

Countryside Access Design Standards

Path Widths and Heights

The width of a path can often be a contentious issue. The following guidance is designed to help Officers and Landowners understand how widths and heights on the public rights of way network should be determined.

Responsibilities

It is an offence to reduce the width of a public right of way (PROW). The County Council has a responsibility to ensure that the entire width is open and available for public use. The County Council may act to remove any obstruction that reduces the width of a highway.

Finding out the width of an existing Public Right of Way

Listed below are a few ways to determine how wide an existing path should be in the event of a dispute:

1. Check for widths recorded within the Definitive Statement for the path. There is provision within the Definitive Statement to record the width of the right of way and any limitation along it. Where the path has a recorded width within the Definitive Statement, this acts as conclusive evidence as to the width of the path. A copy of the Definitive Statement can be obtained from the Countryside Access Service and in many cases from the local Parish Council.
2. Check for widths recorded in legal orders such as Definitive Map Modification Orders, Public Path Orders or Inclosure Awards. A request to the Definitive Map Team within the Countryside Access Service should be made to find out if it is possible to view these documents.
3. In cases where the path runs between two established boundary features, such as a hedge or a ditch, the whole width between them can be presumed to be available, so long as they were laid out in reference to the highway. Mapping evidence should be investigated, as it may be that ditches or hedges have been removed but the highway remains. The width of paths can be measured on maps using a scale rule, however caution should be exercised as the thickness of lines, particularly on old maps, may vary in width.

4. Arable land, field edge paths and cross field paths are subject to legal requirements. Please refer to the "Ploughing, crops and paths" leaflet for guidance.
5. In the event that a width cannot be established by any of the above means, the following table provides guidance as to what the County Council would normally expect to be available for public use.

Recommended minimum path widths and heights

Status	Width (Metres)	Exceptions
Footpath	2	• Legally authorised gaps, gates or stiles that adhere to the design standards
Bridleway	3	
Restricted Byway	3	
Byway	5	• Bridges that adhere to the design standards • Established/Permanent natural features such as trees or rock faces

* These are the minimum advised widths and may vary, dependant on local circumstance. An application can be made to the Countryside Access Service to include a width within the Definitive Statement. This procedure can only be processed with sufficient supporting evidence.

The minimum advised heights for PROW are as follows:

Footpath	2.2 metres
All other PROW	4 metres