

Improving Ropley Footpaths – Progress Report August 2023

Catherine Mitchell

Introduction

The rights of way in Ropley provide community links from the multiple hubs of the village to the village centre, where there is a primary school, shop, church, parish hall, and recreation ground with sports facilities. They also form big circular routes that are popular with trail users from all over the area. Part of St. Swithun's Way goes through Ropley.

Ropley's footpath network has a large number of stiles, which means that access for people with limited mobility is constrained. Ropley Parish Council is keen to improve access to the footpath network by replacing stiles with kissing gates and gates. This is in line with the Ropley Neighbourhood Plan <https://www.easthants.gov.uk/planning-services/planning-policy/neighbourhood-planning/ropley-neighbourhood-plan>

The aims of the project are to:

1. Improve access to footpaths that provide safe walking links between the village centre and outlying clusters of housing in Ropley (for example, Soames Lane, Ropley Dean, Gilbert Street) described as 'priority routes'.
2. Improve access to circular walks, providing a positive impact on physical and mental health.

The rights of way and their numbers can be found on the definitive map – a copy of which can be found [here](#)

Using volunteers

A group of volunteers has been established to help install the kissing gates so that we can buy more gates with the funds available. This is fairly heavy work, as it includes digging holes for new posts. Coffee and cake is provided! The Ropley Footpath Improvement Team (RFIT) currently has 12 members. We are grateful to the volunteers for their hard work and enthusiasm.

Contact Catherine Mitchell cmitchell@ropleyipc.org to find out how to join the group of volunteers.

New kissing gates installed

New kissing gate installed by volunteers on footpath 29



Two kissing gates have been installed in 2023: one on footpath 4 at the junction with Gascoigne Lane, and a second one on footpath 29, where it enters the woods, see above.

Plans are at an advanced stage for installing quite a few more kissing gates over the next few months, including on footpaths 24, 28, 30, and 38.

We are grateful to the landowners for their support with the project.

Funding

The project is being funded by contributions from Hampshire County Council, Ropley Parish Council, Ropley Society, our county councillor and district councillor, and local residents.

The project is divided into two phases, which are listed below. For the purposes of this report, we have assumed that the costs of materials for one kissing gate (gate and post-crete) are approximately £1,000.

Phase 1

Currently we have sufficient funding to install 14 kissing gates. Additional funding is required to install three further gates.

The volume of work means that we are seeking the support of other volunteer groups, for example the Alton Ramblers, to install some of the gates.

Footpath	Number of gates	Funding source	Status
4	1	County councillor	Completed March 2023
29 (part 1)	1	HCC (received)	Completed August 2023
24	1	HCC (received)	Designs confirmed. Gate ordered
28 (part 1)	1	HCC (applied)	Designs confirmed
30	1	HCC (applied)	Designs confirmed
38	1	HCC (received)	Designs confirmed. Gate ordered
21	5	parish council/ county councillor/ district councillor/Ropley Society	Agreed by landowners in principle & designs being drafted
17	3	parish council	Agreed by landowners in principle & designs being drafted
29 (part 2)	2	tbc	In discussion with landowners
28 (part 2)	1	tbc	In discussion with landowners
TOTAL GATES	17		

Phase 2

We have identified a further 15 stiles which would benefit from being replaced by a kissing gate. Additional funding would be needed to deliver phase 2. The appendix provides more information about the footpaths listed below.

Footpath	Number of gates
20	3
22	1
23	3
28	2
31	
33	2
34	4
TOTAL	15

Hampshire Countryside Service

As mentioned previously Hampshire County Council are part funding this work. In addition, where access to the stile/gate is challenging due to steep slopes, the Hampshire Countryside Service team have agreed to improve access through the use of ramps and steps where new kissing gates are installed. One example will be for the new kissing gate on FP29.

APPENDIX OUTLINE PLANS FOR PHASE 2

Footpath	Plans
20 <i>Swelling Hill to Lyeway Rd</i>	Replace 3 stiles with kissing gates https://photos.app.goo.gl/ktRtB4ReN4aPLtbB7
22 <i>Andrews Lane to Carr's field</i>	Starting from Andrews Lane: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Remove old stile to leave wider gap • Replace stile with kissing gate (field with livestock) https://photos.app.goo.gl/xDHBtwRj2waDRCsJA
23 <i>Fields off Andrews Lane in direction of village centre</i>	Starting from Andrews Lane: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Replace 2 stiles with kissing gates • Replace ad hoc gate with 2-in-1 gate suitable for farmer and walkers https://photos.app.goo.gl/JKSCG8qMGar6F4N99
28 <i>Parkstone Rd to West Tisted ridge</i>	Starting from Parkstone Rd, replace 2 stiles with kissing gates https://photos.app.goo.gl/7S8frHcJjmnqeyEB9
31	Walk footpath when reopened (oil pipe line)
33 <i>Smugglers Lane to Soames Lane</i>	Starting from Smugglers Lane: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Remove 1st 4 stiles as not needed. Fencing around fields with livestock • Replace last 2 stiles with kissing gates as field sometimes has livestock <p><i>Definitive statement does not seem to list all stiles – check with HCC</i></p> https://photos.app.goo.gl/J6cpryACkCddtzCCA
34 <i>Smugglers Lane to Hill House, Merryfield, West Tisted</i>	Walk footpath when reopened (oil pipe line) At least 4 stiles Last stile is in West Tisted