Hampshire County Council

Equality Impact Assessment

What is an Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) and why does the County Council do them?

The Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED) is an obligation within the Equality Act 2010 ("the Act"), which asks public authorities, like Hampshire County Council, to give 'due regard' to equality considerations, in particular to:

- Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other conduct prohibited by the Act.

- Advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.

- Foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.

This includes assessing the impact of policies and practices on individuals and communities with a protected characteristic, as defined in the Act and some other specific groups. The County Council uses EIAs to ensure it has paid 'due regard' to equalities considerations when there are changes to a service or policy, a new project or certain decisions.

EIA author	Position & Department	Contact
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Title:	Danebury Hillfort Traffic Regulation Order
Related EIAs:	EIA Number: https://democracy.hants.gov.uk/documents/s125724/Rural%20countryside%20parking%20-%20Equality%20Impact%20Assessment.pdf
EIA for Savings Programme:	Yes EIA - Universal Services - SP25 US15B
Service affected	Countryside Parking Service.
Description of the service/policy/project/project phase	Hampshire County Council has over 100 rural countryside car parking sites across Hampshire that help provide access to nature reserves, country parks and the wider countryside. These range in size from lay-bys for two vehicles to large car parks with over 70 spaces. There is a cost to maintain these sites – for example, a 40-space rural car park costs approximately £1,100 per year to directly maintain. The income generated from car parking at these sites is used to invest in countryside services including the sites that the car park serves.
New/changed service/policy/project	It is proposed to introduce car parking charges at the rural countryside car parks that the County Council manages, where it is expected doing so would be commercially viable from April 2025, with a phased introduction to allow for supporting infrastructure to be put in place. The County Council anticipates this could raise around £65,000 each year. If charges were implemented at any of the County Council's countryside sites, fees could be structured to support short-term use, such as for dog walkers, and deter longer stays such as parking for commuting purposes. The County Council would look to ensure that charges were reasonable and in-keeping with other district/borough council charges and opportunities would be investigated to mitigate this impact such as the offer of a season

	ticket, to bring the cost down for regular visitors, or an initial free period, if commercially viable. Where implemented, charges at rural countryside car parking sites would be reviewed annually in accordance with the current pricing policy and amended from time to time. Income from car parking charging would contribute to the costs to Hampshire County Council of managing Hampshire Countryside Sites.

Engagement
Between 8th January and 31st March 2024, the County Council consulted on the proposal to introduce charging for parking at rural countryside car parks where it is commercially viable to do so – asking respondents to comment on sites that are 20 or more spaces and those that are fewer than 20 spaces or jointly owned with other organisations. The proposal received over 4,500 responses. This consultation formed part of the County Council's wider Future Services consultation. 4,459 responses came from individuals, 39 from organisations, and a further 33 from elected representatives. The organisations responding were chiefly made up of charity, voluntary or local community groups (17 responses), and local authorities (10 responses). In order to help capture the views of young people about the consultation, members of the Hampshire County Council Youth Forum (aged between 11 and 18) were invited to consider the proposals and attend a discussion group to share their feedback. The consultation was promoted via posters at the ten car parking sites with 20 spaces or more listed in the Future Services consultation to engage with existing users. Relevant key organisations who are known to utilise the sites or represent people that could have an interest in the proposals were contacted directly via email with a link to the consultation, inviting them to review and respond. The results from the consultation were broadly supportive of both elements of this proposal, with both potential positive and negative impacts cited by respondents. People responding to the proposed changes were most likely to indicate that the withdrawal of the funding would impact people because of rurality (40%), poverty (36%), age (32%), or disability (30%).

Equalities considerations - Impact Assessment

Age

Impact on public	Negative - Low
Impact on staff	Neutral
Rationale	32% of respondents raised this as an issue in the consultation feedback. It is thought that this is largely due to concerns about ability to pay. Young people and the elderly are more likely to be on low incomes and are therefore more likely to be adversely impacted by any parking charges. Charging for parking may discourage those less able to pay, and those who struggle with the introduction of new technologies (e.g. paying parking charges by mobile phone), from using selected sites and cause them to miss out on the health and wellbeing benefits of accessing the countryside, but by not charging in all locations, alternatives would remain available for those who do not want to or cannot afford to pay.
Mitigation	In the Future Services Consultation 2024, the County Council asked respondents to provide their view on what they felt was an appropriate amount to pay for a two hour stay at a car park. Over 4,400 people responded to this question, with the average amount being £1.83. The tariff structure for Wall Lane, Silchester is designed to reflect feedback from the consultation, and for two hours has been set at over a third below the average amount that respondents indicated as acceptable. Blue Badge holders will not be charged, and many rural sites remain free to access. Similar rural sites (without facilities) managed by Forestry England such as

	Havant Thicket and Creech Wood do not offer an initial free period and have a similar tariff structure. In response to feedback received during the Traffic Regulation Order (TRO) process, the County Council is pleased to introduce a new season ticket option for regular visitors. The County Council will be using RingGo, a company that it has an existing contract with, for payment. RingGo offer three different forms of payment – using their app, website or via phone call. Signal strength at all sites has already been tested by RingGo and found to be sufficient. The British Parking Association recommends that car parking operators offer two different options to enable customers to pay - RingGo offers three. Users do not need to have a smartphone to pay.

Disability

Impact on public	Negative - Low
Impact on staff	Neutral
Rationale	30% of residents raised this as an issue in the consultation feedback. People with certain disabilities may struggle with the introduction of new technologies (e.g. paying parking charges by mobile phone). Another consideration is that the future rural car parking charges proposals would include making improvements to the car park surfacing which would impact positively on people with mobility requirements.
Mitigation	The County Council will be using RingGo, a company that the County Council has an existing contract with, for payment. RingGo offer three different forms of payment – using their app, website or via phone call. Signal strength at all sites has already been tested by RingGo and found to be sufficient. The British Parking Association recommends that car parking operators offer two different options to enable customers to pay - RingGo offers three. Users do not need to have a smartphone to pay. Signage advertising the tariffs will be clear and accessible, with no hidden charges. There will still be many rural sites that are free to visit. The County Council maintains an extensive network of rights of way that provide free access to the Countryside.

Gender Reassignment

Impact on public	Neutral
Impact on staff	Neutral
Rationale	No specific impact on this protected characteristic has been identified.
Mitigation	

Pregnancy and Maternity

Impact on public	Neutral
Impact on staff	Neutral
Rationale	No specific impact on this protected characteristic has been identified.
Mitigation	

Race

Impact on public	Neutral
Impact on staff	Neutral
Rationale	No specific impact on this protected characteristic has been identified.
Mitigation	

Religion or Belief

Impact on public	Neutral
Impact on staff	Neutral
Rationale	No specific impact on this protected characteristic has been identified.
Mitigation	

Sex

Impact on public	Neutral
Impact on staff	Neutral
Rationale	No specific impact on this protected characteristic has been identified.
Mitigation	

Sexual Orientation

Impact on public	Neutral
Impact on staff	Neutral
Rationale	No specific impact on this protected characteristic has been identified.
Mitigation	

Marriage and Civil Partnership

Impact on public	Neutral
Impact on staff	Neutral
Rationale	No specific impact on this protected characteristic has been identified.
Mitigation	

Poverty

Impact on public	Neutral
Impact on staff	Neutral

Rationale	36% of people raised this as an issue in the consultation feedback. Although poverty is not a statutory protected characteristic, charging for parking may discourage those less able to pay from using selected sites and cause them to miss out on the health and wellbeing benefits of accessing the countryside, but by not charging in all locations, alternatives would remain available for those who do not want to or cannot afford to pay. Whilst the proposals will require a modest payment for parking, parking charges are considered to be an integral part of vehicle ownership and are small in relation to the other costs of running a motor vehicle. In an attempt to assist with this, the implementation of a season ticket will be available at a cost of £40.20 for a full 12-month period, which equates to just 77p per week, offering excellent value for frequent users.
Mitigation	In the Future Services Consultation 2024, we asked respondents to tell us what they felt was an appropriate amount to pay for a two hour stay at a car park. Over 4,400 people responded to this question, with the average amount being £1.83. The tariff structure for Wall Lane, Silchester is designed to reflect feedback from the consultation, and for two hours has been set at over a third below the average amount respondents indicated as acceptable. Blue Badge holders will not be charged, and many rural sites remain free to access. Similar rural sites (without facilities) managed by Forestry England such as Havant Thicket and Creech Wood do not offer an initial free period and have a similar tariff structure. In response to feedback received during the Traffic Regulation Order (TRO) process, we are pleased to introduce a new season ticket option for regular visitors We will be using RingGo, a company that the County Council has an existing contract with, for payment. RingGo offer three different forms of payment – using their app, website or via phone call. Signal strength at all sites has already been tested by RingGo and found to be sufficient. The British Parking Association recommends that car parking operators offer two different options to enable customers to pay - RingGo offers three. Users do not need to have a smartphone to pay.

Rurality

Impact on public	Negative - Low
Impact on staff	Neutral
Rationale	40% of people raised this as an issue in the consultation feedback. Although rurality is not a statutory protected characteristic, people living in rural areas may be more car dependent and therefore more likely to have to pay for parking in certain locations. Rural residents are more likely to make regular use of rural car parks and may also be more exposed to disruption caused by informal parking that may arise as a result of a Traffic Regulation Order.
Mitigation	The County Council will monitor both traffic and verge parking, and can take further action if required. Encouraging car sharing and reducing unnecessary car journeys may also help improve local air quality and reduce traffic congestion.

Geographical Impact:Test Valley

Equality Statement

Additional information:

None

Overview Statement:

A summary assessment to show that due regard to the Public Sector Equality Duty has been paid, which is undertaken when a full EIA is not needed:

EIA reference number: 00931

Date of production of EIA for publication: 11/09/2025