

# Equality Impact Assessment

## Countryside & Rights of Way

<b>Name of the project or service</b>
<b>Rights of Way &amp; Countryside Management</b>

<b>File ref:</b>		<b>Issue No:</b>	<b>1</b>
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Part 1	Aims and implementation of the project or service...1
Part 2	Consideration of data and research...5
Part 3	Assessment of Impact...6
Part 4	Measures to mitigate disproportionate or adverse impact or improve on neutral or positive impacts...19
Part 5	Conclusions and recommendations...20
Part 6	Equality impact assessment improvement plan...21
Part 7	Equality impact assessment summary report...23

## **Part 1 Aims and implementation of the project or service**

### **1.1 What is being assessed?**

**a) Name of the project or service.**

Rights of Way & Countryside Management Service

**b) Is this new or existing?**

New ☐ - Review ☒

**c) What is the main purpose or aims of the project or service?**

To enable the safe and informed enjoyment of the East Sussex landscape by residents and visitors, through ensuring that the land and rights of way for which East Sussex County Council is responsible are accessible, maintained, enhanced and promoted

**d) Manager(s) and section or service responsible for completing the assessment.**

Steve Diserens, Team Manager, Countryside Central

### **1.2 Who is affected by the project or service? Who is it intended to benefit and how?**

Our external customers potentially encompass everyone that lives in East Sussex as well as people visiting the county on day-trips or longer breaks/holidays. Amongst various objectives we seek to enable and encourage people to access the countryside, and to provide a range of volunteering opportunities. Walking in the countryside [which is the main activity type] is traditionally dominated by middle-aged middle-class people, but it is believed that our service is good at enabling and encouraging participation in this and other activities by all groups

### **1.3 Does the subject of this assessment impact positively or negatively on any of the following areas of people's lives (human rights)? For more information - [see Paper 1](#)**

	Positive	Neutral	Negative
<b>Life</b> (capability to be alive)	<input type="checkbox"/>	x	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>Physical Security</b> (e.g. free from violence/fear)	x	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>Health</b>	x	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>Education</b> (learning and skills etc.)	x	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>Standard of Living</b> (independence, dignity and respect)	x	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>Productive and valued activities</b> (work, care and leisure)	x	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>Individual, family and social life</b> (right to marry, have children)	<input type="checkbox"/>	x	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>Participation, influence and voice</b> (decision making)	x	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>Identity, expression and self-respect</b> (For example, religion)	x	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>Legal Security</b>	x	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

#### 1.4 How does the project or service contribute to better community cohesion?

Local communities are encouraged to participate in the management of countryside sites and rights of way, which can help to bring them together. This works particularly well for countryside sites close to a town or village, for example at Chailey Common Nature Reserve and Shinewater (Eastbourne), where the communities are strengthened by the shared interest in their local 'greenspace'. This is also the case where there is a volunteer group for a patch of rights of way which is centred on a particular settlement, as in Danehill and Iden.

Volunteer programmes generally are good at mixing people of different ages and backgrounds, and working together on practical projects is an excellent way of developing this contact into new friendships

#### 1.5 What is the relevance of the aims of the project or service, to the equality target groups and the County Council's duty to eliminate unlawful racial, disability and gender discrimination; and promote equality of opportunity?

A number of equality target groups benefit from the service. At the present time increasing effort is being put into facilitating access for all, so disabled people are currently seeing greatest improvements in opportunity. Older people and women [particularly lone women] seem to particularly benefit from the guided walks programme which we run, children are targeted through a range of initiatives, and efforts are made to give opportunities for people from urban environments to be involved. In the past we have set up a couple of tailor-made guided walks for a BME group, but this ceased when the

partner organisation [Sompriti] were unable to find time to continue their involvement. Occasional walks are still run by the ranger at Chailey Common for disabled children who live locally.

**1.6 Are there any partners involved? E.g. Primary Care Trusts, NHS Trust, voluntary/community organisations, the private sector?**

We have many partners – European [as part of 'Interreg'], national [Environment Agency, Natural England, etc], regional [High Weald AONB Unit, South Downs Joint Committee, etc] and local [District and Parish Councils, Ashdown Forest Conservators, etc]. There are also partnerships with the voluntary sector [Sussex Wildlife Trust, Ramblers Association, etc], the education sector [Plumpton Agricultural College, local schools, etc] and internally within ESCC [with the East Sussex Archaeology & Museums Partnership, Highways teams, etc]

**1.7 If yes, how are partners involved?**

In many different ways, including provision of grants [by partners], working together to manage countryside sites [including us managing some sites on behalf of our partners in return for a fee], provision of training, setting up tasks for volunteers together, sharing advice and knowledge, etc

**1.8 Is this project or procedure affected by joint commissioning or strategic planning activity e.g. Children's Act, Corporate Area Assessment etc?**

No

**1.9 How is, or will the project or service, be put into practice and who is, or will be responsible for it?**

The service is part of Environmental Operations within the Operations Division of T&E Dept. It is a long standing service with objectives and methods of working which have developed over many years, but which have been subject to much review and reshaping over the last 5 years [and this process is continuing]. The service is implemented by 30 – 40 staff, comprising mainly Rangers, Rights of Way Officers and Volunteer Officers who are arranged into four teams. Interface with other bodies is through a variety of means, including partnership meetings with other local authorities, Local Access Forum meetings with representatives of users, working parties with community groups, and site meetings with representatives of other agencies. The ROW&CM Service is usually the lead party in any implementation which it gets involved with, and is therefore able to ensure compliance with the Council's Equality Policy.

**How do people access or how are people referred to your project/ service? Please explain fully.**

Public service accessible by all, both in terms of use of the rights of way and countryside sites which we manage, and participation in the volunteering and other events which we run.

Volunteers are recruited mainly through leaflet publicity distributed via outlets such as libraries and at events like Woodfair, and through information and links on the ESCC website. Help with recruiting rights of way volunteers also comes from the parish councils, the Ramblers' Association and from existing local groups, while volunteer walks and rides leaders are often participants who have become inspired to train as leaders themselves.

The 'Volunteer Agreement' entered into on recruitment includes an undertaking by ESCC to 'treat you equally whatever your ethnicity, age, gender, sexual orientation or religious belief'.

**1.10 If there is a referral method how are people assessed to use the project / service? Please explain fully.**

**N/A**

**1.11 How, when and where is your service provided? Please explain fully.**

The service is a public one, available across the whole county in the shape of the rights of way network and the countryside sites which we manage

## Part 2 Consideration of data and research

### 2.1 List all examples of quantitative and qualitative data or any consultation information available that will enable the impact assessment to be undertaken.

Census data: Yes ☐ - No ☒ [Link](#) Staff survey, Yes ☐ No ☒ [Link](#)  
Other info

Other quantitative and qualitative data: Records of volunteer profiles, surveys of participants on guided walks, Countryside Peer Review [2009], national studies of visitors to the countryside by DEFRA/Countryside Agency/Natural England,

### 2.2 Equalities profile of users or those intended to benefit from the project or service.

Census data: Yes ☐ - No ☒ [Link](#) Staff survey, Yes ☐ No ☒ [Link](#)  
Other info

Other data: Very little data is available on the profile of users of ESCC's countryside sites and rights of way network – this is common to most counties and reflects the potential cost and difficulties of gathering such data [with users so spread across a large geographical network]. Instead, local authorities tend to rely on statistics and recommendations from national agencies, e.g. research by Natural England, which demonstrates that there are four under-represented groups in terms of accessing the natural environment: disabled people, BME groups, the young and residents of inner cities

### 2.3 Evidence of complaints against the project or service on grounds of discrimination.

None

### 2.4 Have you carried out any consultation or research on the project or service?

Yes: ☐ Fill out questions 2.5 and 2.6

No: ☒ [Got to Part 3](#)

### 2.5 What does the consultation, research and/or data indicate about the negative impact of the project or service?

### 2.6 What does the consultation, research and/or data indicate about the positive impact of the project or service?

## Part 3 Assessment of impact

### 3.1 Ethnicity: Testing of disproportional, negative, neutral or positive impact

- a) **From the evidence available, does the project or service affect or have the potential to affect ethnic groups differently?**

Yes: ☒ No: ☐ If No [go to 3.2](#)

- b) **Identify the effect of this project or service on different ethnic groups from information available.**

In 2005 and 2006 we organised two tailor-made guided walks for some of the local BME community in partnership with Sompriti – these were well received and illustrated the way in which it is possible for a Service like ours to encourage ethnic minorities to make better recreational use of the countryside if there are the resources available to set up targeted events of this kind

- c) **How is the target group reflected in the take up of the project or service?**

Census data: Yes ☐ - No ☒ [Link](#) Staff survey: Yes ☐ No ☒ [Link](#)  
Other info

We know that some people from ethnic groups in East Sussex do use the rights of way network and our countryside sites, especially where these are close to towns. However, no data is available on levels of take-up.

The take-up on the two guided walks for BME groups was 33 participants on the first and 11 on the second



**d) If yes, do any of the differences amount to?**

	<b>Reason, evidence, comment</b>
<b>Barriers, negative impact or unlawful discrimination</b>	
<b>Neutral Impact</b>	
<b>Positive impact</b>	A questionnaire carried out on one of the BME walks found that of the 33 participants 22 had never previously been out on a walk in the East Sussex countryside – this illustrates both the extent of the current limited participation of this group and the potential to change it through targeted events

**e) If there is a negative impact, can it be justified on the grounds of promoting equality of opportunity for one ethnic group or for another legitimate reason?**

N/A

### 3.2 Gender/Transgender: Testing of disproportionate, negative, neutral or positive impact

- a) **From the evidence available, does the project or service affect or have the potential to affect men, women or transgender people differently?**

Yes: X      No: ☐      If No [go to 3.3](#)

- b) **Identify the effect of this project or service on different gender groups from information available.**

We know that our programme of guided walks is particularly attractive to lone women, many of whom say that they do not feel safe or confident walking alone

- c) **How are men, women and transgender people reflected in the take up of the project or service?**

Census data: Yes ☐ - No X [Link](#) Staff survey: Yes ☐ No X [Link](#)  
Other info

The last survey we did of participants on our guided walks programme [in 2003] showed that approximately two thirds were female. This repeats the findings of the previous survey in 1990, when 62% were found to be women.

- d) **If yes, do any of the differences amount to?**

	Reason, evidence, comment
<b>Barriers, negative impact or unlawful discrimination</b>	
<b>Neutral Impact</b>	
<b>Positive impact</b>	The Exploring East Sussex guided walks programme appears to cater for a large number of single/lone women, many of whom might not otherwise feel able to access the countryside

- e) **If there is a negative impact, can it be justified on the grounds of promoting equality of opportunity for one gender or for another legitimate reason?**

### 3.3 Disability: Testing of disproportionate, negative, neutral or positive impact.

**a) From the evidence available, does the project or service affect or have the potential to affect disabled people differently?**

Yes: ☒ No: ☐ If No [go to 3.4](#)

**b) Identify the effect of this project or service on disabled people from information available.**

In recent years the Service has put increasing effort into 'easier access' initiatives of various kinds, with the specific objective of making the rights of way network and our countryside sites more accessible to all, particularly disabled people. These initiatives include:

- Application of a 'Gaps Gates & Stiles Policy' to public footpaths, which is leading to many step stiles being replaced with gaps, gates & squeeze stiles. To support this the Rangers now have annual targets to achieve minimum numbers of improvements of this kind
- Improvements to surfaces, ramps, gates and other structures at our countryside sites to allow more and easier access. Some sites are now extremely good throughout in this respect [e.g. the Cuckoo Trail and Forest Way], while at others where the natural terrain is more difficult we have constructed selected easy access routes involving stoning or sealing of path surfaces, replacement of steps with ramps and the removal of barriers such as stiles [e.g. at Ditchling Common]
- Creation and promotion of a number of easy access routes based on the public rights of way network [mainly coming out of 'interreg' funded projects], again involving stoning or sealing of path surfaces, etc
- The selection of public rights of way for surface improvement (mainly stoning) now takes into account the potential benefits to all users, including disabled people, who may currently be unaware of a route because of it's condition and are therefore unlikely to be amongst those lobbying for improvements
- Engagement with disabled people through the Local Access Forum, the East Sussex Reference Group and through discussions with individual members. This has helped to guide our work on improving access [and how it is best promoted]

- Setting up guided walks specifically tailored for disabled people, organised in partnership with ESDA [the East Sussex Disabled Association]
- Running regular guided walks on Chailey Common for Chailey Heritage school pupils (severely disabled children)
- Many staff have recently been trained [by the Fieldfare Trust] to carry out disability audits, and this knowledge will be used to carry out audits at our sites, to plan further access improvements and to provide information to allow individuals to decide if they can access specific sites/routes.
- We regularly set up volunteer tasks for groups of adults with learning disabilities at a number of our sites. We also have a number of regular Countryside Volunteers with declared mental health issues and learning disabilities, and have had several individuals with mental health issues on our Trainee Ranger Scheme.
- Our leaflets are made available in large print or different languages on request (although this rarely taken up).
- The brochure promoting our Exploring East Sussex programme of guided walks includes information to help disabled people decide whether or not a walk might be suitable for them.

In addition to these initiatives, a number of organisations use our rights of way network for 'health walks', in line with the growing evidence that access to the natural environment improves health, mental health and general well being. Although we do not lead specific 'health walks' ourselves, these are sometimes promoted through Exploring East Sussex.

**c) How are disabled people reflected in the take up of the project or service?**

Census data: Yes ☐ - No x [Link](#) Staff survey: Yes ☐ No x [Link](#)  
Other info

We know that many people with disabilities do use both the rights of way network and our countryside sites. Those people in wheelchairs and mobility scooters are the most obvious, and they are frequent visitors to the Cuckoo Trail and Forest Way in particular. However, no data is available on levels of take-up.

As far as our volunteer schemes are concerned, out of 320 Countryside Volunteers currently on our books around 15 have declared mental health issues and/or learning disabilities. Of the 71 people who have come through our Trainee Ranger scheme since March 2000, 4 had declared mental health issues and/or learning disabilities.

**d) If yes, do any of the differences amount to?**

	<b>Reason, evidence, comment</b>
<b>Barriers, negative impact or unlawful discrimination</b>	There are still many physical barriers limiting use of rights of way and countryside sites by disabled people. Most of these are lawful, in the shape of steep terrain, stiles, flights of steps, etc, but we are working to gradually modify some of these where we can [and in places where the benefits will be greatest]
<b>Neutral Impact</b>	
<b>Positive impact</b>	<p>We believe that numbers of disabled people using the rights of way network and our countryside sites have increased in recent years, but there is no data to back this up.</p> <p>Likewise, we believe that we are providing volunteering opportunities for a wide spectrum of people, some of whom might not otherwise get involved with the volunteer sector, but this is not really measurable.</p>

**e) If there is a negative impact, can it be justified on the grounds of promoting equality of opportunity for disabled people or for another legitimate reason?**

N/A

### 3.4 Age: Testing of disproportionate, negative, neutral or positive impact

**a) From the evidence available, does the project or service affect or have the potential to affect age groups differently?**

Yes: X      No: ☐      If No [go to 3.5](#)

**b) Identify the effect of this project or service on different age groups from information available.**

Our service is particularly good at providing opportunities for older people, many of whom are keen to walk in the countryside. Our programme of guided walks is particularly popular with older people.

Part of the work of our service is aimed at enabling and encouraging participation by younger age groups, notably through:

- Running a summer programme of Children's Activities at our countryside sites
- Working with schools, particularly those close to our countryside sites
- Running a programme of guided cycle rides, which tend to appeal to a wide age range
- Setting up and running events which are aimed at families [again, mainly based at our countryside sites]
- Taking work experience placements from schools, during which the children work with the Countryside Rangers for a week

**c) How are the different age groups reflected in the take up of the project or service?**

Census data: Yes ☐ - No X [Link](#)      Staff survey: Yes ☐ No X [Link](#)  
Other info

More than 60% of the participants in the Exploring East Sussex programme of guided walks are over 50 [and around 80% are 45 or over]

The annual programme of Children's Activities attracts around 250 attendances per annum

**d) If yes, do any of the differences amount to?**

	<b>Reason, evidence, comment</b>
<b>Barriers, negative impact or unlawful discrimination</b>	
<b>Neutral Impact</b>	
<b>Positive impact</b>	More people of all ages access and enjoy the countryside as a result of our work, but we particularly facilitate participation by more older people and [to a lesser extent, children]

**e) If there is a negative impact, can it be justified on the grounds of promoting equality of opportunity for one age group or for another legitimate reason?**

### 3.5 Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual and Heterosexual : Testing of disproportionate, negative, neutral or positive impact

- a) From the evidence available, does the project or service affect or have the potential to affect gay, lesbian, bisexual and heterosexual people differently?

Yes: ☐ No: X If No [go to 3.6](#)

- b) Identify the effect of this project or service on gay, lesbian, bisexual and heterosexual groups from information available.

- c) How is sexual orientation reflected in the take up of the project or service?

Census data: Yes ☐ - No ☐ [Link](#) Staff survey: Yes ☐ No ☐ [Link](#)  
Other info

- d) If yes, do any of the differences amount to?

	Reason, evidence, comment
Barriers, negative impact or unlawful discrimination	
Neutral Impact	
Positive impact	

- e) If there is a negative impact, can it be justified on the grounds of promoting equality of opportunity for gay, lesbian, bisexual and heterosexual people or for another legitimate reason?



### 3.6 Religion, Belief: Testing of disproportionate, negative, neutral or positive impact

- a) From the evidence available, does the project or service affect or have the potential to affect religious, belief groups differently?

Yes: ☐ No: X If No [go to 3.7](#)

- b) Identify the effect of this project or service on different religious, belief groups from information available

- c) How are religious and belief groups reflected in the take up of the project or service?

Census data: Yes ☐ - No ☐ [Link](#) Staff survey: Yes ☐ No ☐ [Link](#)  
Other info

- d) If yes, do any of the differences amount to?

	Reason, evidence, comment
Barriers, negative impact or unlawful discrimination	
Neutral Impact	
Positive impact	

- e) If there is a negative impact, can it be justified on the grounds of promoting equality of opportunity for one religious, belief or for another legitimate reason?

### 3.7 Carers: Testing of disproportionate, negative, neutral or positive impact

a) **From the evidence available, does the project or service affect or have the potential to affect carers differently?**

Yes: ☐ No: X If No go to 3.8

b) **Identify the effect of this project or service on carers from information available**

c) **How are carers reflected in the take up of the project or service?**

Census data: Yes ☐ - No ☐ [Link](#) Staff survey: Yes ☐ No ☐ [Link](#)  
Other info

d) **If yes, do any of the differences amount to?**

	Reason, evidence, comment
<b>Barriers, negative impact or unlawful discrimination</b>	
<b>Neutral Impact</b>	
<b>Positive impact</b>	

e) **If there is a negative impact, can it be justified on the grounds of promoting equality of opportunity for another legitimate reason?**

### 3.8 Other: Additional groups that may experience impacts - testing of disproportionate, negative, neutral or positive impact.

- a) **From the evidence available, does the project or service affect or have the potential to affect other groups differently?**

Yes: X      No: ☐      If No [go to Part 4](#)

- b) **Identify the effect of this project or service on different other groups from information available**

Research by Natural England has shown that under-represented groups in terms of accessing the natural environment include residents of inner cities. While there are no cities in East Sussex, it is likely that this also applies to poorer parts of the larger towns, notably Hastings.

Our work with volunteers, particularly the Trainee Ranger scheme and countryside volunteers, attracts a lot of people from urban areas, particularly Brighton. Many of these people are unemployed, and the funding for the trainee scheme encourages those who are under 25 or lone parents

Our programme of guided walks is aimed in part at people who do not currently have the confidence to access the countryside, and we also make efforts to arrange as many walks and events as possible to link with public transport. Self-guided walks, promoted by leaflets, on the ESCC website, etc, are mostly also linked to public transport.

A new system of workflow on rights of way is currently being programmed, and this involves prioritising maintenance on those parts of the network which are close to urban centres.

We hope that through these efforts we are catering for at least some of those from the hard-to-reach poorer urban communities.

- c) **How are other groups reflected in the take up of the project or service?**

Census data: Yes ☐ - No X [Link](#)      Staff survey: Yes ☐ No X [Link](#)  
Other info

No data available

- d) **If yes, do any of the differences amount to?**

	<b>Reason, evidence, comment</b>
<b>Barriers, negative impact or unlawful discrimination</b>	
<b>Neutral Impact</b>	
<b>Positive impact</b>	We hope that there is a positive impact but measuring this would be very difficult

- e) If there is a negative impact, can it be justified on the grounds of promoting equality of opportunity for other group or for another legitimate reason?**

## **Part 4 Measures to mitigate disproportionate or negative impact or improve on neutral or positive impacts.**

**3.9 If there is any negative impact on any target equality group identified in Section 3, is the impact intended or legal?**

N/A

**3.10 Specify measures that can be taken to remove or minimise the disproportionate or negative effect identified in Section 3. If none were identified in Section 3; identify how disproportionate impact or adverse effect could be avoided in future.**

Need to attempt to maintain the resources necessary to continue this part of our work

**3.11 If there is no evidence that the project or service, promotes equality, equal opportunities or improves relations within equality target groups, what amendments could be made to achieve this?**

N/A

**3.12 If a neutral or positive impact has been identified, can that impact be improved upon (continuous improvement)?  
What are the improvements that can be made?  
Can they be applied elsewhere in the ESCC?**

Additional resources would allow more of a positive impact to be made, e.g. more gates to be provided to replace stiles [improving the opportunities for disabled people to access the countryside]; more targeted activities [e.g. tailored guided walks] with BME and disabled groups

**3.13 How will any amended project or service be implemented, including any necessary training?**

N/A

## Part 5 Conclusions and recommendations

### 3.14 Does the project or service comply with equalities legislation, including the duty to promote race, disability and gender equality?

Yes: X      No: ☐

### 3.15 What are the main areas requiring further attention?

None [unless additional resources are made available]

### 3.16 Summary of recommendations for improvement

In future, whenever the opportunity arises, consideration should be given to collecting data [for the first time] on levels of involvement by equality target groups. Likely opportunities include:

- Whenever visitor surveys are set up at any of the countryside sites which we manage
- When we carry out surveys of participants on our guided walks and cycle rides
- Recruitment information gathered on Volunteers

### 3.17 What equality monitoring, evaluation, review systems have been set up to carry out regular checks on the effects of the project or service?

(Give details)

Monitoring of numbers of stiles replaced with gates and gaps.

In one instance we are using a people counter to measure the number of users before and after a stile was replaced by a gate. Data is still awaited, but it will of course only tell us whether the number of users has increased, not how many of them are disabled people.

### 3.18 When will the amended project or service be reviewed?

September 2013

<b>Date completed:</b>	September 2010	<b>Signed by (person completing)</b>	Steve Diserens
		<b>Role of person completing</b>	Team Manager, Countryside Central
<b>Date:</b>		<b>Signed by (Manager)</b>	

## Part 6 Equality impact assessment improvement plan

The table below should be completed using the information from the equality impact assessment to produce an action plan for the implementation of the proposals to:

1. Lower the negative impact, and/or
2. Ensure that the negative impact is legal under anti-discriminatory law, and/or
3. Provide an opportunity to promote equality, equal opportunity and improve relations within equality target groups, i.e. increase the positive impact
4. If no actions [go to Part 7](#)

**Please ensure that you update your service/business plan within the equality objectives/targets and actions identified below:**

Area for improvement	Changes proposed	Lead Manager	Timescale	Resource implications	Where incorporated/flagged? (e.g. business plan/strategic plan/steering group/DMT)
Equalities monitoring of volunteers	Record equalities information for volunteers/trainees		Trainees in next recruitment (January 11) Volunteers at next survey	negligible	
Equalities monitoring of site users	Record equalities information when doing user surveys		Next survey (none currently planned)	negligible	
Equalities monitoring of guided walks/rides	Record equalities information when doing surveys of participants		Next survey (none currently planned)	negligible	

## 6.1 Residual Risk

Please identify any areas from the above improvement plan that will not be completed giving reasons and how this has been highlighted within your Directorate:

Area of Risk	Type of Risk? (Legal, Moral, Financial)	Can this be addressed at a later date? (e.g. next financial year/through a business case)	Where flagged? (e.g. business plan/strategic plan/steering group/DMT)	Lead Manager	Date resolved (if applicable)
Surveys of site users and participants on guided walks and rides may not be carried out in foreseeable future	Financial	Maybe	N/A		



## Part 7 Equality impact assessment summary report

The results of equality impact assessments must be published. Please complete this summary, which will be used to publish the results of your impact assessment on the County Council's website.

### **Date of assessment:**

**Manager(s) name:** Steve Diserens      **Role:** Team Manager,  
Countryside Central

### **Project or service, project or service, that was impact assessed:**

Rights of Way & Countryside Management

### **Summary of findings:**

1. The service benefits several equality target groups:

- Disabled people are enjoying gradual improvements in the opportunities available to access the rights of way network and the countryside sites which the County Council manages. This is the result of various initiatives, including the replacement of many stiles with gates and gaps, improvements to surfaces and ramps, more consultation and work with disabled groups, and better training of staff [e.g. in carrying out disability audits]
- Older people and women [particularly lone women] seem to particularly benefit from the guided walks programme which we organise
- Children are encouraged to participate through a number of initiatives, including the summer programme of Children's Activities, work with schools and work experience placements with the Rangers
- In the past we have set up a couple of tailor-made guided walks for a BME group

2. The data available to measure the extent of the impact is very limited and would be expensive to gather, related to the fact that we never meet most of our customers, the majority of whom are spread thinly over a large network of rights of way and countryside sites.

3. There is no evidence of any negative impact on any equality target group.

4. More resources would allow even more of a positive impact to be made. For example, more gates could be provided to replace stiles

[improving the opportunities for disabled people to access the countryside], and we could run more targeted activities [e.g. tailored guided walks] with BME and disabled groups.

5. The immediate challenge in the prevailing economic climate is to try to continue with as many as possible of those areas of work which are currently benefiting equality target groups.

## Summary of recommendations and key points of action plan:

1. As and when opportunities arise [e.g. when carrying out visitor surveys at any of the countryside sites which we manage], gather more data to measure the extent of our impact on equality target groups.

2. Seek to continue with those areas of work which currently benefit equality target groups, in particular:

- The Exploring East Sussex programme of guided walks and events
- Application of the 'Gaps Gates and Stiles Policy'
- Countryside Rangers working with local schools
- The summer programme of Children's Activities
- Our work with a diverse range of volunteers and local communities

3. If additional resources become available in the future, consider extending current programmes to include some or all of the following:

- Provision of more gates to replace stiles on the rights of way network[improving the opportunities for disabled people to access the countryside]
- Setting up more targeted activities [e.g. tailored guided walks] with BME and disabled groups
- A project set up to work with community groups in poorer urban areas [e.g. parts of Hastings] to encourage more people from those environments to access and enjoy the countryside
- More promotion locally of the health benefits of accessing the countryside, walking, cycling, etc

Groups that this project or service will impact upon															
Race		Gender		Sexual Orientation		Age		Disability		Religion/ Belief		Other		All	
+	-	+	-	+	-	+	-	+	-	+	-	+	-	+	-
x	<input type="checkbox"/>	x	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	x	<input type="checkbox"/>	x	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	x	<input type="checkbox"/>	x	<input type="checkbox"/>