

CHILBOLTON PARISH COUNCIL (CPC)

POLICY FOR THE CLOSING OF THE GATE TO THE CHILBOLTON COW COMMON GRAVEL AREA

Background

The River Test is a SSSI and Chilbolton Cow Common is a SSSI. As owners, Chilbolton Parish Council (CPC) has an obligation to protect this environment within its statutory powers and in accordance with the Stewardship agreement with the Rural Payments Agency that is overseen by Natural England.

The Registered Commons Act 2006 and the Countryside and Rights of Way (CROW) Act 2000 give statutory rights for people to access Chilbolton Cow Common ("Common") on foot with dogs that are under control.

The Test Way, a Public Right of Way for horse riders, cyclists and walkers, crosses the Common and the owners of the dwellings on the Common have a legal right of vehicular access to their properties.

CPC has to respect these obligations whilst aiming to limit the fire risk, damage, obstruction to access to dwellings on the Common, litter and serious overcrowding that can occur.

In order to achieve this aim, CPC will close the gate to the gravel area at times that it is deemed necessary to do so as laid out in this policy.

Objective of Policy

The objective of this policy is to clearly set out the circumstances under which the gate to the gravel area will be closed, and the manner by which gate closure is undertaken.

Reasons for Gate Closure

CPC delegate the responsibility for gate closure to the Chilbolton Open Spaces Committee (COSC).

In the event of an anticipated threat to the Common, or for land management or safety reasons, COSC will consider whether to close the gate, determining when closure should occur and closure duration.

The following tables set out the circumstances under which COSC may decide to close the gate, the reasons why this action may be necessary, and the notice of action to be given. Two types of closure are considered, closure for land management and safety reasons and closure to reduce nuisance and risk to the common.

Closure for land management and safety reasons

This will be determined by the COSC Chairman and not put to majority vote by COSC.

Factor	Why	Notice to be given
Common maintenance (including, but not limited to, tree works)	To allow clear access for contractors and/or volunteers	Ideally one weeks' notice, to be displayed on gravel area notice board
Rounding up or releasing of cattle	To allow clear access for the cattle lorry	Ideally one weeks' notice, to be displayed on gravel area notice board
River works (including, but not limited to, work on river bank, river bed, tree trimming and felling, re- stocking with fish, grass cutting and fence repair)	To allow clear access for contractors and/or volunteers	Ideally one weeks' notice, to be displayed on gravel area notice board
Travellers in the area	To prevent access to the Common for travellers to set up camp	CPC may not get much notice and therefore the gate may be closed with immediate effect
Urgent/Emergency situations	To prevent further vehicle access to the gravel area and allow emergency vehicles clear access	There is no notice of when an emergency situation will arise; therefore the gate may be closed with immediate effect

Closure to reduce nuisance and risk

The following factors will require a majority vote by COSC. If there is a need to agree outside a COSC meeting, the COSC committee shall be consulted via email. If there is no majority, the chair of COSC may apply their casting vote.

Factor	Why	Notice to be given
Extreme Weather or Wildfire risk (EXCEPTIONAL Level as advised by Natural England CROW access Fire Severity Index)	To reduce the risk of vehicles blocking access to the common when the the fire risk is heightened and to help protect the Common	As much notice as possible, but may be closed immediately
Anti-social behaviour	To reduce associated nuisance such as excessive drinking, noise, litter.	As much notice as possible, but may be closed immediately

Factor	Why	Notice to be given
Public Holidays and Hampshire school holidays	To reduce the risk of too many vehicles attempting to park on the gravel area due to increased number of visitors, resulting in blocked access and traffic issues in Joys lane. Added pressure is to be expected on the river and SSSI and closure will help to protect the Common and river.	COSC will confirm each year the set dates on which the gate will be closed. This will enable advance notice to be given.
Extended periods of good weather	To reduce the risk of too many vehicles attempting to park on the gravel area due to increased number of visitors, resulting in blocked access and traffic issues in Joys lane. Added pressure is to be expected on the river and SSSI and closure will help to protect the Common and river.	As much notice as possible

Gate Closure Actions

Where it is possible to give advance notice of any closure, a notice will be displayed on the gravel area notice board, and on the CPC noticeboards located on Grindstone Green, at the Village Hall and in Branksome Avenue.

COSC will request the Village Webmaster circulate notifications of gate closure via email to Chilbolton and Wherwell residents. COSC shall also endeavour to use social media to give advance or immediate warning of any closure.

A notice will be positioned at the top of Joys Lane. This notice will state that the Common is closed to vehicles and that there is no turning on Joys Lane.

CPC will be informed of gate closure via email to Councillors and the Clerk.

Common residents will be informed of impending gate closures via email or telephone.

Closure of the gate does not prevent access to the common on foot or to horse riders. Visitors are encouraged to use the car park at West Down for parking for the Common. The Common is also accessible on foot from Village St.

Gate lock code

The combination for the gate lock will be made available to all councillors and members of COSC, to the Common residents and to the fire, ambulance and waste collection services. Residents may release the code to delivery services in strict confidence.

The combination for the gate lock will also be made available to Blue Badge holders upon application to the Clerk. To apply for the gate code, Blue Badge holders should send a copy of their Blue badge (photo or scanned copy of the badge) to the Parish Council Clerk at least a week in advance at chilbolton.clerk@hotmail.co.uk.

The code will be changed in February each year by COSC.

Policy Review

This policy will be reviewed annually and may be amended by a majority vote at a meeting of CPC.

Agreed by COSC and CPC
2 June 2025