**Coronavirus: Public Rights of Way guidance**

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 still important for people’s physical and mental wellbeing, so the government has said people can leave their homes for exercise once a day.

As such, the Public Rights of Way network in Shropshire remains open to allow people to exercise and get some fresh air during these difficult times. However, people are asked to use the network responsibly to help reduce the spread of coronavirus.

NFU and CLA have told us that some landowners are still concerned about increased use of Public Rights of Way on their property increasing the risk to livestock, such as instances of gates being left open and dogs not being controlled.

When exercising their right of way, the public should be mindful that some Public Rights of Way pass through residential properties and/or working farms. Local farmers have no choice but to continue working to provide food to feed the nation, look after their animals and tend their crops.

Defra have [shared a video](https://www.facebook.com/DefraGovUK/videos/848907328918645/) reminding people to follow the [Countryside Code](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/the-countryside-code/the-countryside-code).

Please be respectful when using these parts of the network. To help prevent the spread of coronavirus, please ensure that you:

* Keep to the line of the Public Right of Way
* Avoid approaching buildings off the line of the Public Right of Way
* Do not approach farm animals or pets belonging to those properties.

Although Public Rights of Way remain open, you should only access those that are immediately local to you and are within walking distance from your home. You should not be making special journeys to access them, should not gather on the network. If you are aware of a problem with people gathering on the right of way, then you should inform the Police who have the powers to disperse such groups.

For the latest advice about using green spaces, please see the latest update from the [Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA)](https://www.gov.uk/government/news/coronavirus-guidance-on-access-to-green-spaces).

Advice to land owners or occupiers

If you live in close proximity to Public Rights of Way, please remember that the public have a legal right to use it. It is an offence to block them under Section 137 of the Highways Act 1980 and Section 14 of the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000.

The risk of the coronavirus being passed on to others from people using public rights of way and other paths and trails is considered to be very low as long as people follow the Government’s instructions to maintain social distancing.

However, in very limited circumstances where large numbers of people are using such routes, landowners may consider the following measures:

• Tying gates open if it is safe to do so, so that walkers do not need to touch the gate.

• Temporarily displaying polite notices that encourage users to respect local residents and workers by following social distancing guidelines and consider using alternative routes that do not pass through gardens, farmyards or schools.

• Note: this is a polite request only, and there is no power under the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 (CROW) or the Highways Act 1980 for landowners to close or obstruct a public right of way or use of access land

• Offering an alternative route around gardens and farmyards only where it is safe to do so (you must gain permission from relevant landowners and make sure the route is safe for users and livestock) provided that the original right of way is maintained.

Please be aware that if you are experiencing symptoms of coronavirus illness or at risk of severe illness if you catch coronavirus, then you must stay at home. See the latest guidance from [Public Health England](https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/public-health-england).

**Keep up to date**

Sign-up to receive our daily coronavirus email update to keep up to date with what is happening in Shropshire. You can [sign-up here](https://public.govdelivery.com/accounts/UKSHROPSHIRE/subscriber/new?topic_id=UKSHROPSHIRE_42).

Follow Shropshire Council on [Facebook](https://www.facebook.com/shropshirecouncil/), [Twitter](https://twitter.com/ShropCouncil) and [Instagram](https://www.instagram.com/shropshirecouncil/?hl=en).

**Useful Links**

Shropshire Council: <http://www.shropshire.gov.uk/coronavirus/>

Government: <https://www.gov.uk/coronavirus>

NHS: <https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/coronavirus-covid-19/>

Public Health England: <https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/public-health-england>