

Public Rights of Way and Open Access Land in West Berkshire during the Coronavirus pandemic

RIGHTS OF WAY /OPEN ACCESS LAND

All public rights of way (PROW) and open access land (including West Berkshire commons) remain open. Levels of use are higher than normal during this period, when many people are at home, and seeking outdoor exercise and recreation. At this time it is especially important to be considerate to others.

PROWs are signposted and maintained by the District Council:

Footpath - for pedestrians only.

Bridleway - for pedestrians, cyclists and equestrians only.

Restricted Byway - for pedestrians, cyclists, equestrians and carriage drivers only.

Byway - for for pedestrians, cyclists, equestrians, carriage drivers, and vehicles.

All PROWs are marked at the roadside with signposts, and at intervals along the routes with small arrows. Public footpaths in West Berkshire are marked with signs like these, and with yellow arrows.

Please stick to public rights of way, and stay within the limits of open access land.

Public rights of way map: <https://gis1.westberks.gov.uk/applicationtemplates/onlinemap/>

Open access land map:

<http://www.openaccess.naturalengland.org.uk/wps/portal/oasys/maps/Section4>

Sometimes during this pandemic, a landowner may have requested that the public uses an alternative route, if the official line passes through a sensitive area. The official line must remain available.

APPROPRIATE BEHAVIOUR

PROWs are highways, and you must use them with due care and attention.

Everyone must abide by the **Countryside Code**, and allow for the 2 metres social distancing to take place.

Respect other people:

- consider the local community and other people enjoying the outdoors
- leave gates and property as you find them and follow paths unless wider access is available

Protect the natural environment:

- leave no trace of your visit and take your litter home
- keep dogs under effective control

Enjoy the outdoors:

- plan ahead and be prepared
- follow advice and local signs

Respect other people

- Please respect the local community and other people using the outdoors. Remember your actions can affect people's lives and livelihoods.

Note: Our Rights of Way Rangers and contractors are currently very busy clearing the paths of vegetation. Social distancing is extremely important in order to keep the operatives of the machinery and the public safe. Before starting work they are displaying signs which ask you to keep a social distance and where necessary to make sure the operatives see you before you proceed.

Occasionally, where paths are very narrow and/or winding, we are temporarily closing the paths whilst the clearance is taking place. Signs clearly state the path is temporarily closed.

For more information, visit the West Berkshire Council Coronavirus PROW web site:

<https://info.westberks.gov.uk/coronavirus-residents-prows>

CYCLING ON PUBLIC RIGHTS OF WAY

We are unfortunately receiving lots of complaints from walkers about cyclists riding inconsiderately and too fast both on footpaths and bridleways.

Cyclists have a legal right to ride on bridleways providing they give way to walkers and horseriders. There is no legal right to cycle on a public footpath although it isn't a specific offence to - it is a trespass against the landowner.

Please check the status of a right of way before cycling along it, so you know if it is appropriate for you to be using it. Please do not cycle on these routes.

The Kennet & Avon Canal Towpath is a public footpath but there are rights to cycle along it. The Canal and Rivers Trust have a Towpath Code <https://canalrivertrust.org.uk/news-and-views/our-campaigns/share-the-space-our-towpath-code> and tips for cyclists <https://canalrivertrust.org.uk/news-and-views/blogs/waterfront/cycling-on-the-towpath>

Please make sure you ride with consideration and care especially when passing walkers to ensure everyone can use and enjoy our rights of way safely.

Thank you.

West Berkshire District Council Public Rights of Way Team.

Prow@westberks.gov.uk 01635 519080.