existing rights or traditions that allow you to cycle on or through some access land – for example along a bridleway but you need to check first.

Making sure you cycle responsibly

- Give way to pedestrians, wheelchair users and horse-riders, leaving them plenty of room. When passing horses take extra care, they are spooked easily so never pass without calling out a warning.
- Keep to your side of any dividing line and be prepared to slow down or stop if necessary.
- Don’t expect to cycle at high speeds. Reduce the speed when you don’t know what’s ahead.
- Match your speed to the surface and your skills.
- Remember how quiet bikes can be and how fast they spin along. Don’t surprise people – slow down and make they know you are coming. Carry a bell – some pedestrians may be hard of hearing and won’t hear the sound of your wheels approaching.
- Fit and use lights in poor visibility. Remember that you are required by law to display working lights after dark.
- Avoid skidding on trails - it wrecks paths.
- Go through puddles, not around them – going round just makes them wider.
- Stay off soft areas if it’s been raining for a while.

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Special precautions when riding off-road

- Check local weather reports before heading for the hills - don't take the weather for granted as bad weather can descend very quickly. Don't go if the forecast is for conditions beyond your experience. Watch out for the 'wind-chill factor' in winter and beware of sunstroke in the summer.
- Invest in a first aid kit and know how to use it.
- Carry emergency rations. A high carbohydrate energy bar lasts for years.
- Take a map and a compass and know how to use them.
- Carry essential tools such as a pump and a spare inner tube.
- Tell somebody where you are going and report any changes of plan by telephone.
- Plan the route. Make sure it is within the capabilities of the weakest member of your group.
- Allow enough time to return well before nightfall.
- Avoid going solo if possible. Three is the minimum safe number. In an accident, one can go for help; the other stays with the injured.
- Wear the right clothes (include reflective gear) and footwear. Take spare clothing and don't forget your helmet.
- If you are caught in low-visibility conditions up in the hills, stop until the weather clears and find shelter. Put on spare dry clothing and sit on something dry. If you are cold, keep your limbs moving. Stay awake and huddle close to companions.

Further information about cycling can be obtained from the following organisations:

British Cycling

National Cycling Centre, Stuart Street, Manchester M11 4DG. Tel: 0870 871 2000.

British Waterways www.britishwaterways.co.uk

Willow Grange, Church Road, Watford WD1 3QA. Tel: 01923 226422.

Cyclists' Touring Club (CTC) www.ctc.org.uk/

Cotterell House, 69 Meadrow, Godalming, Surrey GU7 3HS. Tel: 0870 8730060.

Sustrans, The National Cycle Network Centre www.sustrans.org.uk/

2 Cathedral Square, College Green, Bristol BS1 5DD. Tel: 0845 113 0065.

The Highway Code www.highwaycode.gov.uk/

The Highway Code is essential reading for everyone. Its rules apply to all road users: pedestrians, horseriders and cyclists, as well as motorcyclists and drivers. Navigate around this site through the road user categories or simply browse through the rules.

Byways and Bridleways Trust www.bbtrust.org.uk/

PO Box 117, Newcastle upon Tyne, Tyne and Wear NE3 5YT. Tel: 0191 236 4086.