



Central Bedfordshire Council Countryside Access Team Geocaching Policy

Introduction

This policy applies to areas of land which Central Bedfordshire Council (CBC) Countryside Access Team are responsible for. There are 2 main areas:

1. Public Rights of Way (footpaths, bridleways, and byways)
2. CBC Countryside Sites

Geocaching is a high-tech' treasure hunting game played throughout the world by members of the public equipped with GPS devices. The basic idea is to locate hidden containers, called geocaches, outdoors and then share your experiences online. It is similar to orienteering in that caches have to be found and log books filled in. Sometimes tokens (such as key rings or small toys) are left in the cache for the next finder.

1. Public Rights of Way

When placing a cache on or alongside a public right of way, the onus is on the placer to gain the landowner's consent. This consent is required as the Geocaching activity goes beyond the normal purpose of 'passing and repassing' that is permitted on public rights of way.

If the placer is unable to trace a landowner we may be able to assist. If we know the landowner we will contact them and ask if they are happy for us to pass on their details for this purpose.

Once landowner consent has been gained, it would be useful to know the locations of Geocaches. If you are placing a cache on **or alongside** a public right of way, we would be grateful if you could let us know the location grid reference for our records so that we don't remove it or damage it accidentally during routine maintenance operations.

Please contact:

David Leverington Tel: 0300 300 6107

Email: david.leverington@centralbedfordshire.gov.uk

2. CBC Countryside Sites

We will consider each application for caching on our countryside sites on an individual basis.

Permission will **not** be granted on sites with the following designations

- SSSI (Site of Special Scientific Interest)
- SAM (Scheduled Ancient Monument)

Permission will also **not** be granted at other locations with sensitive habitats or other land management issues.

All locations for caches and promoted parking must be agreed on site with the site manager. In the first instance please contact:

Lyndsey Bignell Tel: 0300 300 6941

Email: Lyndsey.bignell@centralbedfordshire.gov.uk

All applications must include direct contact details for the person who will be responsible for the cache, should the application be agreed.

Cache locations will be reviewed on a regular basis and we reserve the right to request the removal of any cache without seeking prior consent if we consider it is causing land management, habitat or other issues.

Some caches may be subject to seasonal restrictions to prevent disturbance to nesting birds and other wildlife.

For safety reasons we would discourage geocaching in the hours of darkness.

CBC Countryside Access Team fully endorses the standard GAGB Guidelines and Codes of Conduct which must be adhered to for all Geocaching activities on CBC countryside sites and public rights of way.

GAGB Guidelines

1. Ensure the cache container is clearly marked, stating that the content is harmless and giving the placers e-mail address or other contact method (e.g. GAGB contact phone number)
2. Only items that would be deemed safe and acceptable for an unaccompanied child to find should be placed in a cache.
3. Caches are possible on Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) or Scheduled Ancient Monument (SAM) locations if they have permission from the landowner. In addition, the Designating Authorities for the Individual Governments/ Assemblies may be required to be consulted, and may require a formal application. No cache should be placed in such a way as to risk damage or disturbance to any SSSI or SAM.
4. When placing a cache, the onus is on the placer to seek the permission of the landowner.
5. Caches should be placed in a way that they will not be accidentally found by non-geocachers.
6. No items of food or drink of any kind should be placed in the cache.
7. Caches should not be buried. Holes should not be dug in order to place a cache.
8. Caches should not be hidden in animal holes or runs.
9. Cache containers should not be placed inside a polythene bag.
10. Fences should never be crossed (other than through a gate or by a stile) when placing or seeking a cache.
11. No caches should be of a commercial nature, either in location or content.
12. Maintenance of the cache is the responsibility of the placer.
13. When leaving the cache site, after hiding or placing a cache, there should be no visual sign of disturbance.
14. No cache should be placed in or on a dry stone wall.

15. Please do not bring geocaching into disrepute, never drive your car anywhere other than on the highways and byways, and always park legally.

GAGB Code of Conduct

...Not endanger myself or others.

- Like any outdoor activity, geocaching involves some inherent risk and many geocachers enjoy manageable risks. Minimize inordinate risks.
- When creating a cache, describe any hidden dangers and, if possible, arrange the hunt to minimize these dangers.
- When seeking a cache, know your limitations and be aware of your surroundings. Don't attempt anything beyond your abilities.
- A cache you own, or one you're trading out of, could be found by children or even a prisoner work crew - consider the location of the cache and those likely to find it when deciding what to leave as a trade item.

...Observe all laws and rules of the area.

- Don't break the law or rules of an area, or encourage others to do so, when placing or seeking a cache.
- Don't leave illegal items in a cache.

...Respect property rights and seek permission where appropriate.

- Seek permission on all private property that's not generally open to public access.
- Check if public land has a geocaching policy and respect existing policies.
- Promptly remove your cache if the land manager or steward asks.
- Do not damage or interfere with buildings, structures, or signage.

...Avoid causing disruptions or public alarm.

- Don't place a cache near schools or government buildings unless the administration and staff are fully aware of the placement.
- Use caution where children play. Parents are understandably concerned when strangers are near their children.
- Don't place a cache near critical infrastructure that might be considered a terrorist target, or create a cache that could be mistaken for a terrorist device (e.g. a pipe bomb).

...Minimize my and others' impact on the environment.

- Follow [Leave No Trace ethics](#) whenever possible.
- Practice "Lift, Look, Replace" - put all stones or logs back where you found them. Leave the area as you found it or better (e.g. pick up litter)
- Obtain the best possible coordinates for your cache to reduce unwarranted wear on the area. Recheck and correct your coordinates if finders report significant errors.
- Do not abandon a cache.

- If you stop maintaining a cache, remove the container, archive its listing and explain the disposition of the cache in your archive note, or put it up for adoption or rescue.
- If you de-list a cache on one host, but keep it on another, make sure you mention this in the archive note to prevent rescues of active caches.

...be considerate of others.

- Treat other geocachers civilly - in the field, in the forums, or wherever your paths may cross.
- Don't spoil the hunt for others - allow them to experience the cache as its owner intended.
- Avoid leaving tracks to the cache. Do not disrupt the cache area or mark the hiding spot.
- Minimize giving unsolicited clues that reveal the cache (i.e. "spoilers")
- Don't provide any hints if the cache description asks you not to. In all other cases, be cryptic or encrypt any hints or spoilers you enter in online logs.
- Edit the log if the cache owner requests you to remove spoilers.
- Promptly alert the owner of any issues with their cache. Make minor repairs if you can, it will save the owner a trip.
- Cache owners appreciate feedback - write an online log, send an email, or otherwise let the owner know about your experience with their cache.
- If you exchange trade items, trade kindly: Consider what future finders would like and leave something equal to or better than what you take.
- Move travelling items toward their goal if possible. Contact the owner if you hold a travelling item for more than a couple of weeks or so.
- Only place caches you can maintain and respond promptly to problem reports.
- Obtain permission from the originator before copying unique themes and techniques, adding to an existing series of caches, or placing a cache close to another.

...Protect the integrity of the gamepiece.

- The owner entrusts you to not damage or jeopardise the cache. Try to ensure the cache is ready for the next finder and is as good or better than you found it.
- Make sure the container is properly closed to prevent the contents from getting wet or destroyed.
- Be inconspicuous in retrieving, signing in, and replacing a cache to avoid vandalism.
- Put the cache back where you found it and hide it well. Don't move a cache to match your reading - if you suspect the cache is not in the intended spot, hide it the best you can and alert the owner as soon as possible.

Don't collect traveling items meant to stay in the game. This is tantamount to stealing.

Don't tamper with or involve a game piece in "alternate" games without the owner's permission.