

SURREY COUNTY COUNCIL
LOCAL COMMITTEE (TANDRIDGE)
DATE: 20 MARCH 2015
SUBJECT: PETITION (To replace the stile on Footpath 21, Tatsfield with a kissing gate)
DIVISION: WARLINGHAM



SUMMARY OF ISSUE:

To consider a petition containing 27 signatures – by Mrs Rosemary Brown.

"We, the undersigned, would like the present dangerous stile replaced by a gate enabling all who wish to use the footpath to be able to do so, and in safety.

The footpath leads from Tatsfield village to St Mary's Church Tatsfield. We have a very nice gate on this path as it enters the field off Ship Hill, but the next stile is extremely dangerous. Getting over it safely is extremely difficult as there is a much deeper drop to the ground on the far side. And it is completely impossible for older people or anyone less agile to get over it at all.

Therefore a lot of people who might otherwise use this path from the Village centre to the Church are unable to. Walking round by the road not only doubles the distance, but also Church Lane is very narrow and without a footpath beyond the old school. Historically, there always was a gate at the site of this stile and we have photographic evidence of this."

RESPONSE:

The Countryside Access Team are always keen to make improvements to paths wherever possible, especially around villages where it is recognised that upgrades give maximum public benefit. In particular we have a continuing programme of removing stiles wherever possible or upgrading to gates where structures are still needed for stock control. With the help and agreement of local landowners, we have actually managed to remove 2 stiles completely and changed another 9 to gates in the Tatsfield area alone this financial year.

It must however be appreciated that this level of success is not always possible. Structures (gates and stiles) are the responsibility of, and are owned by, the landowner not the county council. Although it is apparent that there was a kissing gate on this path in the past, the Definitive Statement (legal record of public rights of way) shows that the right of way is subject to stiles along the route rather than gates. This means that the landowner/s are entitled to have stiles and the county council cannot insist upon their being changed to gates. The changes can only be made with the agreement of the relevant landowner.

This is the first that we in Countryside Access have been made aware of the issue with this stile. We will now inspect the path, investigate ownership of the stile and then approach the landowner with a view to getting their agreement to change the

stile to a gate. If they agree to the change we hope to be able to programme the work for the local Ramblers volunteers who are supported by us and work on behalf of the landowners. We will also look at any other stiles in the immediate area and try and negotiate their removal or replacement with kissing gates, or pedestrian gates.

Contact Officer: Claire Saunders, Senior Countryside Officer 03456 009 009
