

Step 1: Finding and viewing Public Rights of Way (PRoW) data on a Definitive Map and Statement

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Have you ever walked down a path, cycled down a track and hesitated, wondering if it was private land or a 'Right of Way'? It's an interesting question, as most people think that the track they are walking on is a 'right of way'. This isn't quite true. Public Rights of Way (PRoW) are a fundamental part of our transport network. They are not the paths, tracks or roads we can walk, ride, cycle and even drive down; they are the rights that let us pass and repass along specific routes. There are 4 types of PRoW: Footpath, Bridleway, Restricted Byway and Byway Open to All Traffic. Without them, we'd be dependent on pavements and the goodwill of landowners if we wished to travel in urban and rural spaces

In 2026, any PRoW that is not registered on a Definitive Map and Statement in England and Wales will be removed, threatening around 10,000km of PRoW. To protect these routes, we must find them and register them with the local authority. Volunteers up and down the country are now scouring the PRoW in their area to find out which are at risk.

This tutorial will teach you how to start identifying a PRoW that is at risk of being removed, or 'extinguished'. You'll do this by checking a route against the official PRoW data for a specific area. This is stored on a Definitive Map and Statement. We will show you how find and examine Public Rights of Way data of your local area and check if your route is located on the Definitive Map and Statement.

This project uses What3Words (W3W) locations to help you precisely locate the features we are discussing. If you are not familiar with W3W, you can [learn more here](#).



Securing Coventry's Footpaths: Citizen Science, Cultural Collaboration and Public Engagement in Right of Way Preservation

Project Website: <http://rowresearch.coventry.domains/>

Examine a Definitive Map and Statement

We're going to use data from Worcestershire's County Council. County Councils and Unitary authorities are legally obliged to retain an official, updated record of the Public Rights of Way in their area. This is called a Definitive Map and Statement. It's important for walkers, cyclists and horse riders, but also for people buying houses, developers and surveyors. People want to know if a PRoW crosses their land before buying a house!

1. For this exercise, we will use data from Worcestershire's County Council's Definitive Map and Statement. We can visit the website ourselves and look at the data. Follow the link to do this.

<https://gis.worcestershire.gov.uk/website/Countryside/>

- The link takes us to the online version of their 'Definitive Map and Statement'. The official version is always a paper copy you have to visit in person but many local authorities create digital versions. If you zoom in, you'll see coloured lines with labels representing PRoW in Worcestershire. The colour line tells us what type of PRoW the route is and the label (for example, 518(C), is the name of the route).
- The route we're interested in is called 'Frog Lane'. It is located in the village of Callow End.
 - W3W Location: *W3W: <https://w3w.co/defeated.twit.listed>*
 - If you zoom into Callow End on the Definitive Map and Statement, you'll notice the route isn't recorded on the Definitive Map and Statement. It is currently being examined at present by Worcestershire County Council as an application has been submitted to protect it.
 - This is an example of an at-risk PRoW that is in need of further research.
 - If you can't find the data on the County Council website, you can visit www.rowmaps.com a website that makes PRoW data available to download.

Contact the Rights of Way Officer

2. If your route is located on the Definitive Map and Statement, it's registered and is not at risk of extinguishment. You can legally travel upon it.



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3. If your route is not located on the data for the Definitive Map and Statement, you should contact the Public Rights of Way Officer for the local authority to check if the route is included on the physical Definitive Map and Statement
 - It's best to email them, clearly identifying the beginning and end of the route in question. You can use the W3W location to be precise.
 - You should ask:
 - i. if the route is included on the Definitive Map and Statement.
 - ii. If there are any outstanding Definitive Map Modification Order applications currently under review for the route.
 - iii. If there are any Legal Event Modification Orders or any other orders have occurred in the past.
 - It's possible that the route was diverted or 'stopped up' in the past by the local authority. If this is the case, the route has already been extinguished and any future research will be a waste of time.
 4. Some local authorities provide a database of outstanding applications which you can check your route against. Here's a link to Worcestershire's database.
 - http://www.worcestershire.gov.uk/downloads/file/3553/definitive_map_modification_order_register_of_applications
 5. If the local authority replies stating the route hasn't been recorded, isn't currently under review and has not been stopped up, then the route is most likely at Public Right of Way that is at-risk of extinguishment. It's time to move to step 2 and continue your research on the route.
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