

EXTENDING ACCESS RIGHTS AND OPPORTUNITIES IN ENGLAND AND WALES: BMC SURVEY RESULTS

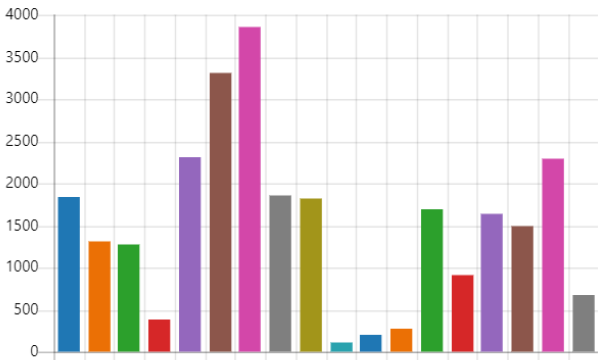
The BMC believes now is the time to be ambitious and bold and really think about how we increase access to more places, for more people, to be able to do more things; no-one should have to travel far or make a big effort to experience the enormous health and social benefits of being in nature.

We therefore held a short survey that posed several questions about the types of activities currently being undertaken in the outdoors and what the future of access legislation might look like.

4360 people took part in the survey and below is a brief summary of the results to each of the specific questions.

1. Which of the following activities have you undertaken at least once during visits to the outdoors in the last 12 months?

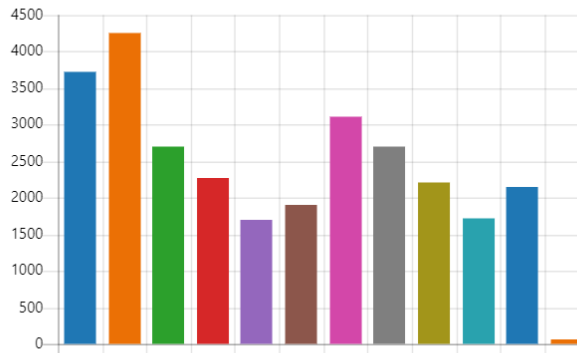
● Trad climbing	1843
● Sport climbing	1313
● Bouldering	1268
● Ice Climbing	382
● Scrambling	2304
● Hill walking (under 2 hrs)	3302
● Hill walking (over 2 hrs)	3854
● Road cycling	1857
● Off-road cycling or mountain ...	1814
● Horse riding	110
● Fishing	208
● Caving	274
● Swimming outdoors	1682
● Canoeing	909
● Wildlife watching	1632
● Running (trail/fell)	1490
● Sightseeing or visiting an attra...	2299
● Other	664



Of those completing the survey, the majority of people went hill walking over the past 12 months, followed by scrambling, sight-seeing and trad climbing. Outdoor swimming and cycling were also very popular.

2. Which of the following, if any, best describes the types of places you visited in the last 12 months?

● Woodland or forest	3731
● Hills, mountains or moorland	4246
● Farmland	2696
● Local park	2271
● Other local open space	1705
● Roadside pavement/track	1899
● River, lake or canal	3107
● Beach	2710
● Sea	2204
● Other coastline	1711
● Village	2141
● Other	68



The majority of visitors have visited hills, mountains and moorland, woodlands and / or river, lakes and canals over the past 12 months.

3. Do you know what the Countryside Code is (without re-searching first)?

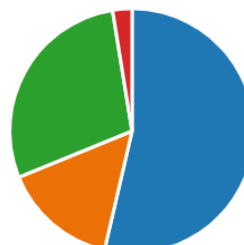
● Yes - heard of it and abide by it	3700
● Yes - heard of it, but don't know...	565
● No - I've never heard of it	94
● Other	1



The majority of those completing the survey had heard of the Countryside Code and abide by it.

4. Have you heard of the following legislation that currently allows you to access the countryside in England and Scotland?

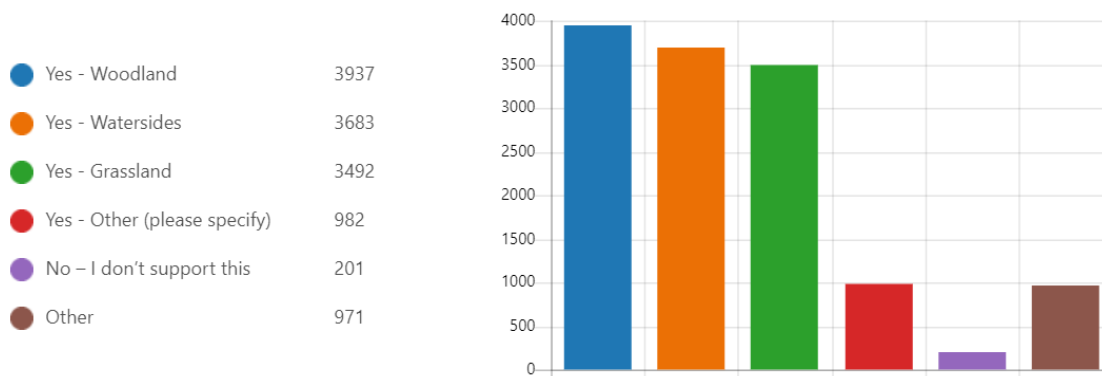
● Countryside and Rights of Wa...	4043
● Marine and Coastal Access Act	1145
● Scottish Land Reform Act (SLR...	2158
● Other	192



Over 92% of respondents had heard of the Countryside and Rights of Way Act, nearly 50% knew of the Scottish land Reform Act and only 26% were aware of the Marine and Coastal Access Act.

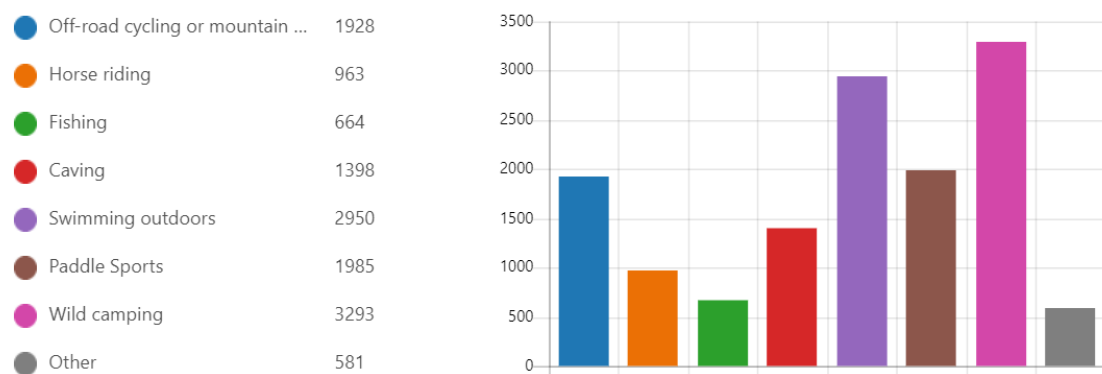
5. Currently in England the public have a 'right to roam' in areas designated as 'open country' (mountain, moor, heath and down) or 'common land' - which are shown as a yellow wash on OS maps. But, right now, it only covers 8% of England and it is not equally distributed.

Would you support the addition of more land types and if so which ones?



Woodland, watersides and grassland are those landscapes that the majority of respondents would like to see access extended to.

6. Currently in England it is possible to undertake the following activities in areas mapped as 'open country' - walking, climbing, running, sight-seeing, bird-watching. What other activities would you like to see included if possible?

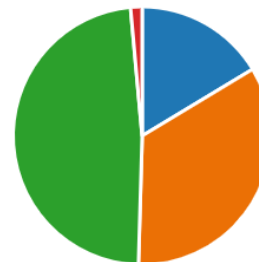


Most people would like to see activities such as wild camping, outdoor swimming, paddle sports and mountain biking included as a right under new access laws.

7. In Scotland, walkers and other recreational users have a right to access most land and inland water (providing they abide by the Scottish Outdoor Access Code) under the Land Reform Act. Thinking about the differences in England (areas of yellow wash on OS maps) and Scotland (access to most landscapes, governed by a code), would you prefer the clarity of a map showing where you can go (particular landscapes) or a right to go to most places based on a code of good behaviour?

Please choose one of the following:

● Map	714
● Code	1486
● Hybrid (Map and Code)	2097
● Other	63



The majority of visitors would welcome a hybrid approach – both mapped and a code of good behaviour.

8. Would you support or oppose extending the 'right to roam' to most land and water in England, (with exclusions such as for private gardens, land where crops are growing, and other sensitive areas like conservation and military sites)?

● Support	3906
● Oppose	273
● Don't know	181



90% of respondents would support extending the 'right to roam' to most land and water in England.

9. Do you think responsible wild camping should be included as part of any new access rights?

● Yes	3668
● No	395
● Don't know	297



The majority of those completing the survey believe responsible wild camping should be included as part of any new access rights.

Other comments summary:

There were a lot of comments made at the end of the survey that were very helpful and insightful, and were themed around several key issues:

- Concern about the potential impact of extending a right to roam on wildlife and ecosystems as well as litter, fires, traffic and noise
- The need for robust exemptions for nature protection / temporary exclusions on access
- The impact of dogs on ground nesting birds / other users
- Concern with population density / land and space available
- The need for more education from a young age on responsibilities / countryside code
- The need for more access to help more people (physical and mental benefits)
- Support for true wild camping (not multi-night, road side / fly camping) and need for clear guidance
- New right to roam laws to be supported with strong messaging, clear codes and appropriate enforcement when / where necessary – rules around 'leave no trace' principles
- Improved access to outdoor spaces, places to safely exercise, an improved and obvious traffic free cycle routes
- Improved maintenance of footpaths
- More access to waterways
- Clarity needed over the insurance liabilities of landowners.

The results of this survey and wider consultation across the BMC, therefore give us the mandate to lobby for amendments to or the introduction of new legislation in England and Wales to significantly extend rights of access, similar to the regulations governing access in Scotland.

This will create more areas for us to enjoy both on land and water, with many more and better-connected spaces close to where people live. It's refreshing to hear commitments from some political parties already (Labour and the Green Party in particular) to say that they would pass new 'right to roam legislation'. So now is the time to lobby for responsible access to nature, which also respects the needs of land managers, and we need to bring as many people as possible with us on this journey if we are to make meaningful change.