

Blocked Footpath – Road 32 Eastwood (29 April 2020)

There has been a resurgence of issues with the landowner and his prevention of the public from crossing the turnstile. Previously the police were involved frequently, and an enforcement notice was applied. This time the landowner has posted notices stating that the public should not access the land during the Covid-19 lockdown. It has also been alleged that the landowner attacked a walker injuring his leg and has been verbally abusive to other walkers.

Inspector Ben Doughty has given the following advice:

'In respect of the rights of way issues, Calderdale council would be the lead in respects enforcement. It is something we are seeing across the District; some landowners are using COVID 19 restrictions as an opportunity to hamper access to land and close rights of way. Please can you send details to Communityprotectiocovid@calderdale.gov.uk. This is the daily partnership briefing between the Community Safety Partnership and there may be resource that can look at the issues and assist/refer to the rights of way team.

If you hear of specific incidents of offences (Threats or Violence), please encourage reporting so we can investigate. This can be done on 101 or online <https://www.westyorkshire.police.uk/report-it> ' .

Sam Pearson, Calderdale Enforcement Officer responded with:

'Thank you for your emails regarding Footpath 32. I am working closely with our Rights of Way officer who assisted in getting the formal diversion approved to resolve the matter.

In the meantime, my advice to the public if they are faced with aggressive behaviour from the landowner is to contact the Police and if a situation was to warrant it, they may need to be called while on site.

We are looking to address the issues of the obstruction, but any violence needs to be addressed by the Police.

I am writing to landowners across Calderdale as they begin to obstruct footpaths off the back of Covid19 and enforcement action may need to be carried out in some cases. This will be prioritised accordingly against all Highways Enforcement work not just Public Rights of Way. Your patience is appreciated as we continue to work through this challenging time'.