The Ernest Cook Trust's Access Statement

Responsible access to the land

The Ernest Cook Trust believes that spending time outdoors benefits people's wellbeing and lives, as well as enriching those communities and places, but we are also very aware of the environmental, farming and legal responsibilities we need to balance.

This Trust welcomes visitors to explore the parts of the estate that are open to the public.

This Access Statement explains how to enjoy the estate safely and responsibly, while respecting the farming activities, wildlife, habitats and the interests of everyone who lives, works or visits the estate.

This is managed land

Most importantly, a lot of our land is part of a complex working landscape that supports farming, forestry, conservation, rural businesses, and outdoor learning. What might look "wild" is in fact "managed land" that is thoughtfully and intentionally cared for.

We welcome visitors onto our land where possible, but we also respect the needs of our tenant farmers, the expertise of our estate managers, and safety of our outdoor learning leaders and their groups.

Publicly Accessible Areas

We welcome visitors to those parts of our estates where public access is available:

- Public rights of way (such as footpaths, byways and bridleways)
- Open Access Land under the Countryside and Rights of Way (CROW) Act 2000 (such as common land)
- Permissive rights of way (footpaths that have been voluntarily agreed by the landowner or tenant)
- Visitor areas (special events where access is agreed by the Trust or its tenants)

We ask you to be part of our land management and explore responsibly. This way you can help us protect the multiple values of our land and ensure these landscapes remain open to wildlife, local communities and visitors for years to come.

Learning

Everyone has something to learn from the land, and we are working hard to provide learning opportunities for all visitors – including seasonal updates on wildlife, advice on where and when it's safe, and sharing the heritage of these landscapes.

If you have any ideas of how we can help your learning on our land, please get in touch.

Land

We believe in informed access, which means ensuring that wildlife, farming and the environment are not damaged or endangered by human activity. Here are some tips to help you access our land in an informed and safe way:

- **Dogs are a danger to birdlife and wildlife, especially in Spring and Summer.** Please keep dogs on a short lead between 1st March and 31st August, to allow wildlife to flourish and young animals to survive. Please respect our farming businesses and keep dogs under direct and effective control throughout the year.

- **Dogs can scare or harm livestock.** Please ensure dogs are under control around livestock at all times of the year. Keep dogs on a lead around livestock, but if cattle approach, let them off the lead until safe to call back. Always clean up after dogs to keep the land safe and healthy for all, and to prevent the spread of diseases such as Neospora, which can adversely affect cattle.

- **Please take responsibility for your own safety,** including following signs, temporary diversions, or specific instructions. The countryside is a natural environment with uneven ground, livestock, watercourses and changing weather conditions to be aware of.

- **Some areas may be temporarily closed** for farming, conservation, environmental protection, or your safety. We appreciate your understanding in these cases and ask that you stick to designated paths and access routes.

- Please follow the **'Leave No Trace'** principles; take your litter home and help protect wildlife and habitats. Your care supports the work of our staff, tenants and contractors in managing these special places.

- **Leave all gates in the state in which they were found** i.e. please close all gates that have been found closed, even if you think there is no stock in the field.

- For legal, safety and environmental reasons, **lighting fires and BBQs is not permitted**

Connection

We want visitors to enjoy their time outdoors and really connect with nature, the land, and our shared love of the countryside. Here are some ideas:

- Visitors are welcome to enjoy publicly accessible areas **on foot**. Walking, running and wildlife watching are encouraged.

- Cycling, horse riding, motor vehicles and other **restricted activities** are permitted only on the appropriate Public Rights of Way (PROW) or in designated areas where specific permission has been granted.

- If you'd like to **camp**, get in touch - we would be delighted to point you in the direction of official campsites and safe places to do so. Wild camping is not permitted for many reasons.

- If you're planning an **organised event** or another activity outside normal public access, please get in touch. We would love to discuss your ideas and help where we can.

- Some locations have **cultural or historic significance**. Please treat them with care and follow any specific guidance. We all have special places, or memories linked to the land.

Thank you for helping us look after these special places. By respecting wildlife, working landscapes and other visitors, you are helping to create healthier landscapes where nature, people and rural communities can thrive.

Land is in our nature, we hope you feel that too.

For queries, concerns or to report any issues, please contact the Ernest Cook Trust at hello@ernestcooktrust.org.uk