



**Cyfoeth
Naturiol**
Cymru
**Natural
Resources**
Wales



The Wild Swimming Code



Wild Swimming Code

The rivers and lakes of Wales are an amazing place to swim; offering beautiful scenery, crystal clean water and a sense of peace and tranquillity. Help keep them special and preserve them for future generations. Make sure that you:

- **Respect** other people
- **Protect** the natural environment
- **Enjoy** the outdoors and stay safe



Respect other people

- The Countryside Code gives important advice on how to use the countryside responsibly. Visit www.countrysidecodewales.org.uk to read the code. Be aware of it before you go out and follow it at all times.
- Don't trespass. There are areas with designated public access, including rights of way, access land and some waters with navigation rights. However, outside of these areas, you should not assume that you have access onto any land or water without the owner's permission. Find out about places with public and permissive rights of access and egress at Outdoor Wales OnLine in the interactive map section of the Natural Resources Wales website:
www.naturalresourceswales.gov.uk
- Be aware that other people may be using the lake or river you're in, such as gorge walkers, canoeists or anglers. Make sure they are aware of your presence but try not to disturb them or get in their way.
- Be discreet if you need to change your clothes in public places.

Protect the natural environment

- Many fish species lay their eggs in gravel in the shallow parts of the river between autumn and spring; they may be very vulnerable at this time and it is an offence to harm them. If possible, try and avoid contact with gravel on the riverbed, at any time of year.
- Avoid damaging plants in and around the water. Stick to established paths or bare rock. If available, use guidebooks, local information or signs to find the best places to get in and out of the water.
- Take care not to alarm birds, livestock or other animals as they may be very sensitive to disturbance; if you see animals looking agitated by your presence move away quietly.
- Be aware that ground-nesting and hole-nesting birds may be breeding on islands, banks and shingle in the spring and summer; be particularly careful not to disturb them at this time.
- Introducing invasive species of plants and animals to watercourses may have very serious effects on the habitats found there. You can prevent this by checking, cleaning and drying your swimwear thoroughly before going to a new place. For more information, visit the Non-Native Species Secretariat (NNS) pages on DEFRA's website - www.defra.gov.uk

Enjoy the outdoors and stay safe

- You are responsible for your own safety.
- Know your limits, swim with others if possible or let someone know where you are going and when you expect to return.
- Have a way of raising an alarm if you need help.
- Check the weather forecast before you leave home. Remember that water conditions may change while you are out.
- Check the water before you get in:
 - Make sure that there aren't any hidden objects in the water.
 - Make sure that it is deep enough for you not to hit the bottom.
 - Remember that the way you dive in will effect how deep you go.
 - Be aware of fast flowing water and strong currents, particularly around waterfalls and rapids.
- Take care around the water's edge as rocks, grass and mud can be slippery and unstable. Always make sure you know how to get in and out of the water safely.
- Be aware that people may be using boats or other water vessels near you:
 - Stay visible – consider wearing a brightly coloured hat.
 - Make it easy for them to avoid you.

- Take note of warning signs on or around water, particularly around man-made features such as sluices and weirs.
- Have your route planned if you're going to swim long distance:
 - Swimming in an indoor swimming pool is very different from swimming outside
 - you may not be able to swim the same distance.
 - Make sure you have identified places to get out of the water if you need to.
- The shock of sudden immersion into cold water can sometimes cause hyperventilating and even lead to drowning:
 - Enter cold water slowly and make sure that you have planned a safe way to get out.
- Hypothermia can set in after prolonged periods in cold water:
 - If you feel your arms getting weak, your fingers going numb or muscle cramping then get out of the water as soon as possible.
- Bacteria, viruses, and toxic algae may be present in some water. Generally, if the water looks or smells bad, don't enter. However, if you are entering suspect water:
 - Cover all cuts and abrasions with waterproof plasters.
 - Wear footwear to avoid cutting your feet.
 - Avoid swallowing water.

- Wash as soon possible after getting out and particularly before eating any food.
- Contact your doctor if you start experiencing any symptoms and tell them where you have been.
- The Royal Life Saving Society has more information about water safety and training on its website - www.rlss.org.uk

If you see sewage entering a watercourse call Dŵr Cymru Welsh Water's hotline on 0800 085 3968 or you can also report pollution or other wildlife crime by calling 0800 80 70 60. For non-emergency issues you can contact the police on 101.