

Coronavirus - your questions answered Public Rights of Way Update 14.05.2020

Are public rights of way (footpaths and bridleways and byways) still open?

The updated position regarding public paths in England is as follows:

- The public rights of way network in England is open and available.
- The government's priority is to save lives and the best way to protect yourself and others from illness is to stay at home.
- However, exercise is important for people's physical and mental wellbeing, so the [government](#) has said people can leave their homes for exercise as often as they wish.
- The public rights of way network is a great place to take exercise, there is a low risk of the type of overcrowding which has led to the closure of other open spaces and, provided users follow guidance about keeping a safe distance from others, it is unlikely to present a problem at this time.
- We are increasingly receiving reports of people wandering across private land and fields. Please respect the people and animals that live there and **keep to the marked paths**
- Remember your actions can affect peoples' lives and livelihoods
- You may see signs requesting you follow a small diversion around the perimeter of a property away from buildings and residents and/or polite notices asking users to consider using another route if residents are self-isolating. Please, as a matter of courtesy, follow these alternative routes.

When in the countryside, follow the [Countryside Code](#). You can do this by:

- leaving no trace of your visit and taking all of your litter home
- not using barbecues as they risk causing wildfires
- keeping dogs under effective control and on a lead when you are around farm animals
- leaving gates as you find them and following instructions on signs
- keeping to footpaths and following signs where they suggest alternative routes
- [Countryside code video](#)

What can I do if a public right of way crosses my land?

The guidance is the same as the above. With this additional information regarding public paths in England:

- The public rights of way network in England is open. Public Rights of Way must not be closed to the public. There has been no change in the law and KCC has no new powers to close them.
- It is recognised that some paths are busier than others, are narrow and enclosed or pass close to property where people live or work, but there are some measures that landowners may take to keep themselves safe:
 - Clearly mark paths lessen the chance of users wandering off it.
 - Land managers may wish to consider tying gates open if it is safe to do so, so that walkers do not need to touch the gate.
 - Where there is a genuine case of a public right of way running close to a property (including its garden) containing a person who is vulnerable and/or self-isolating you may wish to provide a signed alternative route on land in the same ownership. The public right of way must however remain open. Suggested wording for signs can be found [here](#)
- There's no evidence of human-animal transference of coronavirus.