



PROW Information for Parish Footpath Observers



Definitions of Public Right of Way (PROW):

Footpath (FP)

For walkers only. Prams, pushchairs or wheelchairs are allowed along a public footpath but please be aware that many routes may not be physically suitable for that purpose. public footpaths are normally waymarked in yellow.



Bridleway (BR)

For walkers, horse riders and pedal cyclists. Cyclists must give way to walkers and horse riders. Bridleways are normally waymarked in blue.



Byways Open to All Traffic (BOAT)

These are often referred to as just byways, for motor vehicles, cyclists, horse riders and walkers. Because of its nature, a byway is used mainly as a footpath or bridleway. BOATs are normally waymarked in red.



Restricted Byway (RB)

For walkers, horse riders, cyclists and horse drawn vehicles. Restricted byways are normally waymarked in mauve.



Countryside Access Land

On Countryside Access Land, there is in many cases the “right to roam” under the provisions of the Countryside & Rights of Way Act 2000 (the CROW Act).

Additional Information

All public rights of way carry a definitive number with a prefix for the area e.g. HE166, ER265. See the Definitive Map of public rights of way, or the KCC online rights of way map (see below for web addresses of all available maps).

A permissive route is not a public right of way. The public are allowed to use it with the kind permission of the landowner, but remember such permission can be withdrawn.

There is a difference between public and private rights. Kent County Council does not hold records of private rights of way or access.



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When using public rights of way, you should be aware that there might also be additional landowners' or other private higher rights of access – sometimes with vehicles.

Rights of Way Widths

There is no general statutory definition of a minimum or maximum width. However, a width may be recorded in the Statement which accompanies the Definitive Map of PROW, or the right of way may have a customary width. Statutory provisions only apply in respect of paths which have been disturbed or ploughed. In such cases the minimum widths are:-

*	Cross field footpath	1.0 metre
*	Field edge path	1.5 metres
*	Cross field bridleway	2.0 metres
*	Field edge bridleway	3.0 metres
*	Restricted byway	5.0 metres

Inspecting paths to check whether there are any problems

Parish Footpath Observers would be expected to walk all the paths in their parish at least once a year to ensure that the list below is complied with and reported to KCC if it is not.

- 1) Paths are signposted where they join a metalled road (either public or private) with two signs either side of a road where the same path crosses a road.
- 2) Paths are free of obstructions, such as fallen trees, electric fences, barbed wire, barriers, fencing, ditches, debris (bricks, rubble, dung), posts.
- 3) Paths have sufficient waymarking with the correct coloured waymark
- 4) Stiles and gates are in good condition and free of barbed wire.
- 5) Paths across ploughed fields have been reinstated and are thus clearly marked
- 6) In arable fields, there are no crops actually growing on paths (see minimum widths)
- 7) Path widths generally are correct (as above)
- 8) No fierce animals (bulls, dogs, horses)
- 9) No intimidating signs (beware of bulls, dogs, etc.)
- 10) No misleading notices ("private" can be misleading)



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- 11) No unauthorised diversions
- 12) Shared routes with cyclists are correctly signed and have the appropriate surface
- 13) No people using firearms close to a footpath
- 14) No incidents of verbal or physical abuse (if so, also report at once to the police)
- 15) No cyclists or horse riders using footpaths
- 16) No motor vehicles using footpaths, bridleways, or restricted byways
- 17) No missing bridges

How to report path problems

Problems should be reported to Kent County Council, ideally by means of the online map-based system designed for the purpose at:

<https://webapps.kent.gov.uk/countrysideaccesscams/standardmap.aspx>

To make a report you will have to register your details with the site. Registering enables KCC to contact you if necessary, and to send you e-mail updates. It also allows you to track the current status of the problems you have logged, and to report more issues without further formalities.

Completing an online report is not difficult. Options are offered enabling you to search for the exact location of the problem. Once you have pinpointed it on the map, select the type of problem encountered from the drop-down menus, and send your report. Should you encounter any initial difficulties, the Ramblers Local FP Officer for your parish will be happy to assist you.

Should it not be possible for you to make an online report, it is still possible to send details by other means (see below). Reports should include:

- Your name, contact information and that you are a Ramblers Parish FP Observer
- Location of the problem, e.g. OS map grid reference, path number or a general description of the area concerned
- Nature of the problem and the date that you saw it
- Reports by Phone: 03000 417171
- Reports by E-mail: eastprow@kent.gov.uk
- Reports by Post: Public Rights of Way & Access Service, Kent County Council, The Granary, Penstock Hall Farm, Canterbury Road, East Brabourne, TN25 5LL.



Rights and responsibilities – general (see below for more specific information)

Most public rights of way cross private land. We all have a responsibility to look after the network of paths. If properly managed and well used, rights of way provide an excellent access to Kent's wonderful variety of coast and countryside without causing disruption to the working or natural environment.

The landowner is responsible for keeping the rights of way free from obstruction and for looking after gates and stiles on the path, whilst KCC is responsible for maintaining them (e.g. the path surface), keeping them in good condition, signing and waymarking them.

A series of eight Countryside Access Design Standards have been produced to assist landowners and Countryside Agencies in raising the quality of access furniture (e.g. gates, bridges, stiles) across the county. The standards, based on the British Standard, are designed to improve the accessibility, enjoyment and safety of the Kent countryside.

The KCC Public Rights of Way & Access Service can tell you exactly where all recorded rights of way are in cases of doubt. But normally you can look yourself at the online map or inspect the maps at the KCC offices in Invicta House, Maidstone and at the main public libraries. KCC can also advise you on your rights and responsibilities - how you should use rights of way, and how they should be managed by the Council and landowners.

Standards for Stiles and Gates

Stiles should be in a safe condition and to the standard of repair required to prevent unreasonable interference of the rights of users.

B.S.I. recommendation (but not legally enforceable) for stiles:

- * height from ground 36 inches for one step
- * height from ground 41 inches for two steps
- * step height 12 inches
- * Height between steps 12 inches
- * Width between uprights 39 inches

Gates should be freely operable, i.e., on hinges to a minimum width of 5 feet for bridleways.



Useful maps of Kent - how to access them and what they contain

Most of the information you will need can be found on the fault reporting map mentioned above. <https://webapps.kent.gov.uk/countrysideaccesscams/standardmap.aspx> It will show you where the existence of stiles, signposts and gates has been recorded. And by turning on more layers using the small blue box on the right hand margin of the map, you can see parish boundaries, which paths are on KCC's vegetation clearance contract, promoted routes (like the North Downs Way), Traffic Regulation Orders (e.g. temporary closures), and more.

There are more maps on the Explore Kent website, but a very interesting new feature, added in 2021, is the Kent Landscape Information System (KLIS) - an interactive map showing information about Kent's biodiversity and landscapes. A variety of spatial information is available, including Ordnance Survey mapping and aerial photos. You can overlay this with other information including the 2012 Kent Habitat Survey, designated sites, landscape character assessment, public rights of way and scheduled monuments. The map can be found at <https://webapps.kent.gov.uk/KCC.KLIS.Web.Sites.Public/ViewMap.aspx>

Information on the location of public rights of way shown on KCC's maps has been taken from a working database, which is frequently updated following any legal changes to the network. However, these maps are not the Definitive Map and are therefore not the legal record of public rights of way. Nor are they suitable for use in legal or planning matters.

As mentioned previously, paper copies of the Definitive Map may still be viewed at Invicta House, County Hall, Maidstone, or at the main public libraries. But the Ramblers Local FP Officer for your parish should also be able to e-mail you a digital copy of the map sheet(s) and Statements relevant to you.

Although KCC endeavour to keep their maps as up-to-date as possible, some of the information may be inaccurate. You can report any errors on the map by e-mailing eastprow@kent.gov.uk Where possible please include full information about the public right of way that you believe to be inaccurate, including footpath number and location.

Incidentally, a screen grab (an image of what you actually see on the screen) of the relevant web page may also be helpful for highlighting a problem. You can create a screen grab by pressing the "print" button found on both maps, and following the directions shown.

The Ordnance Survey mapping used in KCC's maps is provided by them under licence from Ordnance Survey.

For information about personal use of Ordnance Survey mapping visit the Ordnance Survey Copyright website.



East Kent Area

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Whilst there is very little in east Kent, Countryside Access Land designated under the 2000 CROW Act can be found not on the KCC maps but by using the search facility on the Natural England website: <http://www.openaccess.naturalengland.org.uk/wps/portal/oasys/maps/MapSearch>

This link also gives details of any temporary closures, restrictions etc.

And finally, there is yet another map, new in 2021, which shows some information similar to that on the KLIS map. However, this is a commercial map, with no connection to KCC, and some of its features are available only on monthly subscription.

<https://footpathmap.co.uk/map/?zoom=15&lng=1.35336&lat=51.21916>

Detailed Responsibilities - KCC

Kent County Council is responsible for:

- * administering the law concerning rights of way
- * recording, defining and protecting all public rights of way in the county
- * signposting footpaths, bridleways and byways, where they leave a metalled road, and waymarking along the paths where appropriate
- * maintaining and controlling natural vegetation on the surface of rights of way
- * maintaining bridges over natural water courses and ditches
- * making grants to farmers or landowners of at least 25% of the cost of maintaining existing authorised stiles and gates. This is usually done by providing the necessary materials.

Detailed Responsibilities - Farmers & Landowners

Farmers and landowners are responsible for:

- * keeping paths free from obstructions and overhanging vegetation
- * reinstating footpaths and bridleways across fields two weeks after the first disturbance (ploughing or cultivation) and within 24 hours of it being disturbed again
- * keeping rights of way free of crops to legal minimum widths
- * ensuring that vegetation overhanging or encroaching from the sides is cut back
- * ensuring established stiles and gates are maintained in a safe and easy-to-use condition for the public

NB Where stiles and gates are no longer required they can be removed with the agreement of the local KCC Public Rights of Way Officer.



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Farmers and landowners should:

- * know where public rights of way cross their land
- * never plough or disturb a public right of way along a field edge
- * obtain consent from Kent County Council before erecting new stiles and gates
- * never plough a byway, under any circumstances
- * provide adequate bridges where new ditches are made or existing ones widened
- * not put plain, barbed or electrified wire across a right of way. It is not necessarily illegal to run wire along the side of a right of way but some types of wire are considered a nuisance to the public using the path
- * never deter the public from using a public right of way, including the erection of misleading signs or markings
- * not keep any animals that are known to be dangerous in a field through which a public right of way passes
- * not keep beef bulls under 10 months of age in a field that contains a right of way. It is acceptable to keep a beef bull over 10 months in a field with cows or heifers, but dairy bulls over 10 months are never to be put in a field that contains a right of way.

The following are classified as dairy breeds: Ayrshire, Jersey, Dairy Shorthorn, Kerry, British Friesian, British Holstein and Guernsey.

The public's rights and responsibilities in more detail

Some examples of the many legal rights and responsibilities of the general public are listed below:

Members of the public may:

- * pass and re-pass on any public right of way, even if it hasn't been used for many years
- * stop to look at the view, take a photograph, and sit down to rest
- * take a pram, pushchair, wheelchair, but expect to encounter stiles on footpaths
- * take a dog, preferably on a lead, but always under close control
- * take a short route around an illegal obstruction
- * remove an illegal obstacle sufficiently to get past



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Members of the public may not:

- * roam over land at will (except on Countryside Access Land), or deviate from the line of the Right of Way unless it is to pass an obstruction
- * use a vehicle on a byway if it is not registered, taxed and insured, or ride/pedal/drive recklessly, carelessly or without consideration
- * use footpaths if you are a cyclist and horse rider (except with the permission of the landowner)

The Countryside Code

Please remember to - Always follow the Countryside Code - be safe!

- Plan ahead and follow any signs
- Leave gates and property as you find them
- Protect plants and animals, and take your litter home
- Keep dogs under close control
- Consider other people

Countryside Access Land (usually indicated by this sign)



Can I always walk on Access Land?

Not always. Farmers and landowners have the right to close their land sometimes, usually for reasons of nature conservation, land management or public safety. If access land is temporarily closed, it will have a 'restriction' placed on it so there is no public access. This should be shown – with details - on the Natural England mapping mentioned above. Note: existing public rights of way are not affected by Open Access restrictions or exclusions under the CROW Act.



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Can I take my dog onto Access Land?

You can normally enjoy walking with your dog on open access land. However, sometimes there may be a ban on taking your dog or you may need to keep it on a lead due to sensitive wildlife. Such restrictions should also be shown on the Natural England mapping.

While exercising the access right with a dog, you must use a fixed lead no more than 2 metres (6 feet) long at all times near livestock, and from 1st March to 31st July as this is the ground-nesting bird season. You may also find that dogs are excluded from lambing enclosures at lambing times.

Incidentally, you do not have to put your dog on a lead on public paths as long as it is under close control. But you must not allow your dog to defecate on ground where animals graze. Always pick up your dog's poo and dispose of it in an appropriate bin. But as a general rule, keep your dog on a lead if you cannot rely on its obedience. On a bridleway or byway this could be especially important as you may meet horses and could be liable for damages if your dog causes an accident.

And Finally

- You can access **all** of KCC's online material on the subject of public rights of way via the homepage at <http://www.kent.gov.uk/waste-planning-and-land/public-rights-of-way>
- And don't forget that the Ramblers Local FP Officer for your parish is potentially one of your main resources, so do liaise with them as appropriate.

Enjoy your role as a Ramblers Volunteer.
Your valued contribution will make a difference.
Thank you.