



Gaps and Gates Fund

Landowner information pack

Introduction

Public rights of way are vital links between communities, landscapes, and the River Eden.

However, many routes still contain barriers, such as stiles or narrow gates, that restrict access for people with reduced mobility.

The Access to Eden – Gaps & Gates Fund supports landowners to replace restrictive structures with more inclusive ones, such as open gaps or accessible pedestrian gates. Together, we can make the Eden Valley's paths open, welcoming, and accessible to more people.

This pack explains:

- Your legal responsibilities as a landowner;
- What types of improvements the fund supports;
- How the funding and installation process works;
- What Eden Rivers Trust (ERT) will and will not provide; and
- A suggested project timeline.

Background and legal responsibilities

Under **Section 146 of the Highways Act 1980**, landowners must:

- Maintain any gate, stile, or access structure on a public right of way,
- Keep it in a **safe** and reasonably **easy to use** condition,
- Ensure it meets standard specifications set by the **local Highway Authority**.

Even if someone else installs the structure, the landowner remains legally responsible for its continued upkeep and safety.

Important restrictions

When undertaking any access improvements:

- Existing access must **not be made more difficult**,
- Stiles **must not replace** gaps or gates,
- Kissing gates cannot replace a more accessible option,
- Improvements must always represent an **accessibility gain**,
- Only improvements to existing furniture can be funded, not gates in new fence lines.

What the Gaps & Gates Fund supports

Typical grant amounts: £200–£1,000.

We prioritise:

- Replacing stiles → fully accessible gates or gaps,
- Replacing narrow/inaccessible kissing gates → wider pedestrian gates, and/or
- Improving accessibility and public benefit by replacing gates and stiles with gaps.

We will also consider kissing gates only where terrain, livestock, or landscape constraints prevent fully accessible options.

Eligible routes: definitive public rights of way.

Not eligible: permissive paths (as access can be withdrawn).

Responsibilities of each party

Landowner's responsibilities

- Provide **written permission** for any works.
- Pay the required **20% contribution** before work begins.
- Provide a **detailed, itemised quote** for the proposed works.
 - ★ If the **landowner** will complete the works themselves, they must supply an itemised breakdown of materials, labour time, and costs.
 - ★ If using a **contractor**, a full contractor quote must be supplied.
- Submit the contractor's invoice or a self-completed works statement with evidence (photos, receipts, etc.) upon completion.
- Maintain all structures **after installation**, in line with the Highways Act.
- Maintain all structures for 10 years in line with grant requirements from the **National Lottery Heritage Fund**.

Eden Rivers Trust's (ERT) responsibilities

- Assess applications, costs, and accessibility benefits.
- Approve specifications and review itemised quotes for specification quality and value for money.
- Issue Purchase Orders (Formal Approval to Proceed) **only after** receiving the landowner's 20% contribution.
- Pay contractors after satisfactory completion or verify evidence if the landowner has completed the work themselves.

What ERT will not do

- Purchase, install, or own access structures.
- Maintain gates or access structures after installation.
- Fund works on permissive paths.
- Fund works started before formal approval.

How the funding works

Typical grant amounts: £200–£1,000 and is designed to be simple and cost-effective for landowners.

You pay only **20%**, and ERT manages everything else.



How to apply: step-by-step process

1 Apply

Submit your application along with a detailed, itemised quote.

You may either:

- Do the work yourself, providing an itemised breakdown of materials and labour, or
- Use a contractor, providing their itemised quote.

We will assess your proposal based on specification, value for money, and suitability.

If approved, you will receive a formal grant offer letter outlining:

- Total project cost,
- Funding structure,
- Your required 20% contribution.

2 Pay your 20% contribution

Before any works can begin, you pay 20% of the total project cost.

3 Eden Rivers Trust issues a Purchase Order/formal approval to proceed

If you are using a contractor, we will issue a Purchase Order once your 20% contribution is received.

If you are carrying out the works yourself, we will confirm approval of your itemised self-delivery plan.

This confirms:

- Scope of works
- Agreed value
- Approval to proceed

4 Works completed

Either by contractors or by the landowner.

After completion, send:

- Contractor invoice or landowner self delivery completion summary,
 - Photos and evidence as required.
- to dylan.jackman@edenrt.org within 4 weeks of completion.

5 ERT pays the contractor

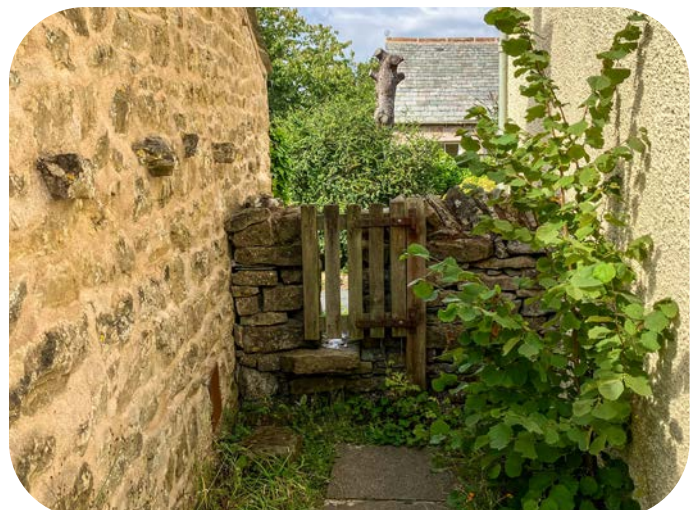
- If using a contractor: ERT pays the contractor in full.
- If self-delivered: ERT reimburses eligible costs based on the approved quote.

You will not be asked to pay anything further.

Important: three month completion window

Your grant offer is valid for three months.

If the work is not completed within this time, ERT may withdraw the offer.



Typical project timeline

To ensure fairness and transparency, all applications received within a calendar month are reviewed together in the first week of the following month.

This monthly assessment cycle allows us to monitor the limited fund of £10,000 closely and manage demand responsibly.

If it becomes clear that the fund is nearing its limit, we may pause or close applications to avoid over-committing and to ensure that grants are awarded in a fair and sustainable way.

Stage	Responsibility	Timing
Application submitted	Landowner	Anytime during the month
Monthly application window closes	ERT	Last day of each month
Assessment of applications received	ERT	First week of the following month
Grant offer letters issued	ERT	By the end of the second week of the month
20% contribution paid	Landowner	Within 2–4 weeks of the grant offer letter
Purchase Order issued	ERT	Within 2 weeks of receiving contribution
Works completed	Landowner / contractor	Within 3 months of the date on the Purchase Order
Evidence submitted	Landowner	Within 4 weeks of completion
Final payment issued	ERT	Within 2–4 weeks of satisfactory evidence

Summary

By taking part in the Gaps & Gates Fund, you will:

- Improve accessibility for your community
- Reduce long-term maintenance needs (gates last longer than stiles)
- Remain compliant with legal responsibilities
- Only pay 20% of improvement costs
- Receive full support from ERT throughout the process

The Gaps and Gates Fund is part of the *Access to Eden: Breaking barriers, building bridges* partnership project led by Eden Rivers Trust and supported by a grant from The National Lottery Heritage Fund.



For queries or to discuss potential projects, please contact:

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