Improving Ropley Footpaths – Progress Report August 2025

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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 (The Ropley Footpath Improvement Team (RFIT)) has been established to help install the kissing gates so that we can buy more gates with the funds available. Coffee and carrot cake is provided! We are grateful to the volunteers for their hard work and enthusiasm.

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

Kissing gates/gates installed

Photos of the stiles and kissing gates/ gates can be found in the appendices (see separate documents on website).

2023 Appendix A

The Parish Council installed eight kissing gates in 2023.

2024 Appendix B

The Parish Council installed eight kissing gates/ gates in 2024. In addition, Hampshire County Council rangers removed the stile on footpath 2, and rebuilt the steps on footpaths 2 and 29.

2025 Appendix C

The Parish Council has installed seven kissing gates/ gates as at August 2025.

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, Alresford Rotary Club and s106 funds from East Hampshire District Council.

Future plans

There are 29 more stiles in Ropley that could potentially be replaced with a kissing gate/ gate. We have secured agreement with the relevant landowners for 11 of these stiles to be replaced.

The pace that the remaining stiles are replaced depends on sign off from landowners and funding.