

Access to public rights of way and Coronavirus (COVID-19) - May 2020

The restrictions on movement announced by the government in March 2020 and revised on May 2020¹ remain relevant to public rights of way and the countryside access network.

The outdoors is a great place for exercise which has numerous benefits for health and well-being, especially at a time when we all face social isolation and anxiety. Walking and cycling can also be excellent ways to commute to work when working from home is not possible. However, people must adhere to government rules and advice for the safety of all.

Please also be aware that some people live in very close proximity to public rights of way - including residential moorings on canal and river towpaths and farmers. Please consider their need for social distancing, treat each other with respect and be aware that some of these people may be in self-isolation because of illness or other vulnerabilities.

The rules to adhere to are

1. Use your local public rights of way network only for lawful access, which is to exercise on your own, in your family household group, or with one person from outside your household group whilst maintaining social distancing. Check our online map of Oxfordshire's public rights of way [here](#)
2. Public rights of way can be used for spending time outdoors as well as exercising. However social distancing and hygiene rules must still be followed
3. Think very carefully before travelling to places outside your local area and 'honeypot' sites with large car parks or where there are residential moorings. Car parks, toilets and other facilities may not be open and you may be putting you or others at risk of contamination and increasing pressure on local communities
4. Keep a minimum of 2 metres (6ft) spacing between your household group and others you may meet on the paths. Increase spacing when running and cycling if possible. Give advance warning when approaching from the rear and stay alert by not using headphones or ear buds
5. Don't arrange to meet other families or groups to share your exercise walk or ride
6. Carry, use and take home your tissues and other health products. Take care using or touching gates and other access furniture and hard surfaces
7. Where your local routes use canal towpaths and river banks please respect residents who have limited space and may be in self-isolation due to illness and other vulnerabilities. Consider using other routes.
8. Although there's no evidence of human-animal transference of coronavirus, it is sensible to limit contact with other families' dogs and farm livestock as part of social distancing

Oxfordshire County Council
Public Rights of Way Strategy & Operations
www.oxfordshire.gov.uk/countrysideaccess

¹ HM Government (2020) OUR PLAN TO REBUILD: The UK Government's COVID-19 recovery strategy CP239
https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/884171/FINAL_6.6637_CO_HM_G_C19_Recovery_FINAL_110520_v2_WEB_1_.pdf