

Miles Without Stiles – an update

County Councillor Bertie Harrison-Rushton has given this project a major boost by funding the installation of twelve kissing gates through the Leicestershire County Council Members Highways Fund. This is in addition to the three kissing gates installed last year.

Six kissing gates are on footpath S48 between Barton Road, Market Bosworth and Lount Road, Nailstone and have made the route between these points entirely stile-free. It also means that it is now possible to walk from Bosworth Road in Carlton to footpath S48 by two different routes and then to roads to the north and south without climbing a stile.

Three kissing gates are on footpath S70 which runs along the northern side of the school playing fields and across the golf course in Market Bosworth. In the longer term the plan is to make this footpath stile-free all the way to the Ashby Canal and Carlton Road.

The final group of three kissing gates is on footpath S68 between Keeper's Cottage and Shackerstone Station. These mean that it is now possible to walk from The Square in Market Bosworth, across Silk Hill, and through Carlton to Shackerstone Station without climbing a full stile (there are two low crush stiles at the road at Keeper's Cottage). There are now also stile-free routes between Carlton and Barton in the Beans, between Carlton and the Ashby Canal and between Carlton and Nailstone.

The *Miles Without Stiles* project is spearheaded by Carlton Parish Council and began back in 2004, following conversations with several local residents. These people had lived and worked in the local countryside all their lives but were becoming less mobile, and although they could walk for miles they were finding it more difficult and in some cases impossible to climb stiles. This meant they could only walk along roads and tracks, and were feeling cut

off from places which they had known well and still wished to visit.

The Parish Council decided to try to remedy this situation, and began with a pilot project on footpath S75 in 2004. This was much appreciated, and proved so successful that it was decided to extend the concept subject to funding. Since then most of the footpaths in Carlton have been made stile-free and these routes are being extended into neighbouring parishes. This would not have been possible without the support of local landowners and neighbouring parish councils, the work of the Carlton Footpath Group, and grant aid and help in kind from Hinckley & Bosworth Borough Council and Leicestershire County Council.

Stuart Tupling (Chairman, Carlton Parish Council) said: "Kissing gates are good for landowners because they are stockproof and make the line of the footpath obvious on the ground. They are good for walkers because they are easy and safe to pass through, and easy to spot. They are also more robust, require less maintenance and last much longer than timber stiles. Over the years we have found that footpaths with kissing gates become very well used by local residents, and their value was demonstrated during the recent Covid lockdowns. We also find that country walkers are visiting this area because there are now good circular walks without stiles, and these visitors are contributing to the rural economy by using local pubs, shops and tea rooms."

Nigel Palmer (Chairman, Market Bosworth Parish Council) said "We are very pleased with the improvements to this section of the Leicestershire Round. Now, more than ever it is vital that people can take exercise and what better than walking in our beautiful countryside. We hope that even more people will take the opportunity to explore one of the most varied and beautiful parts of Leicestershire."

Chris Peat - Clerk to Carlton Parish Council



Carlton Parish Councillor Mick Vann thanking County Councillor Bertie Harrison-Rushton