

Active Travel Team – Update to the County Durham Local Access Forum

A key area of current focus for the Active Travel Team relates to access controls on the County's active travel network.

Under the Equality Act (2010) public authorities responsible for a space are required to anticipate and make reasonable adjustments to enable Disabled people access with no substantial disadvantage compared to non-Disabled people. This explicitly includes altering and removing physical features which would otherwise exclude Disabled people. It is not permitted to require a Disabled person to go a longer way around, ask for assistance or traverse a space much more slowly than a non-Disabled person would have to due to a physical barrier that could be removed.

A key aspect of the act is that public authorities should advance equality of opportunity for all people with protected characteristics, including Disabled people. This goes beyond removing and minimising disadvantages, and additionally includes taking steps to promote equality by actively enabling Disabled people to participate in public life and activities, especially where Disabled participation is disproportionately low. The wish for the removal of barriers also aligns with national guidance (e.g. Cycle Infrastructure Design LTN 1/20, Inclusive Mobility) which encourages that access control measures should not be used as they reduce the usability of an active travel route for everyone and, may exclude people riding nonstandard cycles and cargo bikes. They unfortunately reduce the capacity of a route as well as the directness and comfort.

For Durham County Council, this involves identifying instances where existing access controls are not in accordance with legislation, best practice and guidance and through working with local partners, such as Sustrans, to remove these and deliver inclusive and high-quality access controls.

In some instances, access controls are unable to be completely removed from the active travel network to suit local circumstances such as, but not exhaustively, Anti-Social Behaviour and safety. However, new access controls delivered at these locations provide betterment against the previous and support our agenda to open up access for all users.