

Improving Ropley Footpaths – Progress Report January 2024

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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: www.myropley.org.uk/footpaths

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. The Ropley Footpath Improvement Team (RFIT) currently has 12 members. This is fairly heavy work, as it includes digging holes for new posts. Coffee and cake is provided! 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.

Kissing gates installed in 2023

The Parish Council installed eight kissing gates in 2023. Locations and photos of the kissing gates are included in the Appendix.

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, local residents, and Alresford Rotary Club.

Plans for 2024

Our outline plans show that there are at least another 25 stiles that need replacing with kissing gates.

Two kissing gates have been purchased and will be installed soon:

- Footpath 30
- Footpath 21

Detailed plans have already been agreed with landowners for the replacement of stiles with kissing gates, once funding is secured, for the following footpaths:

- Footpath 21 – 2 kissing gates
- Footpath 22 – 1 kissing gate
- Footpath 23 – 3 kissing gates

Plans are currently being drawn up for footpaths 29 and 38, where landowners have already agreed in principle that gates should be installed.

Over the next few months we will be working with other landowners to develop more plans.

APPENDIX

Kissing gates installed by Ropley Parish Council in 2023

Footpath 4

After



Footpath 29

Before



After



Footpath 28

Before



After



Footpath 24

Before



After



Footpath 17

a) FP17 First stile removed to leave a gap

Before



After



b) FP17 Second stile replaced with a kissing gate

Before



After



c) FP17 Third stile replaced with a kissing gate

Before



After



d) FP17 Fourth stile replaced with a kissing gate

Before



After



Footpath 21

Before



After

