

As Holt parishioners we are fortunate to have over 70 public rights of way in our Parish allowing us to ramble over vast areas of private land. Many of these historic routes have existed for hundreds of years.

These days they are marked by nationally recognised colour-coded signs:

- **Yellow = Footpath** - for walkers, and possibly accessible for prams, pushchairs, wheelchairs and electric mobility scooters.
- **Blue = Bridleway** - for walkers, horse-riders, and possibly suitable for bicycles.
- **Red = Byway Open to All Traffic (BOAT)** - for all users including motor vehicles, but primarily for walkers and horse riders.
- **Purple = Restricted Byway** - for walkers, horse riders, bicycles and non-mechanically propelled vehicles (eg. horse drawn carriages)

Note: *It is an offence to drive or ride a mechanically propelled vehicle (excluding an electric mobility scooter) along a footpath, bridleway or restricted byway without lawful authority.*

While you have a right to use these routes, you need to respect *The Countryside Code* guidelines and be aware that by not doing so you may be committing a prosecutable offence.

You have the following responsibilities and duties:

- To respect everyone you meet, including the landowners.
- To follow the signs and stay on the path leaving all gates as you find them.
- Not to remove, damage, or tamper with any any structures along the route: signs (including way-marking signs and posts), gates, stiles, fences, farm machinery etc.
- Not to alter the path in any way such that it will cause a danger to other users.
- Not to harm or disturb livestock or wildlife, or allow your dog to do so.
- To protect the environment.
- Not to damage natural vegetation or crops, or the surface of the ground.
- To take all your litter home.
- Not to start any fires plus, in areas where signs permit BBQs, to ensure they are properly extinguished.

Dogs - Although there is no statutory right to take a dog on a public right of way there are no exclusion orders.

- You should keep them under close control, although not necessarily on a lead - they have no right to stray off the path.
- Be aware that farmers can legally shoot, or injure, any dog that is worrying livestock.
- Take your dog poo and the plastic bag home with you to prevent disease transmission to livestock.

Landowners also have rights, responsibilities and duties:

- To maintain stiles and gates in good repair.
- Not to obstruct a public right of way.
- Not to erect misleading signs.
- To leave the surface of a path on a field-edge undisturbed (ie, not ploughed) and to ensure the line of a path remains apparent on the ground when ploughing or cultivating.
- To protect their livestock.
- To observe the legislation regarding bulls in fields where there is a right of way.

Report a problem?

Go to the Dorset Council webpage  'Rights of Way'  'Report and Problem'.

You will also find a link to the Definitive Map showing the public rights of way.