



Ploughing, crops and public rights of way: a practical guide

This leaflet is designed to assist landowners, farm managers and agricultural contractors. It explains the legal requirement to keep public rights of way open and available after ploughing and cropping.

Before ploughing

- Ensure your tractor driver or agricultural contractors know where paths are and how to deal with them.
- Field edge rights of way must not be ploughed.
- Avoid ploughing cross field footpaths and bridleways if you can reasonably do so.
- Cross field byways open to all traffic and restricted byways must not be ploughed.

Following ploughing

- Within 14 days of ploughing, the path must have a firm level surface and be marked on the ground to at least the minimum width.
- It is good practice, and saves time, to re-establish the right of way before leaving the field, using sets of wheelings to define the minimum width.

Further cultivation

- If further cultivation is necessary after the expiry of the 14 day period following ploughing, the path must be reinstated within 24 hours. This is best achieved before leaving the field by marking the path with two or more sets of wheelings.

During the growing season

(for crops other than grass)

- As the crop germinates, the path must remain evident on the ground.
- As soon as is practical and before the crop reaches a height of 150mm (6") the crop should be removed from the path.
- The path should remain clear of the crop to its minimum width, including crop encroaching from the sides throughout the growing season.

Tall crops

- To prevent obstruction to the minimum width, tall crops such as oil seed, rape or maize may need additional clearance during the growing season. A practical solution is to clear extra width, equal to the anticipated height of the crop.

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What happens if a path is not reinstated?

Landowners and farm managers have a responsibility to ensure that when a field is cropped or ploughed, any public right of way across it is reinstated. This should be done to a minimum, legally prescribed width and within set timescales.

Norfolk County Council seeks to work with farmers, the National Farmers' Union and the Country Land and Business Association to ensure that the legal requirements are met.

The Highways Act 1980 places a duty on Norfolk County Council as the Highway Authority to ensure that the law is complied with. Norfolk County Council is committed to ensuring paths remain available to the public and may use those powers given to it by the Act, should they be necessary.

Landowners are reminded that the requirements as outlined in this leaflet represent good agricultural practice. Failure to keep public rights of way in good order could result in prosecution with offenders being reported to the Rural Payments Agency for non-compliance with GAEC (Good Agricultural & Environmental Conditions) 7B.



Ploughing and Cropping Reference Guide

Cross Field Paths

	Footpath	Bridleway	Byway/Restricted Byway
What is the minimum width required?	1m (unless stated otherwise)	2m (unless stated otherwise)	3m (unless stated otherwise)
Can I plough across field path?	Yes, but only where it is not reasonably convenient to avoid it.		No
What do I have to do after I have ploughed?	Within 14 days ensure that the path has a firm and even surface that is easy to use and ensure the path is the minimum width or wider.		N/A

Field Edge Paths

	Footpath	Bridleway	Byway/Restricted Byway
What is the minimum width of a field edge path?	1.5m (unless stated otherwise)	3m (unless stated otherwise)	5m (unless stated otherwise)
Can I plough a field edge path?	NO		
Must I do anything to a field edge path?	You must ensure that the hedge is cut back and any boundaries are well maintained so that the path is easy to use.		

Crops

Crops have started to grow on the path which crosses my field, what should I do?	You must keep the minimum width of the path clear from any crops and ensure the route is clearly marked. This will help to stop people wandering away from the path and onto your land.
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Further technical advice is available. **Email:** prow@norfolk.gov.uk **Call:** 0344 00 8020
Or www.norfolk.gov.uk/out-and-about-in-norfolk/public-rights-of-way

This leaflet is available in other formats or in different languages.

For a copy please call 0344 800 8020 **or** **textphone** 0344 800 8011

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