

# CROPPING AND PLOUGHING PUBLIC RIGHTS OF WAY



## A guide for landowners and farmers

Somerset County Council's Rights of Way Team look after one of the longest rights of way networks in the country. If all of Somerset's rights of way were laid end to end, they would stretch from Taunton to New York in the United States, a distance of nearly 6000km.

The Rights of Way Team works closely with local landowners and farmers to help them keep rights of way that cross their land open and easy to use. By working in partnership, we can encourage people to explore Somerset's beautiful and diverse countryside responsibly and safely.

Two common complaints we receive from people concern paths that have either been left ploughed or are so overgrown by crops they're impassable.

The purpose of this leaflet, published with support from the National Farmers Union (NFU) and the Country Land and Business Association (CLA), is to provide an easy to use reference guide that lets you know:-

- Whether you can plough a public right of way;
- What you should do after you have ploughed a public right of way; and
- The width that public rights of way should be maintained to ensure they are passable.



### ▼ What are Public Rights of Way?

There are four categories of public rights of way:-

- ➔ **Public Footpaths** – Public Footpaths provide a right of way for walkers & wheelchair users. They are waymarked with a yellow arrow.
- ➔ **Public Bridleways** – Public Bridleways may be used for riding or leading a horse. They also provide a right of way for walkers, wheelchair users and pedal cyclists (as long as the cyclist gives way to all other users). They are waymarked with a blue arrow.
- ➔ **Restricted Byways** – Restricted Byways provide a right of access for walkers, wheelchair users, people riding or leading a horse, pedal cyclists and users of non-mechanically propelled vehicles such as a horse-drawn carriage. Restricted Byways are waymarked with a purple coloured arrow.
- ➔ **Byways Open to All Traffic (BOATS)** – Along a Byway Open to all Traffic, a right of way exists for walkers, wheelchair users, people on horseback, pedal cyclists and people driving all kinds of wheeled vehicles including horse drawn and mechanically-propelled vehicles. A red arrow is used to waymark a BOAT.

### ▼ Quick Ploughing and Cropping Reference Guide

	Footpath	Bridleway	Restricted Byways & BOATS
<b>Cross Field Paths</b>			
Can I plough a cross field path?	Yes	Yes	no
What should I do after I have ploughed a cross field path?	Within 14 days, restore the path so it has a level and even surface		
How wide should a cross field path be?	1m* minimum	2m* minimum	3m* minimum

	Footpath	Bridleway	Restricted Byways & BOATS
<b>Field Edge/ Headland Paths</b>			
Can I plough a field edge path?	No	No	No
What should I do to a hedge next to a field edge path?	Please ensure the hedge and any overhanging vegetation is cut back so the path is easy to use and easy to follow. Don't forget to clear high enough along bridleways and byways for horse riders		
How wide should a field edge path be?	1.5m* minimum	3m* minimum	3m* minimum

	Footpath	Bridleway	Restricted Byways & BOATS
<b>Crops</b>			
What should I do if crops have started to grow on or over a path that crosses my field?	Please do not allow crops (other than grass) to grow or overhang a public right of way. If crops do grow along or overhang a path, they should be cut or sprayed off so the public right of way is apparent on the ground and easy to follow.		

(\* Unless a specific width is recorded in the Definitive Map and Statement)



### ▼ Enforcement and Cross Compliance

We ask all landowners and farmers to do everything they can to ensure all paths that cross their land remain open and easy to use. This will prevent people from wandering off the public right of way and inadvertently damaging your crops or worrying livestock.

If the Rights of Way Team receive reports that a path has not been reinstated following ploughing or is so overgrown with crops it's difficult to use, we will firstly always informally ask the landowner to resolve the problem within a convenient and reasonable period of time.

Unfortunately, if our informal approach is unsuccessful and the path remains obstructed, our Enforcement Officers may have to resolve the matter formally by taking appropriate enforcement action.

Landowners and farmers are now required to maintain all public rights of way crossing their land when claiming payments under the Single Payment Scheme administered by the Rural Payments Agency (RPA). If our Enforcement Officers have to take formal enforcement action to ensure a ploughed or overgrown path is reinstated to its minimum width, they have no option than to follow DEFRA's advice and report the matter to the RPA.

### ▼ How to Contact us

Somerset County Council's Rights of Way Team is here to help you resolve any rights of way issues you may have.

We would be more than happy to provide you with a map showing the rights of way that cross your landholding. To get hold of a map, or if you would like to discuss or report a problem on a public right of way, please contact us by:-

- ☎ Telephone [0300 123 2224](tel:03001232224) if possible please have an Ordnance Survey grid reference or path number ready to assist our advisors
- 🖱 Visit our website [www.somerset.gov.uk/rightsofway](http://www.somerset.gov.uk/rightsofway)



This document is also available in Braille, large print, on tape and on disc.

