

The Drivers' Countryside Code of Conduct.

Using vehicles on unsealed public roads is an emotive subject. There are many organisations that would like to see recreational motor vehicles confined to major surfaced roads. All reasonable users of the countryside can enjoy their pastime without upsetting others so long as we all exercise a little care and consideration. This Code of Conduct is intended to help you gain the most from your recreation and to protect our future access to the countryside.

1. Use only vehicular rights of way, not all unsealed roads have vehicular rights.
2. Keep to the defined track. Report any obstructions to the highway authority. If the route is not obvious on the ground, ask locally, or check on the maps held at the highway authority offices.
3. Travel at a quiet and unobtrusive pace and when travelling in groups, keep to a small number.
4. Ensure that your vehicle and yourself are fully road legal. Unsealed roads are subject to the same laws as roads with sealed surfaces. There is no public right to drive on common land, moorland, sand dunes, or beach.
5. Pay Attention to "The Four Ws"
Weather: Do not travel on unsealed roads when they risk surface impact beyond a point of natural recovery when the weather improves.
Weight: Do not use roads which may be seriously damaged by the wheel pressure applied by your vehicle.
Width: Some roads are too narrow for vehicles. Avoid damage to trees, hedgerows and boundaries.
Winches: The use of winches on public roads is inappropriate and should not be required.
6. Respect the life of the countryside. Be courteous to other road users, including walkers and take great care when passing horses. Be prepared to stop your engine if necessary. Always leave gates as you find them and take care near livestock.
7. Remember that wildlife faces many threats and some unsealed roads can be valuable habitats. Take special care in spring and early summer.

Rights of Way

You have a legal right to use Byways Open to All Traffic (BOATs) and most Unsealed Unclassified Roads (UUR, sometimes called UCR). There are still rights of way shown on older Ordnance Survey maps as Roads Used as Public Paths (RUPPs) but these all became Restricted Byways following the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 (CRoWA). Restricted Byways are not open to mechanically propelled vehicles.

Do not assume that Ordnance Survey maps give correct information on rights of way. Many maps contain out-of-date information. Other routes, with public rights, may also be missing.

Recent OS maps indicate Unsealed Unclassified Roads as 'Other routes with public access' (ORPAs) but do not assume that these or any other minor road or track has vehicular rights. Most do, but it is better to check status than risk prosecution.

Some vehicular rights of way are closed to mechanically propelled vehicles by Traffic Regulation Orders (TRO). Where lawful signs are in place it is an offence to disregard them.

Voluntary Restraint

As an alternative to more formal measures, LARA operates a system of 'voluntary restraint' to help solve problems on unsealed roads. Signs are erected to indicate that the system is in place and for what period or time, giving contact details for enquiries. The system is only applied after agreement with local users. Motor vehicle users are asked to abide by the spirit of voluntary restraint. Details of the Voluntary Restraint scheme are on LARA's website www.laragb.org