



## **Northumberland Coast Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty**

### **Coasteering code of conduct**

#### **Introduction**

Access to the coast in the UK is often taken for granted, however most of the coastline, and the paths we use to access the coast, are privately owned. Coasteering providers should familiarise themselves with land ownership of the sites they use, and any site specific access agreements that are in place.

The Northumberland Coast is also home to an abundance of wildlife ranging from spectacular birds of prey such as the Peregrine, and internationally important nesting sites for sea birds, to rare plants and lichens and delicate rocky shore species such as sponges and sea urchins.

Much of the Northumberland coast and its wildlife is protected by law from damage and disturbance, coasteering guides have a duty to lead activities on the coast with minimal impact to the environment and with respect for wildlife and other users of the coast.

This code of conduct has been developed as a guide for and by the providers of coasteering activities on the Northumberland coast to ensure that:

- The natural environment is protected
- Coasteering does not affect others' enjoyment of the coast

Safety guidelines for coasteering are provided by the [National Water Safety Forum](#)

#### **Protecting the natural environment**

Much of the Northumberland Coast is protected for its habitats, wildlife and natural beauty. Most of the coast is designated as Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI), and also Special Areas of Conservation (SAC), Special protection Areas (SPA) which are protected by law.

- Before exploring a new area as a potential coasteering site you must seek the landowner's permission. There is no right of access along the Northumberland Coast, also a right of way or open access does not give right to other activities including

coasteering. You should also consult Natural England and the Northumberland Coast AONB Partnership to check whether there are any designations or other sensitivities which might be affected by your activities. Coasteering activities within areas designated as SSSI may require consent from Natural England.

- Avoid disturbing wildlife; be ready to change your route if there is a risk that wildlife might be disturbed. All breeding wild birds, their nests and eggs are protected under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981, as amended, and it is an offence to damage or destroy their nest, eggs or chicks.

- Breeding Seabirds

There are several mainland breeding seabird colonies on the Northumberland Coast that could be affected by coasteering activities. These include the Bathing House to Cullernose Point, Castle Point (Dunstanburgh), North Sunderland Point to Seahouses Harbour, Berwick to the Scottish Border.

As a guide, birds come ashore to nest between 1<sup>st</sup> March and 31<sup>st</sup> July, although breeding birds can be sensitive to disturbance outside of this period. Disturbance to breeding seabirds can lead to the birds being flushed with and a loss of eggs and increased predation of chicks/eggs.

Breeding seabird colonies should not be used for coasteering activities whilst breeding birds are present.

Natural England have provided site-specific advice for Cullernose Point during the bird-breeding season.

- Birds of prey

Birds of prey, particularly peregrines, can use coastal cliffs. If you are in the vicinity of a breeding peregrine site, the adult birds may be agitated with increased vocalisation, if this happens you should leave the site. Disturbing certain birds listed in Schedule 1 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981, as amended, e.g. peregrine falcons, little and roseate terns, have additional protection which makes it an offence to disturb them during the breeding season.

- Be aware of the various organisations in your area concerned with the welfare of wildlife. If you come across wildlife stranded, injured or in distress, take time to report this to the relevant organisation.
- Enjoy the outdoors - it is worthwhile learning some interesting facts about the wildlife, geology, culture and heritage at the sites you use. You can then pass on this knowledge to your clients to help them enjoy the session even more, and appreciate how special the coastal environment is.

## **Respect for others**

- The Northumberland Coast provides a place for quiet recreation for a wide-range of people. Your activities should not prevent others from pursuing their activities or detract from their visit to the coast.
- Stay safe - follow the best practice for the activity.
- Show respect for other users of the coast – keep noise to a minimum when coasteering along a tranquil stretch of the coast.
- Leave the coast tidier than it was when you arrived – where possible, pick up litter as you go and report any pollution incidents / environmental damage to the Environment Agency or Northumberland County Council.