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Gaps, gates and stiles – Specification

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Summary of pages

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Foreword

Publishing information

This British Standard is published by BSI Standards Limited, under licence from The British Standards Institution, and came into effect on 28 February 2018. It was prepared by Technical Committee B/201, *Fences and gates*. A list of organizations represented on this committee can be obtained on request to its secretary.

Supersession

This British Standard supersedes BS 5709:2006, which is withdrawn.

Information about this document

Walking, cycling and riding have continued to increase since the first edition of this British Standard was published in 1979. Recent thinking and legislation have focused on the need for less able-bodied and disabled people to be able to access the countryside.

This revision notes the requirements of the Equality Act 2010 [1] and the safety of path users, taking account of the needs of land management. The experience gathered from the many years of use of this British Standard has been applied to clarify meaning and wording throughout.

More recently, the trial of bridle gates in York (see *A trial of closing bridle gates* [2]) has informed the incorporation of functional attributes into this standard, which improve the safety and the ease of use of these structures.

Use of this document

It has been assumed in the preparation of this British Standard that the execution of its provisions will be entrusted to appropriately qualified and experienced people, for whose use it has been produced.

Presentational conventions

The provisions of this standard are presented in roman (i.e. upright) type. Its requirements are expressed in sentences in which the principal auxiliary verb is “shall”.

Commentary, explanation and general informative material is presented in smaller italic type, and does not constitute a normative element.

Where words have alternative spellings, the preferred spelling of The Shorter Oxford English Dictionary is used (e.g. “organization” rather than “organisation”).

Contractual and legal considerations

This publication does not purport to include all the necessary provisions of a contract. Users are responsible for its correct application.

Compliance with a British Standard cannot confer immunity from legal obligations.

Introduction

The United Kingdom is noted for the variety of structures on routes with public access, and historic structures should be respected. New structures need to be effective for the purpose for which they are installed, and traditional forms of structure may be used if they provide good access for all legitimate users.

Accordingly, this British Standard specifies structures by their functional performance, thus allowing many designs of structure to conform to the requirements and encouraging innovation. However, it also tries to meet the need for buildable designs by means of examples that meet the functional performance criteria.

This British Standard provides specifications for gaps, gates and stiles to ensure that they cause the minimum of inconvenience to users whilst fulfilling the requirement for preventing the passage of animals that need to be controlled and, for all structures, where lawful, preventing access to those not entitled to use the path.

NOTE Attention is drawn to the Equality Act 2010 [1], which requires local authorities authorizing the installation of gates, stiles and other works on public rights of way to have regard to the needs of people with disabilities.

This British Standard is an ongoing standard in that, in order to continue to conform to it, the structure might need to be modified, replaced or removed if the land usage changes.

Authorizing bodies are expected to specify the edition of the standard which applies and the initial structure to be installed.

When authorizing structures, "to BS 5709" means to the latest edition of this standard and "to BS 5709:20xx" refers to a particular edition of this standard. See [Annex A](#) for clarification.

1 Scope

This British Standard specifies field-measurable performance requirements for new gaps, gates and stiles for footpaths, bridleways, restricted byways and other routes used by the public. It can also be used for structures to be installed on permissive paths, wholly private ways and on commons. It includes a hierarchy of accessibility performance requirements to raise awareness of the characteristics of different structures. It does not attempt to provide performance requirements in relation to land management, which need to be individually assessed according to the circumstances. It can be used to establish and maintain a quality in all new structures that represents good practice.

This British Standard does not automatically apply retrospectively to most existing structures. It can be used as guidance for those who wish to repair or improve existing structures.

This British Standard does not allocate decision making, installation, maintenance or record keeping to any particular organization or person.

This British Standard is intended to be used by:

- a) those planning, specifying or authorizing new structures on paths (e.g. highway authorities, highways agencies, district councils, landowners, tenants, user groups and others handling diversions, creations or dedications of paths subject to gaps, gates and stiles);
- b) those making and buying path structures or kits;
- c) those installing path structures; and
- d) those replacing, maintaining and inspecting path structures.