

Who Cares About Bothies?

Many bothies in Scotland, Wales and Northern England are maintained as open shelters and may be used at no charge. They are used by walkers, climbers and cyclists, and also by shepherds, stalkers and other estate workers. In severe weather or after an accident, bothies have frequently saved lives, by providing shelter to those who need it.

What Facilities do they Offer?

Many bothies have open fires or stoves, although there may not be fuel available. Some will have a wooden sleeping platform and tables to cook on. Very few offer more than these basics.

What is the Attraction of Bothies?

Going to a bothy offers the chance of meeting other people who are passionate about the outdoors. You will find that the art of good conversation is alive and well around the bothy fire. A bothy is also a link with the past. Most have a history going back a century or more, to a time when the countryside was home to many more folk and the way of life was very different.

How Are Bothies Maintained?

Often landowners maintain the bothies on their estates, but many are maintained by enthusiasts. There are several volunteer groups, some long established, that look after specific bothies. The oldest is the Mountain Bothies Association, a charity registered in Scotland, that currently cares for around a hundred bothies in Scotland, England and Wales.

How Do I find Out More About Bothies?

The easiest introduction to bothies is to visit the Mountain Bothies Association website.

www.mountainbothies.org.uk

The Bothy Code

The Bothies maintained by the MBA are available by courtesy of the owners. Please respect this privilege. Please record your visit in the Bothy Log-Book.

Respect for Other Users

Please leave the bothy clean and tidy with dry kindling for the next visitors. Make other visitors welcome. Set a good example.

Respect for the Bothy

Tell us about any accidental damage. Don't leave graffiti or vandalise the bothy. Please take out all rubbish which you can't burn. Avoid burying rubbish; this pollutes the environment. Please don't leave perishable food as this attracts vermin. Guard against fire risk and ensure the fire is out when you leave. Make sure the doors and windows are properly closed when you leave.

Respect for the Surroundings

If there is no toilet at the bothy please bury human waste well away from the bothy. Use the spade provided, keep well away from the water supply and never use the vicinity of the bothy as a toilet. Never cut live wood or damage estate property. Use fuel sparingly.

Respect the Agreement with the Estate

Please observe any restrictions on use of the bothy, for example during stag stalking or at lambing time. Please remember bothies are available for short stays only.

Respect the Restriction On Numbers

Because of over crowding and lack of facilities, large groups (6 or more) should not use a bothy nor camp near a bothy without first seeking permission from the owner. Bothies are not available for commercial groups.

Bothies Are Used Entirely At Your Own Risk

Bothies

Responsible access



In 2005, new legislation came into force in Scotland, which enshrined in law rights of access to the countryside. Many of these rights are based on traditions of tolerance, mutual respect and personal responsibility. In England and Wales, meantime, legislation to open upland areas to greater public access is putting more emphasis than ever before on mutual understanding between visitors and those who live and work there.

Bothies have for generations been freely available for the public to use. This tradition began with empty buildings in remote locations being left open in case anyone needed shelter. In time wayfarers came to rely on such shelters and some set up voluntary organisations to help maintain them. However, few bothies could survive were it not for the active co-operation of both the landowners and all the people who use these shelters.



Just as a landowner may provide a stile across a fence and expect it to be used and not broken down, so too is the bothy available on the understanding that those who use it will respect the building and its contents. Many are still used on a regular basis by the landowner and estate folk. All of them offer shelter when lives may be in peril.

Each bothy is a fragile resource, which if abused will be lost. This leaflet explains some of the ways in which we can all help our system of unlocked shelters to survive.

The new legislation does not directly affect the use of bothies, but it does emphasise lessons that regular bothy users learned many years ago. When we go into the countryside we expect our presence to be tolerated and our rights to be respected. We know that this only happens if in return we can be counted on to exercise personal responsibility.



A positive attitude begins at the roadside. Parking vehicles safely can be a challenge on narrow roads in remote places. Gateways may appear inviting, but should never be blocked. Farming, forestry and deer management doesn't only happen during the week and access to a track, a field or woodland may be required at any time. Please show consideration for others from the moment you stop your vehicle.

Minimise disturbance if there are farm or estate activities in progress near or across your route try to cooperate with any reasonable requests about your choice of route. Many people legitimately earn their living from the land. If we can show that we

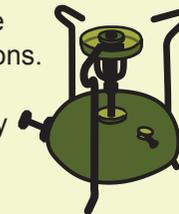


Care for the environment

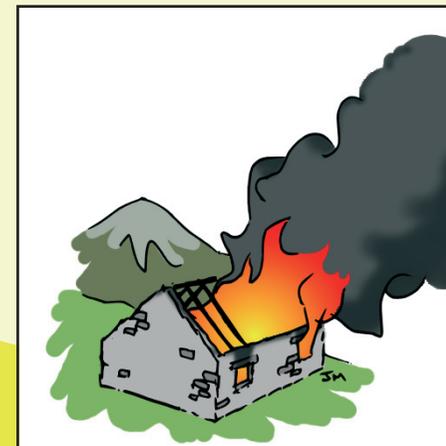
recognise this, it is more likely that our right to be in the countryside will in turn be respected.

Tread lightly both on the way to and when you are at the bothy. This doesn't only help preserve the bothy, it is also good for the environment and helps ensure the enjoyment of future visitors.

Care about the bothy. Almost all maintenance work on bothies is done by volunteer organisations, such as the Mountain Bothies Association. Most of the materials are paid for with donations and subscriptions. Vandalism squanders the labour and the money that is given freely by many for the benefit of all who use bothies.



We are fortunate to have open mountain shelters that are free to use. Please help preserve this priceless asset by behaving responsibly when going to or from a bothy and when you are there. Without your continuing co-operation, bothying could well become no more than a fading memory.



Care for the bothy