



Mapping of open country and registered common land - FAQs

What type of maps have been produced?

Maps were produced in three stages on an area by area basis:

- **Draft** maps of open country and registered common land were produced using the best available datasets and from scanning and digitising the commons registers. The draft maps were put out to formal public consultation
- **Provisional** – each comment made during the formal consultation was considered and where appropriate, changes were made. A provisional map was then issued. At this point those with a legal interest in the land had a right to appeal against the showing of land as registered common land or open country on the provisional map
- **Conclusive** – following the appeal stage, changes were incorporated into a final map which is the legal record of open country and registered common land and will be reviewed by Natural England no later than 10 years after its publication.

Was the approach to mapping consistent across the whole country?

Yes. The Countryside Agency prepared a mapping methodology that set out, in detail, the means by which the mapping was undertaken. In 2001, the Countryside Agency consulted over 200 of the main national organisations with an interest in the mapping process on the draft methodology; the final version of the methodology is available on our website.

Was the mapping methodology tested before the mapping was carried out?

A partner organisation, the Geodata Institute, Southampton, carried out an initial study to identify the datasets that would allow determination of mountain, moor, heath and down. Three areas of the country were chosen to be mapped and evaluated in this way. This was successful, demonstrating a good correlation between the mapped land and the identification of the boundaries on the ground. This approach was developed further, resulting in the mapping methodology.

How was the mapping exercise carried out?

The mapping exercise made use of a wide range of available data (including aerial photography), information supplied by the public during the consultation period and site visits. For more details on how the mapping was carried out, refer to the ['Mapping Methodology'](#) section.

What datasets were used to map access land?

The maps of registered common land from the various commons registers held by local authorities around the country were used to map registered common land. The main datasets used to map open country were: the moorland line compiled by MAFF, Phase 1 habitat and E.S.A. surveys carried out by local authorities and aerial photography.



Isn't there a danger that vegetation change may have occurred since data capture and that the conclusive maps may therefore be inaccurate?

Some areas have inevitably altered in vegetation composition since data capture. Formal consultation on the draft maps and appeals against the provisional maps helped to resolve any anomalies.

Do the maps show the different land types?

Registered common land and open country are indicated on the conclusive maps in green and yellow shading respectively. There is no requirement under the legislation to differentiate between mountain, moor, heath and down on the maps.

CROW access land is shown in yellow shading on Ordnance Survey 1:25,000 Explorer maps and on the [Countryside Access](#) website.

Will I be able to see rights of way and access points on the maps?

Rights of way information, available to Ordnance Survey at the date on which the base maps were compiled, appears in black and white on the Ordnance Survey base map that underlies the access shading. No other information is shown on the draft, provisional or conclusive maps. However, access information points are shown both on Ordnance Survey Explorer maps and on the Countryside Access website where this information has been provided to Ordnance Survey by the access authority.

An area I usually walk on has not been shown as access land on the conclusive map. Does this mean I will have to stop walking on it?

No. The maps show only open country and registered common land. Public rights of way and any existing rights of access remain unaffected, whether on section 15 land or elsewhere. Other existing recreational uses of this or other land (whether by permission, tolerance or tradition) continue unaffected, though it remains open to the occupier to end such arrangements. You can find out more about existing recreational use of land by reading Defra's guidance note "[De facto and de jure access to the countryside](#)".

Why haven't we mapped village greens?

The Commons Registration Act 1965 provides for the registration of village greens in the same manner as for common land. However, greens are legally a completely different concept to commons, one (greens) relating to local recreational rights, the other (commons) relating to traditional 'taking' rights such as grazing stock or collecting fallen wood. Whilst many village greens may also have been common land, the 1965 Act made the two classes of land mutually exclusive for registration purposes, and created separate registers of them. The Countryside Agency's duty under section 4 of CROW was to map registered common land. As this task excluded the mapping of registered village greens, they were not shown on the map of open country and registered common land.

What are the conclusive maps?

Under the CROW Act 2000 the Countryside Agency had a duty to produce maps of registered common land and open country in England. The conclusive map exists as the legal record of the Countryside Agency's mapping of open country and registered common land in each mapping area.



PLEASE NOTE THAT THE CONCLUSIVE MAPS MUST NOT BE USED AS A WALKING MAP as there are exceptions and restrictions that may be applicable to some areas. See instead Ordnance Survey Explorer maps or, for up-to-date information on what land is open for access under the CROW Act.

Can I buy a paper copy of the conclusive map for my area?

A copy of your local conclusive map sheet at 1:25,000 scale is available to purchase for £15.00 plus £5 P&P per order by calling the Open Access Contact Centre on 0845 100 3298.

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Can any areas be added or removed from the conclusive maps?

The consultation and appeals stages of the mapping provided the only opportunity to alter the map. We are now at a the stage where no further changes can be made to the conclusive map until the statutory review.

Natural England must perform a review of the conclusive map of open country and registered common land not more than 10 years after the first issue of the map, and every 10 years thereafter. At the review, Natural England must consider whether any land shown on the map as open country or registered common land still fits the definition of these land types. They must also consider any land, not shown on the maps, which may have come to fit the definition of open country or registered common land.(Refer to the Mapping review project for further information)

What should I do if I think there is an error on the conclusive map?

Errors concerning the grey background map, should be referred to Ordnance Survey in the first instance. If Ordnance Survey are made aware of the issue then in due course the grey background data shown on the conclusive website map will be updated.

If the error concerns an area of open country or registered common land then contact the Open Access Contact Centre (0845 100 3298) for further advice.

Is the information shown on the conclusive maps shown on Ordnance Survey maps?

Areas of CROW access land are shown, along with other areas of access land on the Ordnance Survey Explorer maps. The Ordnance Survey maps do not include some areas of excepted land (refer to "What is excepted land?") such as military byelaw land, racecourses and aerodromes. Nor do they include section 28 land (where the Secretary of State for Defence or the Home Secretary has made a direction for defence or National security).