

Herefordshire Council: Managing Byways Open to All Traffic (BOATS)

Herefordshire Council is the Highway Authority for all highways maintainable at public expense within Herefordshire. The council has a duty to maintain in relation to the character and use.

BOATS can be surfaced, stoned or naturally surfaced.

Background

Section 66(1) of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 defines a byway open to all traffic (“BOAT”) as “a highway over which the public have a right of way for vehicular and all other kinds of traffic, but which is used by the public mainly for the purpose for which footpaths and bridleways are so used”.

Herefordshire has a recorded network of 2159 miles (3475 km) of public rights of way (PROW) at the time of writing which consist of:

- 1873 miles (3014 kms) of footpaths
- 257 miles (414 kms) of bridleways
- 20 miles (32 kms) of byways open to all traffic (BOATS)
- 4 miles (6km) of restricted byway

The network provides important access across the county for the community; it also provides a valuable amenity function.

The council’s Highways Maintenance Plan details how we manage the highways network which includes Byways Open to All Traffic, (BOATS) link below:

<https://www.herefordshire.gov.uk/downloads/file/5210/highway-maintenance-plan-covid-19>

Network Hierarchies pg 45

5	Rural Access Lanes	Roads serving occasional rural properties and providing access to the countryside carrying only access traffic.	The Low Priority Network. In order to ensure that our objectives can be afforded, it will be necessary to reduce the levels of service that will be delivered to an identified component of the network.
6	Rural Routes	Routes serving single or infrequent properties and farms. These routes are often unsuitable for HGV’s and carry very light traffic flows, much of which may require access for agricultural purposes. These routes may be used more frequently by walkers looking to access the countryside. This category includes metalled Byways Open to All Traffic (BOAT).	

Inspection

Inspections will be undertaken when a defect is reported, remedial action to make the path safe will be arranged.

Maintenance

The surface is of a standard for travel by foot, horseback, pedal cycle or wheeled vehicles including mechanically propelled vehicles but is used by the public mainly for walking or for riding.

Where surfacing is provided (either unbound or paved), the surfacing material shall respond to the local landscape character and be of a type suitable for the usage allowed by the status of the public right of way, including periods of inclement weather.

(https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/498941/Technical_Standard_-_Public_rights_of_way.pdf)

Where there is a need to repair, this will be undertaken on a risk based and asset management approach, the basic repair will be undertaken.

If higher standard of maintenance is required contributions from the adjacent landowners will be sought.

Residents / landowners may request and wish to repair the surface themselves. The council will support where able. It is envisaged this will be in the provision of materials, this will be provided on a case by case and available resources, hence the need to maintain on character and usage.