

CHILBOLTON PARISH COUNCIL (CPC)
POLICY FOR THE CLOSING OF CHILBOLTON COW COMMON (COMMON)
GRAVEL AREA TO VEHICLES

Background

The River Test is a SSSI and Chilbolton Cow Common is a SSSI. As owners the Parish Council 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 the Common on foot with dogs that are under control.

The Test Way is a Public Right of Way for horse riders, cyclists and walkers and crosses the Common and the owners of houses on the Common have a legal right of access to their properties for all types of vehicle, particularly emergency vehicles.

CPC has to respect all these legal obligations within its statutory powers whilst seeking to limit the fire risk, damage, litter and serious overcrowding mainly during holiday weekends in Summer.

CPC have recently installed a metal gate that will make closing the gravel area to vehicles much easier whilst enabling access to authorised vehicles by using a lock with a code.

Objectives of Policy

Whilst conforming to the statutory obligations set out above CPC will seek to:-

- Protect and enhance the SSSI and the River Test in accordance with the Stewardship agreement.
- Permit access to persons on foot with dogs on leads.
- Prevent parked vehicles obstructing vehicular access to dwellings situated on the Common.
- Provide access to persons with disabilities and infants, equestrians and those with fishing rights.
- Keep the gravel area open but after closure to reopen as soon as possible.

How will the decision to close the gate be made: -

CPC delegate the responsibility of the gate operation to the Chilbolton Open Spaces Committee (COSC).

In the event of an anticipated threat to the Common or for safety reasons COSC may make a decision to close the gate in terms of the policy and advise CPC councillors and CPC clerk by email of the dates and times of closure. Closures will be included in the monthly COSC report.

Policy for normal closures by COSC.

Factor	Why	Notice to be given
Common maintenance (inc. 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 an area of hard standing for the cattle lorry to park, without parked vehicles being in the way	Ideally one weeks' notice, to be displayed on gravel area notice board
River works (inc. 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 need to be shut immediately
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 and the gate will be closed immediately.

The following factors and any other matter will require a CPC decision by email. If there is no majority the Chairman can use his casting vote, otherwise no action will be taken.

Factor	Why	Notice to be given
Extreme Weather Alerts (Heat and Wildfire risk)	To reduce the number of vehicles using the gravel area and thereby reducing overcrowding.	As much notice as possible, but may be closed immediately
Anti-social behaviour	To reduce associated nuisance such as excessive drinking, noise, litter.	The gravel area will be closed at night and notice to be displayed on gravel area notice board.
Holiday weekends, Public Holidays and school holidays.	Added pressure is to be expected on the river and SSSI and closure will help to protect the Common and river.	CPC will consider if the gate should be closed on set dates throughout the year so that advance notice can be given.

Actions when gate is closed

Where it is possible to give advance notice of any closure a notice will be displayed on the gravel area notice board.

CPC will ask the Village Webmaster to circulate any notifications to Chilbolton and Wherwell residents and endeavour to use social media to either give advance or immediate warning of any closure.

A barrier and 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 nowhere to turn on Joys Lane.

The combination for the gate lock will be made available to all councillors, 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 code will be changed regularly by COSC.

Closures by COSC will be reported to CPC councillors and the clerk by email and closures requiring a CPC decision by email will be reported at the next CPC meeting including copies of the emails.

Review

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