

Durham County Council Equality Impact Assessment

The Public Sector Equality Duty (Equality Act 2010) requires Durham County Council to have 'due regard' to the need to eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation, advance equality of opportunity and foster good relations between people from different groups. Completion of this template allows us to provide a written record of our equality analysis and demonstrate due regard. It must be used as part of decision making processes with relevance to equality.

Please contact equalities@durham.gov.uk for any necessary support.

Section One: Description and Screening

Service/Team or Section	Spatial Policy Rights of Way
Lead Officer name and job title	Peter Ollivere Policy Team Leader
Subject of the impact assessment	Rights of Way Improvement Plan (ROWIP)
Report date (Cabinet/CMT/Mgt team etc)	March/April 2023
MTFP Reference (if relevant)	
EIA Start Date	2/03/23
EIA Review Date	TBC

Subject of the Impact Assessment

Please give a brief description of the policy, proposal or practice which is the subject of this impact assessment.

It is a statutory requirement, due to the Countryside and Rights of Way Act (2000), that every local authority in the United Kingdom produces and publishes a plan on how the local authority is going to provide and improve public rights of way (PROW) in their area. PROWs include footpaths, bridleways, and byways. They can be used by a range of users – walkers, cyclists, horse-riders, and some off-road motorised vehicles. Durham County Council's ROWIP, which is a 10-year, long-term plan, namely ROWIP4, focuses on PROWs within the entire County and aims to maintain and develop shorter utility trips and longer recreational routes for all users within the County. ROWIP4 sets an ambitious but realistic strategic vision of how to improve the ROW network over the next 10-years, from 2023 to 2033.

ROWIP4 differs to previous ROWIPs in terms of the plan being more community led and driven by the quality of information, as well as implementing higher standard monitoring methods and developing a county-wide app. ROWIP4 is therefore more progressive and designed for the 21st century.

ROWIP4 thereby aims to provide a more accessible network of PROWs and greenspaces across the County. It is therefore imperative that infrastructure is implemented to support this aim. The Council will achieve this by proposing 8 different policies which incorporate stakeholder priorities and showcase County Durham's beautiful network of PROWs. The policies are the following:

- Policy 1: Managing and Delivering a High-Quality Access network
- Policy 2: Awareness of Public Rights of Way and other routes
- Policy 3: Making our Network Accessible – '10 in 10'
- Policy 4: Empowering Communities to 'own' their Public Right of Way Network
- Policy 5: Promoting the Economy and Cultural Identity of County Durham through our Public Rights of Way Network
- Policy 6: Ensuring the Countryside Code is followed, and Landowners are respected
- Policy 7: Incorporating Public Rights of Way in New Development
- Policy 8: Monitoring the use of our Public Rights of Way

Who are the main people impacted and/or stakeholders? (e.g. general public, staff, members, specific clients/service users, community representatives):

Anyone who lives, studies or visits County Durham may be interested in the ROWIP4. It is anticipated that it will have a positive impact on members of the public since they are the primary users of the PROW network. The project also impacts private landowners and private organisations who manage land, such as the National Trust or Forestry England.

Screening

Is there any actual or potential negative or positive impact on the following protected characteristics ¹ ?		
Protected Characteristic	Negative Impact Indicate: Yes, No or Unsure	Positive Impact Indicate: Yes, No or Unsure
Age	No/Potentially?	Yes
Disability	No/Potentially?	Yes
Gender reassignment	?	Yes
Marriage and civil partnership (only in relation to 'eliminate discrimination')	N/A	N/A
Pregnancy and maternity	No	Yes
Race	?	Yes
Religion or Belief	?	Yes
Sex	?	Yes
Sexual orientation	?	Yes

Please provide **brief** details of any potential to cause discrimination or negative impact. Record full details and any mitigating actions in section 2 of this assessment.

Whilst the ROWIP4 will have an overall positive impact on all protected characteristics, there is the potential to have a negative impact on older persons IF the awareness and information regarding PROWs are kept to an online forum only as older persons are less likely to use the internet or have a smart phone.

Personal safety will be a consideration as it is noted that some groups are more likely to be victims of crime or have a heightened perception of crime when using public spaces. This relates to all protected groups although there is a disproportionate impact for women, people from the LGBT+ community, people from minority ethnic groups, disabled people, people living in deprived areas, and people at the intersections of these groups.

¹ <https://www.equalityhumanrights.com/en/equality-act/protected-characteristics>

Please provide **brief** details of positive impact. How will this policy/proposal promote our commitment to our legal responsibilities under the public sector equality duty to:

- eliminate discrimination, harassment and victimisation,
- advance equality of opportunity, and
- foster good relations between people from different groups?

Positive impacts are achieved through the promotion of PROWs and ensuring wider access to PROWs for users. Discrimination will be addressed through ensuring all user groups and those with particular protected characteristics, such as age and disability, have greater awareness of and access to PROWs. Representatives from such groups have been consulted and will be further consulted during the full public consultation in May- July 2023.

In addition, to eliminate discrimination and promote equal access to county-wide PROWs, infrastructure will be implemented on PROWs, such as high-quality information, accessible toilets, and parking, clear waymarking and suitable rest-points.

To achieve equality of opportunity, PROWs will enable all users to utilise the network to access places of work and schools, important social infrastructure, and local amenities by forming part of a sustainable transport link to County Durham settlements. Connecting communities with sufficient links ensures equality of opportunity in terms of accessing local amenities, doctors' surgeries and greenspace, as well as cultural attractions etc.

By promoting and encouraging the use of PROWs in everyday life, people can socially interact with others more and to a better standard, achieving good relations between people of different groups. People and the multitude of users have equal access, which means others do not feel marginalised.

More is required to ensure that users have equal access and users from all backgrounds are encouraged to use PROWs.

Evidence

What evidence do you have to support your data analysis and any findings?

Please **outline** any data you have and/or proposed sources (e.g. service user or census data, research findings). Highlight any data gaps and say whether or not you propose to carry out consultation. Record your detailed analysis, in relation to the impacted protected characteristics, in section 2 of this assessment.

Census 2021

Nomis 2022

Research findings through the ROWIP Steering Group. The steering group occurred on a bi-monthly basis while ROWIP4 was being drafted and this began process began in February 2022.

County Durham Plan 2022

Review of previous ROWIPs and country wide ROWIPs produced by other local authorities.

Primary research through extensive internal and external stakeholder consultations carried out between April to July 2022. Analysing other Council corporate strategies to understand where internal policies align and to drive our strategic objectives.

Secondary research through analysing journal articles and other local authority ROWIPs.

Consultation is planned to take place between May 2023- July 2023 to collect information from the public – this will provide more user-detail in terms of understanding which groups access/use PROWs and what their ideas/priorities are for improving such access.

Screening Summary

On the basis of the information provided in this equality impact screening (section 1), are you proceeding to a full impact assessment (sections 2&3 of this template)?	Please confirm (Yes/No)
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Sign Off

Lead officers sign off: Peter Ollivere	Date: 07/03/23
Equality representatives sign off (where required): Mary Gallagher, E&D Team Leader	Date: 23.03.23

If carrying out a full assessment, please proceed to sections two and three.

If not proceeding to full assessment, please ensure your screening record is **attached to any relevant decision-making records or reports**, retain a copy for update where necessary, and forward a copy to equalities@durham.gov.uk

If you are unsure of assessing impact please contact the corporate equalities team for further advice: equalities@durham.gov.uk

Section Two: Data analysis and assessment of impact

Please provide details of impacts for people with different protected characteristics relevant to your screening findings. You need to decide if there is or likely to be a differential impact for some. Highlight the positives e.g., benefits for certain groups and advancement of equality, as well as the negatives e.g. barriers or exclusion of particular groups. Record the evidence you have used to support or explain your conclusions, including any necessary mitigating actions to ensure fair treatment.

Protected Characteristic: Age		
What is the actual or potential impact in relation to age?	Record of evidence which supports and/or explains your conclusions on impact.	What further action or mitigation is required?
<p>Policy 2 Awareness of Public Rights of Way. This policy seeks to digitise the wider access networks and public routes onto one digital platform. This could have a potential positive impact on younger people who tend to be more comfortable using digital technology. Raising awareness of these routes could encourage them to use them.</p> <p>Positive impacts include encouraging a range of individuals, both young and old, to use local PROWs for physical activity and thereby make a positive contribution to their physical and mental wellbeing. Decreases</p>	<p>The resident population in County Durham increased by 1.7% (8,800 people) between 2011 and 2021, compared to a 6.6% increase across England. The proportion of children aged 0 to 15 remained relatively unchanged in this period at around 88,000. Across England this group increased by 4.6%. The number of residents of retirement age (65 and over) increased by 20.6% (19,000 increase) and this group now represents around 1 in 5 residents in the county (21.3%). (Census 2021)</p>	<p>Don't limit the provision of high-quality information about what is available at PROWs. Provide this information all in one place on an app or website AND in paper for at Hubs, Libraries, community centres or CAPs etc..</p> <p>Analysis of consultation feedback</p> <p>Address personal safety to ensure safer PROW</p>

<p>loneliness and isolation, generates greater connectivity between settlements making it easier to access local amenities and potential employment sites.</p> <p>There is potential for a negative impact on older persons IF raising awareness of the Public Rights of Way is only on a digital platform. Older persons are less likely to have access or use devices such as smart phones on which the digital platform would be used.</p> <p>Policy 3 Making our Network Accessible. This policy aims to establish and promote 10 accessible routes in 10 years. This will have a positive impact on older persons who are more likely to have mobility issues and benefit from access to routes that are made accessible including accessible parking, routes that do not contain bridges, stiles and other factors that may hinder access for persons with mobility issues. A key part of this policy is that better information will be provided so people with mobility issues can choose routes based on a high level of information.</p>	<p>Significant proportion of PROWs within the County have uneven surfaces (i.e., gravel), lack of toilet facilities, sufficient parking spaces or local car parks, local amenities, clear and legible signs and this deters users from a certain age group.</p> <p>Steering group and stakeholder consultation feedback.</p>	
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Protected Characteristic: **Disability**

What is the actual or potential impact in relation to disability?	Record of evidence which supports and/or explains your conclusions on impact.	What further action or mitigation is required?
<p>Policy 2 Awareness of Public Rights of Way. This policy seeks to digitise the wider access networks and public routes onto one digital platform. This could have a potential positive impact on people with disabilities if accessible routes are promoted and accessible online. Raising awareness of these routes could encourage them to use them.</p> <p>Positive impacts include encouraging a people with disabilities to use local PROWs for physical activity and thereby make a positive contribution to their physical and mental wellbeing. Decreases loneliness and isolation, generates greater connectivity between settlements making it easier to access local amenities and potential employment sites.</p> <p>Policy 3 Making our Network Accessible. This policy aims to establish and promote 10 accessible routes in 10 years. This will have a positive impact on people with disabilities who are more likely to have mobility issues and benefit from better access to routes that are made accessible including accessible parking, routes that do not contain bridges, stiles and</p>	<p>County Durham has a higher percentage of people with long term health issues and disabled people than the Northeast average, representing nearly a quarter of the overall population.</p> <p>The ONS 2022-09 reported the County Durham disabled employment rate is 45.7% compared to the general employment rate for County Durham of 72.4%.</p> <p>Pictures taken on PROWs and monitoring of PROWs.</p> <p>Previous accessibility assessments?</p> <p>Steering group and stakeholder consultation feedback.</p>	<p>See above</p> <p>Sign off and Implementation of the ROWIP4.</p>

other factors that may hinder access for persons with mobility issues. A key part of this policy is that better information will be provided so people with mobility issues can choose routes based on a high level of information		
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Protected Characteristic: Gender reassignment		
What is the actual or potential impact in relation to gender reassignment?	Record of evidence which supports and/or explains your conclusions on impact.	What further action or mitigation is required?
Accessing open spaces and personal safety is more likely to be a heightened concern for transgender people.		Analysis of consultation feedback Address personal safety to ensure safer PROW

Protected Characteristic: Marriage and civil partnership (only in relation to 'eliminate discrimination')		
What is the actual or potential impact in relation to marriage and civil partnership?	Record of evidence which supports and/or explains your conclusions on impact.	What further action or mitigation is required?
Not applicable		

Protected Characteristic: Pregnancy and maternity		
What is the actual or potential impact in relation to pregnancy and maternity?	Record of evidence which supports and/or explains your conclusions on impact.	What further action or mitigation is required?
Policy 3 Making our Network Accessible. This policy aims to establish and promote 10 accessible routes in 10 years. This will have a	Steering group and stakeholder consultation feedback.	Implementation of rest points on PROWs

<p>positive impact on people who are pregnant and with young families who may have mobility issues and/or find PROWs are not accessible for pushchairs or use is hindered as accessible routes are not local or due to a lack of parking or amenities such as toilets. A key part of this policy is that better information will be provided so people with mobility issues can choose routes based on a high level of information.</p> <p>It could increase the capacity for pregnant women to exercise and families to exercise together through accessing PROWs. Exercise facilities on PROWs should be located close to home, making PROWs more accessible.</p> <p>PROWs to provide and act as a connection to local amenities.</p>		<p>Promotion of these PROWs</p> <p>Circular walks with facilities such as toilets and car parks.</p>
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Protected Characteristic: Race		
What is the actual or potential impact in relation to race?	Record of evidence which supports and/or explains your conclusions on impact.	What further action or mitigation is required?
<p>Accessing open spaces and personal safety is more likely to be a heightened concern for ethnic minority groups.</p>		<p>Analysis of consultation feedback</p> <p>Address personal safety to ensure safer PROW</p>

Protected Characteristic: Religion or belief		
What is the actual or potential impact in relation to religion or belief?	Record of evidence which supports and/or explains your conclusions on impact.	What further action or mitigation is required?
Accessing open spaces and personal safety is more likely to be a heightened concern for minority religious groups.		

Protected Characteristic: Sex		
What is the actual or potential impact in relation to sex?	Record of evidence which supports and/or explains your conclusions on impact.	What further action or mitigation is required?
Accessing open spaces and personal safety is more likely to be a heightened concern for women.		Analysis of consultation feedback Address personal safety to ensure safer PROW

Protected Characteristic: Sexual orientation		
What is the actual or potential impact in relation to sexual orientation?	Record of evidence which supports and/or explains your conclusions on impact.	What further action or mitigation is required?
Accessing open spaces and personal safety is more likely to be a heightened concern for LGB people.		Analysis of consultation feedback Address personal safety to ensure safer PROW

Section Three: Conclusion and Review

Summary

Please provide a brief summary of your findings; a summary of any positive and/or negative impacts across the protected characteristics, links to the involvement of different groups and/or public consultation, mitigations and conclusions made.

ROWIP4 is our plan to develop and deliver a high-quality path network which is fit for the 21st century in terms of travel, recreation, and enjoyment. The plan follows on from previous Council ROWIPs and continues to promote the vital contribution the Access Rights of Way network makes to the wider economic, health, environmental and social agendas, as well as Durham County Council's corporate objectives. ROWIP4 focusses on network paths which serve as strategic rights of way to provide important utility and recreational routes around the County. Therefore, ROWIP is a vital document which enables the Council to collect data and implement structures which will help maintain county-wide PROWs and provide accessible infrastructure for both residents and visitors.

Through ROWIP4, we will deliver a range of planned green networks which incorporate and provide multiple benefits simultaneously to local communities, such as the protection of biodiversity and wildlife, improvement to mental and physical wellbeing, and the reduction of carbon emissions. The Covid- 19 pandemic has emphasised the importance of accessing PROWs and the valuable role greenspace has in managing physical and mental wellbeing, therefore, the ROWIP project comes at a time when people in County Durham communities value their local green space more than ever.

As part of ROWIP4, we carried out extensive consultation with both internal and external stakeholders (as mentioned above) to deliver this draft plan. Stakeholders highlighted specific areas on the ROW network which needed improving and prioritising and these priorities have informed the plan's policies. The aim is to have a full public consultation starting in May 2023.

We have developed policies that are inclusive of all users' needs to be make the plan as inclusive as possible, whilst maintaining good relationships with private landowners. To reflect this, we have included policies such as 'Making our Network Accessible' – '10 in 10' (Policy 3), 'Empowering Communities to own our Right of Way Network' (Policy 4) and 'Ensuring the Countryside Code is followed, and Landowners are respected' (Policy 6).

Will this promote positive relationships between different communities? If so how?

Yes, ROWIP should promote positive relationships between different communities by encouraging all to use the right of way network. We will ensure residents and visitors can access PROWs across the county – we will minimise exclusion wherever possible. This will foster positive mental and physical health.

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Action Plan

Action	Responsibility	Timescales for implementation	In which plan will the action appear?
Public Consultation	PO	May- July 2023	
Consult with Disability Groups	PO/JK	May-July 2023	
Update ROWIP to reflect consultation feedback	PO/KGP	August/September 2023	
Develop 3 year action plan to deliver ROWIP4	Rights of Way Team Leader	May - September	

Review and connected assessments

Are there any additional or connected equality impact assessments that need to be undertaken? (If yes, provide details)	
When will this assessment be reviewed? Please also insert this date at the front of the template	

Sign Off

Lead officer sign off: Peter Ollivere	Date: 7/3/2023
Equality representative sign off (where required): Mary Gallagher, E&D Team Leader	Date: 23.03.23

Please ensure:

- **The findings of this EIA are carefully considered and used to inform any related decisions and policy development**

- **A summary of findings is included within the body of any relevant reports or decision-making records**
- **The EIA is attached to reports or relevant decision-making records and the report Implications Appendix 1 is noted that an EIA has been undertaken**

Please retain a copy for review and update where necessary, and forward a copy to equalities@durham.gov.uk