

## Your questions answered

### ? Who is responsible for maintaining gates and stiles?

A Normally the landowner is responsible, but Cumbria County Council (CCC) can make a contribution of 25% of the cost of repair. Generally, materials (for example, a gate kit) or volunteer labour are provided as payment in kind.

### ? How can I claim my 25% contribution from CCC?

A Contact us by telephoning : 01228 226558 or email : [countryside.access@cumbria.gov.uk](mailto:countryside.access@cumbria.gov.uk)

### ? Can I fix barbed wire to my gate or stile?

A No. Barbed wire shouldn't be fixed to any part of a gate or stile.

### ? I would like to install a new gate or stile, what do I do?

A CCC can authorise new gates and stiles under

section 147 of the Highways Act (1980). This applies to gates and stiles to control animals on land for agriculture, forestry or horse breeding / keeping. We prefer gaps or gates.

### ? Who is liable if someone had an accident on a poorly maintained gate or stile?

A The landowner.

### ? Is there a standard for gaps, gates and stiles?

A Yes, there is a British Standard (5709, passed in 2001) and many designs and materials available. Contact us to find out more.



### For further information contact:

Telephone : 01228 226558

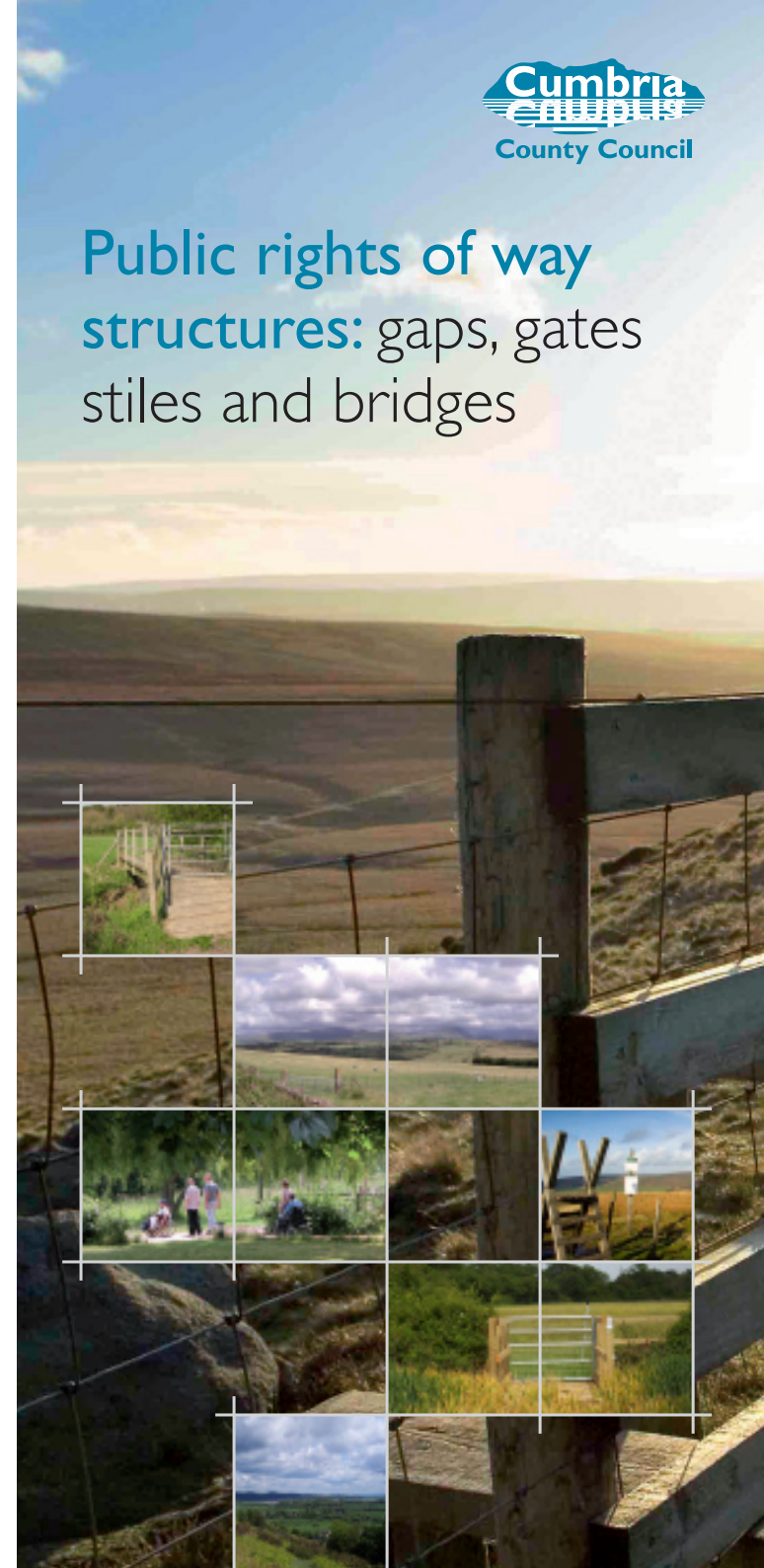
Email : [countryside.access@cumbria.gov.uk](mailto:countryside.access@cumbria.gov.uk)  
or look on our website: [www.cumbria.gov.uk/roads-transport/public-transport-road-safety/countryside-access/default.asp](http://www.cumbria.gov.uk/roads-transport/public-transport-road-safety/countryside-access/default.asp)

You can get a copy of this document in different formats such as large print, braille, audio, or in a different language by calling 01229 894401.



**Photographs:** Natural England: Charlie Hedley, Mike McGoran, Pauline Rook, McCoy Wynne, Barry Stacey • Lake District National Park Authority • Cycling for Health Project • By All Means Project • Shane Harris: North Pennines AONB Partnership • Cumbria County Council • S J Studios • Ashley Cooper • Harriet Sharkey • Centrewire

## Public rights of way structures: gaps, gates stiles and bridges



## Did you know ...

Good land management recognises the need to reduce the number of stiles and gates on rights of way. All sorts of people find them a barrier to enjoying the countryside. Where they are no longer needed for controlling animals they could be removed. If you are part of the stewardship scheme, it is especially important that you look after the stiles and gates on your land.

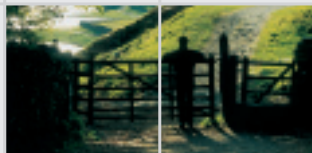
We estimate that at least 15% of the stiles and gates in Cumbria are either so poorly maintained that they no longer control stock, or are between arable crops and are not needed. Many more stiles could be replaced with gates.

## Gaps

Our first choice where a right of way crosses a hedge or fence-line is for a gap. Even where cattle are kept, sometimes a squeeze gap is all that is required.

Some benefits of replacing a gate or a stile with a gap are:

- Less maintenance costs and responsibilities
- Reduced risk of liability for accidents involving stiles or gates



## Gates

Where a gap is not possible, the next preference is for a gate. There are many gate designs and materials available, which we can advise on. Farmers using properly installed and well-maintained self-closing or sprung gates have not experienced problems with stock escaping. Gates should not be locked or tied up with string – this only encourages people to climb them, causing them to drop on their hinges. Make sure your gates open and shut easily. Gates on bridleways should be easy to use from horseback. Kissing gates should only be used on footpaths.

## Stiles

Stiles are the last resort and should only be used on footpaths in exceptional circumstances. The maximum step height should be 30cm (1ft). No barbed wire should be attached to any part of a stile or a gate.

To prevent damage to wire fencing near existing stiles, you may like to fit 'dog latches'. The latch lifts to allow a dog through, and then drops, keeping the field stock-proof. For details of suppliers or designs, contact us. Remember that dog access can be made easier by opting for a gate.

## Other barriers

Installing a chicane, bollards or a motorbike-barrier can help manage access. Certain designs of barrier can reduce illegal use of a route, while still allowing convenient access for all users, although they might not be stock-proof. Contact us for more information as any new restriction will need permission.

## Ditches and bridges

Footbridges and bridleway bridges are the responsibility of CCC. Vehicle (sometimes called 'farm accommodation') bridges are normally the landowner's responsibility. If you are widening a ditch or creating a new ditch, please contact us for bridge designs.

## Improving accessibility

We recognise that gates are sometimes necessary on a busy farm. They are also a barrier to some people. For example, elderly people, families with pushchairs, or disabled people can't enjoy the countryside to the full. Their friends and families are also affected if they are unable to enjoy access to the countryside together.

Some people with limited mobility enjoy a challenging route away from managed recreation areas. All they ask is for a minimum of unnecessary barriers and reliable information to decide where to go. Modern powered wheelchairs can go over rough terrain and have a long battery-life.

Other people find stile after stile in the countryside a real barrier. Simply replacing stiles with gates can make all the difference.

We are keen to work with farmers and landowners to increase access opportunities for all. Where gates can be negotiated, we are willing to increase our contribution. Contact us for help and advice.

