

Gwithian Green Local Nature Reserve – Visitor Code of Conduct

This local nature reserve is very unusual in having such rich bio-diversity and variety of habitats and wildlife within such a small area. We all have a responsibility to protect our countryside and open spaces for current and future generations, so we ask that our visitors follow the brief guidance given here, whilst enjoying the beauty and diversity of this space.

Please note:

- Gwithian Green is a scientific, conservation and educational resource used by Schools/Colleges/Universities and other activity groups, including our working volunteers.
- Gwinear-Gwithian Parish Council are responsible for Gwithian Green which is managed, on their behalf, by the Gwithian Green Advisory Group.
- Our Visitor Guide and Map is available on site.

We also ask that anyone visiting the "Green" respect its wonderful but fragile environment, as it can easily be disturbed by unintentional or inappropriate use. For example; dog excrement must be collected and disposed of by those exercising their dogs. Dog poo can have an adverse effect on the vegetation and wild flowers, is unpleasant for other walkers and can cause a variety of diseases to humans, particularly children. (Cornwall Council have introduced a Dog Fouling Public Spaces Protection Order that covers all of Cornwall).

Respect everyone

- Be considerate to those living or working nearby and those that are also enjoying the "Green".
- Do not block access to gateways and access roads when parking in the very limited space available.
- Be nice, say hello and share the space.
- Keep to the pathways wherever possible, especially when walking your dog, to protect ground nesting birds.

Pony Grazing

- Pony grazing takes place during the autumn and winter months. They are checked daily by trained volunteers under the guidance of the grazier.
- Follow the grazier's directions when ponies are being moved. This helps keep everybody safe.
- Give ponies, when present, plenty of space. Their behaviour can be unpredictable.
- Do not feed the ponies, if present, as it can cause them harm.

Protect the environment

- Please take your litter and any food waste home - leave no trace of your visit.
- The lighting of fires (except when disposing of rank vegetation under the supervision of an authorised person), the use of stoves and BBQs is strictly prohibited, as is the use of sky lanterns (Chinese lanterns).
- Camping is prohibited, as are overnight stays in campervans or similar.
- Always keep dogs under control and preferably on a lead.
- Dog poo - bag it and bin it - please use the waste bin provided or take it home.
- Care for nature - avoid causing damage or disturbance. For example, leave rocks, stones, log piles, habitat covers, plants and trees as you find them and take care not to disturb wildlife including birds, butterflies and dragonflies etc.
- Bicycles, motorbikes and horses must not be ridden through the local nature reserve, apart from on Green Lane itself.
- Photography, painting and sketching is encouraged. But please take care if you need to 'expose' your target plant/specimen, as you may inadvertently remove rarer plants or adversely alter the surrounding microclimate. Try to avoid crushing vegetation in order to gain access, having regard for mosses, liverworts, lichens and fungi. The removal of flora and fauna specimens is prohibited (unless prior authorisation is granted by the Parish Council/Gwithian Green Advisory Group for scientific and/or educational purposes).

Legislative Protection

The **Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981** is the primary legislation **protecting animals, plants and habitats** in the UK. More specifically, within the act, people are restricted from causing harm to named protected species (including their removal), even if it is considered entirely unintentional. The legislation covers four main areas:

1. Wildlife protection, including protection of wild birds, their eggs and nests, protection of other animal and protection of plants.
2. Nature Conservation, Countryside & National Parks.
3. Public Rights of Way.
4. Miscellaneous provisions.

Wild plants and the law

All wild plants are given some protection under the laws of the United Kingdom.

It is illegal to uproot any wild plant without permission from the landowner or occupier. Uproot is defined as to 'dig up or otherwise remove a plant from the land on which it is growing'. This is whether or not it actually has defined roots. For the purposes of the legislation, the term 'plant' includes algae, lichens and fungi as well as bryophytes (mosses and liverworts) and vascular plants.

Remember, that all plants are the legal property of someone. Under the 1968 Theft Act, it is an offence to uproot plants for commercial purposes without permission of the land owner or occupier. This protection is in addition to that provided by the Wildlife and Countryside Act.

Some plants are specifically protected by law and cannot be picked or disturbed unless you have the appropriate licence (see Vascular plants protected under Schedule 8 of the 1981 Wildlife and Countryside Act).

For further information see:

www.wildlifetrusts.org/uk-wildlife-law www.gov.uk/government/organisations/natural-england

www.gov.uk/government/publications/the-countryside-code/the-countryside-code-advice-for-countryside-visitors#enjoy-the-outdoors

<https://bsbi.org/> (Botanical Society of Britain and Ireland)

Please note:

Removal of living or dead specimens:

- Scientific research, conservation, educational and activity groups must seek **prior** permission from the Parish Council/Gwithian Green Advisory Group, if in order to aid their studies, it is deemed necessary to alter/disturb habitats and/or remove specimens from the "Green".

Organised visiting groups:

- Organised visiting groups should ensure that they have appropriate risk assessments (and appropriate insurance) in place.
- Organised visiting groups should ensure that they have a person who has ultimate responsibility for their group (and actions) and will act as group leader.
- Those organising School/College visits should ensure that they have adequate supervisory staff for the number of children/students in their care.