

# Assessing the Impact on Equality Characteristics, the Welsh language and Socio-Economic Disadvantage

Please see the sheet *How to Make an Equality Impact Assessment* for assistance to complete this form. You are also welcome to contact Delyth Williams, Policy and Equality Officer on ext. 32708, or [DelythGadlysWilliams@gwynedd.llyw.cymru](mailto:DelythGadlysWilliams@gwynedd.llyw.cymru), for further assistance.

The Council is required (under the Equality Act 2010) to consider the impact that any change in any policy or procedures (or the creation of a new policy or procedure) will have on people with protected equality characteristics. The Council also has additional general duties to ensure fairness and to foster good relationships. Therefore, a timely assessment should be made before any decision is taken on any relevant change (i.e. that affects people with protected equality characteristics).

The Council is also required, under the requirements of the Welsh Language Standards (Section 44 of the Welsh Language (Wales) Measure 2011), to consider the impact that any change in policy or procedure (or the creation of a new policy or procedure), will have on opportunities for people to use the Welsh language and to ensure that the Welsh language is not treated less favourably than English. This document therefore ensures that these decisions safeguard and promote the use made of the Welsh language.

From 1 April 2021, the Council has a duty to give due attention to addressing socio-economic disadvantage in strategic decisions.

## 1) Details

### 1.1 What is the name of the policy / service in question?

Rights of Way Improvement Plan (ROWIP)

### 1.2 What is the purpose of the policy / service that is being created or amended? What changes are being considered?

The purpose of the ROWIP is to set high level guidance for the Authority's work in the field of countryside access and specifically how the rights of way network would be maintained and improved physically. The ROWIP also deals with the statutory responsibility of the Authority to maintain and update the definitive map and statement.  
The new ROWIP would be a progression / review of the original ROWIP adopted in 2007. Unless there is a change in legislation the ROWIP will be operational until 2028/29.

The new ROWIP does not vary much from the original plan but deals with changes in resources and emerged legislations that have come into force since 2007, for example the Equality Act 2010 and the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015.

The ROWIP presents a series of Action Statements rather than detailed work programmes. One of the Action Statements that would be prioritised was the work of updating the "Rights of Way Policies" document that would go into greater detail regarding work processes.

### **1.3 Who is responsible for this assessment?**

Wyn Williams - Countryside Service Manager

### **1.4 When did you commence the assessment? Which version is this?**

Version I - October / November 2022

## **2) Action**

### **2.1 Who are the stakeholders or partners whom we will have to work with to carry out this assessment?**

The rights of way and other paths are available for everyone in Gwynedd as well as visitors to the area.

The day to day work of managing the access networks was already being undertaken with the input and the co-operation of a number of stakeholders and partners within the public sector (Community Councils, SNP, Natural Resources Wales), voluntary organisations and user representatives (The Ramblers Association, British Horse Society, Sustrans, Access Forums). The above and others have had the opportunity to contribute to prepare the ROWIP.

### **2.2 What steps have you taken to engage with people with protected characteristics, regarding the Welsh language or with communities (either due to location or due to need), who are living with a socio-economic disadvantage?**

The following consultations were held:

- Gather opinions on Rights of Way 2017 - 1,386 valid responses. Specific questions were asked on the provision for people with mobility difficulties.
- Public consultation 2022 on the ROWIP Draft - observations were received in relation to the provision for people with mobility problems
- A number of consultations and Access Forums that include members with protected characteristics.
- Consultation on the Regeneration Plan - Ardal Ni showed that a number of communities wished to prioritise improvements to paths.

### **2.3 What was the outcome of the engagement?**

The main messages from the consultation have been incorporated in the ROWIP

### **2.4 On the basis of what other evidence are you acting?**

The responses to the consultation as well as the nature of the enquiries and complaints to the Countryside Service reflect the need for provision of multi-use paths and improve the accessibility of paths generally.

### **2.5 Are there any gaps in the evidence that needs to be collected?**

Lack of information regarding the condition of most of the networks were a barrier to develop comprehensive work programmes.

## **3) Identifying the Impact**

- 3.1 The Council must duly address the impact that any changes will have on people with the following equality characteristics. What impact will the new policy/service or the proposed changes in the policy or service have on people with these characteristics? There is also a need to consider the impact on the socio-economic disadvantage and on the Welsh language.**

Characteristics	What type of impact? *	In what way? What is the evidence?
<b>Race (including nationality)</b>	None	There are no individual plans that involve this characteristic but there was some evidence that some communities of ethnic minorities do not take full advantage of access opportunities to the countryside. There was a need to work with the partners in order to identify positive steps that could be taken jointly.
<b>Disability</b>	Positive	<p>The need to ensure that the infrastructure was suitable and safe for everyone including people with different mobility problems was emphasised.</p> <p>In response, the following steps were prioritised:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Continue to implement the least obstructive method of working - replace a stile with a gate, and if possible totally remove the gate.</li> <li>• Remove unnecessary obstacles and growth.</li> <li>• Widen paths where possible.</li> <li>• Ensure that bridges and structures that maintain paths are at least 1.2m wide.</li> <li>• Prioritise improvements to popular paths close to communities.</li> <li>• Provide information regarding the locations of "access for all" paths.</li> </ul> <p>The Rights of Way Policies document would be amended during 22/23 and would detail on the steps that could be taken to implement the above.</p>
<b>Gender</b>	None	There are no individual plans that involve this characteristic.
<b>Age</b>	Positive	Ensuring that paths were more accessible for everyone facilitates older people to keep active and continue to enjoy the outdoors and nature.
<b>Sexual orientation</b>	None	There are no individual plans that involve this characteristic.
<b>Religion or belief (or non-belief)</b>	None	There are no individual plans that involve this characteristic.
<b>Gender reassignment</b>	None	There are no individual plans that involve this characteristic.
<b>Pregnancy and maternity</b>	Positive	Ensuring that paths were more accessible for everyone facilitates pregnant women and those with young children to enjoy the outdoors.

<b>Marriage and civil partnership</b>	None	There are no individual plans that involve this characteristic.
<b>The Welsh language</b>	Positive	Interpretation material and information on rights of way and access opportunities will be prepared and presented through the medium of Welsh or bilingually in accordance with the Council's language policy.
<b>Socio-Economic Disadvantage</b>	Positive	The provision of accessible and safe paths is beneficial to communities under Socio-Economic Disadvantage. It would be easier to travel on foot or on bicycle, improved connections to community hubs and public transport.  Provide an opportunity for everyone to take advantage of access to the outdoors to benefit their physical and mental health.

\* Delete as required

**3.2 The Council has a duty under the Equality Act 2010 to contribute positively to a fairer society through advancing equality and good relations in its activities in the fields of age, gender, sexual orientation, religion, race, transgender, disability and pregnancy and maternity. The Council must duly address the way any change impacts on these duties.**

<b>General Duties of the Equality Act</b>	<b>Does it have an impact?*</b>	<b>In what way? What is the evidence?</b>
<b>Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation</b>	Yes	The ROWIP has a positive impact on duties.
<b>Promote equal opportunities</b>	Yes	Implementing the ROWIP would provide a resource which would be available for everyone and would promote equal opportunity.
<b>Foster good relationships</b>	Yes	Implementing the ROWIP was an opportunity to strengthen and expand the collaborations and connections.

\* Delete as required

**3.3 How does your proposal ensure that you work in accordance with the Welsh Language Standards (Welsh Language (Wales) Measure 2011), to ensure that the Welsh language is not treated less favourably than the English, and that every opportunity to promote the Welsh language is taken (beyond providing bilingual services) and increase opportunities to use and learn the language in the community?**

Information and advertising signs and materials would be published bilingually with Welsh first, in line with the Council's language policy.

Volunteers contribute to the work of maintaining rights of way, it is ensured that there are opportunities for those learning Welsh to practice their language skills in an informal environment.

**3.4 What other measures or changes could you include to strengthen or change the policy / practice so as to have a positive impact on people's opportunities to use the Welsh language, and to reduce or prevent any detrimental impacts that the policy/practice could have on the Welsh language?**

It should be ensured that other agencies and the business sector who promote walks pay equal attention to the Welsh language.

**3.5 How does the proposal show that you have given due regard to the need to address inequality due to socio-economic disadvantage? (Please note that this relates to closing the inequality gap, rather than improving outcomes for everyone only).**

No further observations

**3.6 What measures or other changes can you include to strengthen or change the policy / custom to show that you have given due regard to the need to reduce disproportionate outcomes as a result of socio-economic disadvantage, in accordance with the Socio-Economic Act?**

Opportunities were taken to collaborate within and outside the Council to ensure that the Regeneration plans gave full consideration to the needs of rights of way users with disabilities.

#### 4) Analysing the results

##### 4.1 Is the policy therefore likely to have a significant, positive impact on any of the above? What is the reason for this?

The ROWIP has had a positive impact although no impact had been identified in relation to all equality characteristics.  
The equality impact assessment would be updated as part of the work of updating the Rights of Way Policies.

##### 4.2 Is the policy therefore likely to have a significant, negative impact on any of the above? What is the reason for this?

No substantial, negative impacts have been identified.

##### 4.3 What should be done?

Select one of the following:

Continue with the policy / service as it is robust	<b>X</b>
Revise the policy to remove any barriers	
Suspend and abolish the policy as the harmful impacts are too great	
Continue with the policy as any harmful impact can be justified	
No further steps at present, it is premature to decide, or there is insufficient evidence	

##### 4.4 If you continue with the plan, what steps will you take to reduce or mitigate any negative impacts?

This is not relevant

**4.5 If you are not taking any further action to remove or reduce the negative impacts, please explain why here.**

This is not relevant

**5) Monitoring**

**5.1 What steps will you take to monitor the impact and effectiveness of the policy or service (action plan)?**

The effectiveness of the individual Action Statements will be monitored over the time of the ROWIP and progress will be reported to the Council's Committees and to key stakeholders namely Natural Resources Wales, the Welsh Government and Local Access Forums.