

Any structure on a path will impede use, therefore a gap in the fence or hedge is always preferred; a gap is also virtually maintenance and cost-free. If a structure is required, for example, to prevent livestock getting into or out of an area, the best option is a gate.

No gates are permitted across the width of rights of way classed as Restricted Byways or Byways Open to All Traffic (BOATs) except when authorised as part of a barrier (see barrier guide).

Responsibilities

Landowners are legally responsible for the maintenance of, and are liable for, any gates on public rights of way over their land. Landowners are legally obliged to obtain permission from the County Council before installing any additional (not replacement) gates or stiles.

The County Council is willing to contribute towards the cost of a gate where it replaces an existing stile or kissing gate, provided that a gap is not suitable.

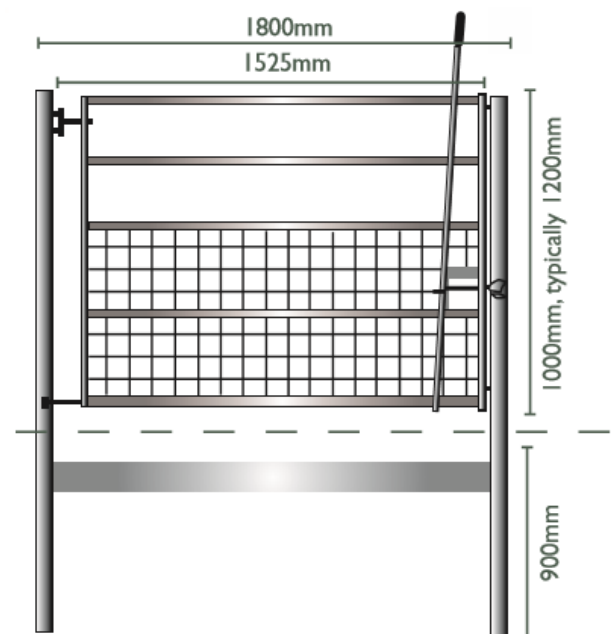
Gate Design

- The County Council's default, where a structure is required, is to use a 1.5m wide, two-way opening gate (ie opens both towards and away from you). On bridleways this is the legal minimum width. On other paths, including footpaths, a 1.5m gate will allow easy passage for pushchairs, dogs, mobility vehicles, people with mobility difficulties and (if permitted to use the path) cyclists and horse-riders. They also allow mowers and other maintenance machinery to access the path.
- On footpaths and paths open only to walkers, a narrower gate (1.2m minimum unless the legal width is narrower) and one-way opening gate is permissible, but only if there is insufficient room for the standard gate or for other good reasons.
- If livestock are present the gate should swing closed on its own; however, gates should not slam closed or close too quickly as this may startle a ridden horse or close onto users. The British Horse Society have produced guidance for self-closing gates, which can be viewed at www.bhs.org.uk.

- If next to a road, the gate should be set back to allow a refuge for users. Ideally, this should consist of 2m for footpaths and 4m for bridleways.
- Latches (if fitted) should be visible, accessible and simple to operate from both sides of the gate—see overleaf for more details.
- There should be good hard ground either side of the gate and positioning is important so that there is plenty of room for people to use it—see overleaf for more details.
- Where smaller livestock (such as sheep or goats) are kept in an adjacent field, wire mesh should be attached to the lower part of the gate to prevent escape.
- For two-way opening gates with latches, the space between the closing post and the gate should be at least 30mm to avoid trapping fingers. For one way opening wooden gates, the overlap between the gate and closing post should be at least 30mm.

Wood or Metal?

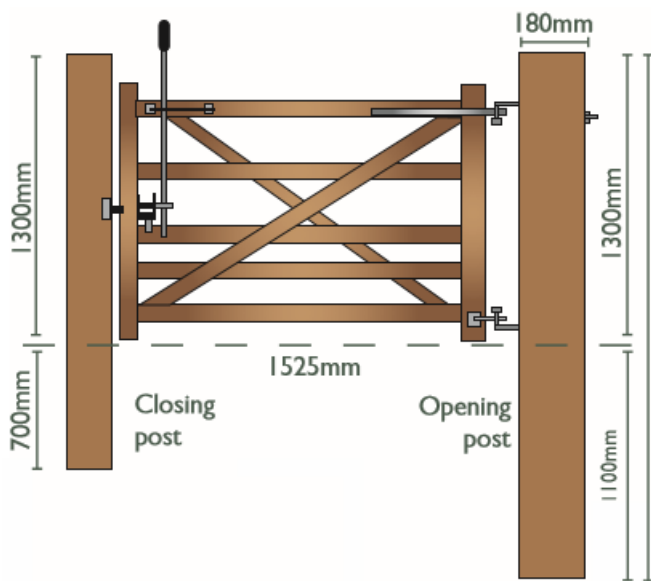
Both wooden and metal gates are used in Hampshire; the decision on which to use is guided by the specific location, level and type of use, budget and aesthetics.



This guidance is suitable for most situations in Hampshire; for further advice email countryside@hants.gov.uk or call 0300 555 1391

Metal gates last longer (25 years or more). Are more expensive and are usually more simple to install correctly as they have an 'H' frame which ensures the right distance between the posts and has fittings already attached. They can also be more easily made stock-proof—may gates incorporate mesh already (to keep smaller animals from escaping)

Wooden gates are usually softwood and slightly cheaper but will not last as long (typically 10 years) and will need occasional maintenance as the posts move over time and use, affecting the swing and closure of the gate. Hardwood gates (eg oak) are available; they are usually made bespoke and so can be considerably more expensive but will last as long as a metal gate.



Components:

- 1x Hanging post 180mm x 180mm x 2.4m
- 1 x Closing post 150mm x 150mm x 2m
- 1 x Gate 1525mm wide x approx. 1-1.2m high
- 1x Hinge set
- 1x Latch with handle

Latches

The latch should be easy to use from both sides of the gate, including by those with limited dexterity. The preferred design is a simple lifting latch with a long lever ('handle') that extends above the top of the gate (see diagram). This can be used either by lifting the small latch to release the bolt or by using the handle to withdraw the bolt.

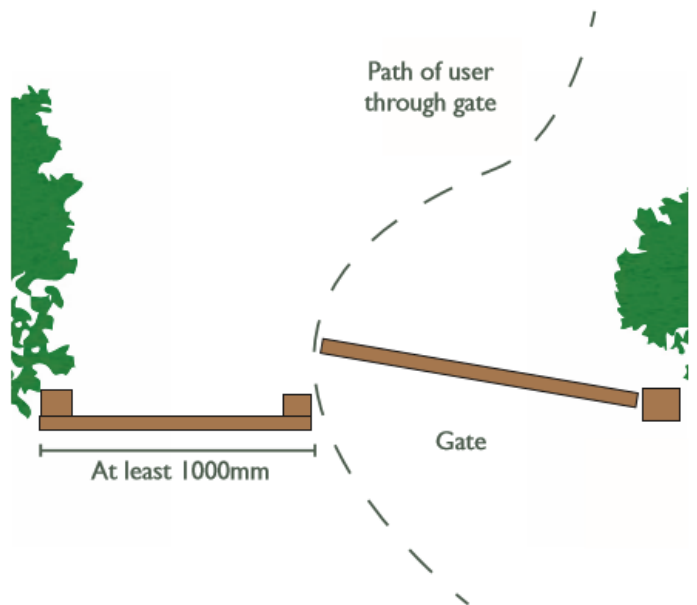
If the path is open to horse-riders (eg bridleways), a longer handle, extending further above the gate, should be provided to allow horse-riders to open the gate without dismounting. All handles and latches must have a yellow coating to ensure it is visible to all users.



Positioning

The ground around gates and stiles will become well trampled and so may be prone to getting muddy. If this is likely, use a material such as scalping's to protect the ground for around a metre either side.

Where there is room, gates should be a minimum of 1 metre from any adjoining hedge or fence; its particularly important to have room at the latch end of the gate rather than the hinge end, to allow room for users operating it—see diagram.



Installation Tips

- A wooden gate will require two post holes and time to get the posts upright, the correct distance apart and the gate to swing correctly.
- A metal gate typically has a H frame which fixes the angles, distances and hinges so is much easier to set up but will require a trench dug across the path as well as the two holes, to sink the frame into.
- Make holes in the ground as narrow as possible and backfill with well-rammed earth and stones or cement. Post-crete (a quick set cement mix) may be required where ground conditions prevent the post hole being dug to the full depth or there is a danger of it being removed.
- On wooden gates the top hinge pin should point downwards and the lower one should point upwards—this prevents someone just lifting the gate off. An extra nut and plenty of grease on the lower hinge will make future maintenance easier.
- Be particularly careful not to disturb underground services and take all normal precautions for working outdoors, with manual or power tools and lifting and handling.
- This is necessarily brief—further guidance is available from County Council officers.