

Equality Impact Assessment Record

Date of EIA March 2009
 Directorate Environment Culture and Communities

Initial Screening Record	
Activity to be assessed	Parks and Countryside Service
What is the activity?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Policy/strategy <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Function/procedure <input type="checkbox"/> Project <input type="checkbox"/> Review <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Service <input type="checkbox"/> Organisational change
Is it a new or existing activity?	<input type="checkbox"/> New <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Existing
Aim / objective / purpose of the activity – who is the activity designed to benefit/target?	The Parks & Countryside section manages around 80 sites across the Borough, together with 26 children’s play areas and nearly 50 miles of public rights of way. These are all managed for recreation, landscape and nature conservation. The activity is designed for everyone who lives and works in and visits Bracknell Forest.
Who is responsible for the activity?	The person responsible for this service/policy is the Parks & Countryside Manager, Richard Walton
Did Step 1: Initial Screening indicate that a full EIA was necessary?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes – full EIA completed and recorded below. <input type="checkbox"/> No – full EIA not completed therefore record ends here.
Full EIA Record	
Who are the members of the EIA team?	Richard Walton, Parks and Countryside Manager, Mark Devon, Chief Officer: Leisure & Culture.
What evidence has been found to indicate that the activity might need to be amended? (Include any consultation undertaken)	<p>A detailed report, ‘Study of open space, sports, recreational and leisure facilities’ (PPG17) has produced guidance on the accessibility of each site and whether they are fit for purpose. This provides a baseline on qualitative and quantitative standards of provision. The study was undertaken in accordance with government guidance on the design and planning for open spaces, sport and recreation. The document is a key background document in support of spatial planning policy.</p> <p>The Local Countryside Access Forum provides a mechanism for ongoing input from all members of the community, with the remit to advise the council on outdoor recreation (as set out in the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000). Steering Groups and Friends Groups exist for the higher profile parks.</p> <p>The Service has completed 2 main consultations: (i) information gathered from the Peoples Panel questionnaire on satisfaction and levels of use, and (ii) Planning Policy guidance work carried out on green space provision management within the whole Borough (carried out in 2005).</p> <p>Strategic Leisure Ltd were commissioned to carry out door to door research of randomly identified households. These consultations indicate that the level of community use of green spaces is 82.3% of residents. The Peoples Panel feedback indicated a satisfaction rating of 82.1%.</p> <p>In addition to the above, relevant consultation has also been carried out as part of the development of the new Cultural Strategy. Residents’ Panel research carried out in July 2007, indicates 92.3% satisfaction with the provision of parks and</p>

	<p>countryside activities in Bracknell Forest.</p> <p>With regards to potential improvements, feedback from residents highlights issues such as litter and dog mess.</p> <p>The Service also uses an ongoing national monitoring tool called Greenstat to keep up to date on the public's views of both the service and also in relation to specific sites. Greenstat is an online system set up with Lottery Grant funding which collates data on quality of experience and also visitor profiles (including equalities information). Customers can input their views online but the Service is also starting to use onsite paper questionnaires that the Rangers collect. This is then input into Greenstat from the office. So far we have reported approximately 150 questionnaires for the Borough. Greenstat allows benchmarking against other service providers at a regional level, and also between local authorities of a similar type or population size. The indication is that Bracknell Forest compares favourably against other organisations.</p> <p>The consensus from survey work is that the type of user correlates to the local demographic.</p> <p>The Parks & Countryside Service is actively recruiting a disabled representative to the Local Access Forum (summarised above) and work is carried out with disability groups to audit and assess provision of outdoor recreational facilities. The demand lies more with information provision so that users can make an informed choice of where they visit, rather than adapting the natural environment.</p> <p>Literature on the BFC website highlights accessibility and facilities. This is regularly reviewed and improved.</p> <p>The Ranger teams also hold surgeries at key sites for users and local residents to put their views of the service. Whilst well publicised, these have not been highly attended. This reflects the overall satisfaction rating, with numbers attending being higher if there is a specific local problem, such as littering or anti-social behaviour.</p>	
<p>With regard to the equalities themes, which groups might be impacted by the activity? Might any of these groups be impacted adversely?</p>	<p>Groups Impacted</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Race and ethnicity <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Disability <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Gender <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Age <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Sexual Orientation <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Religion or belief 	<p>Groups impacted adversely</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Race and ethnicity <input type="checkbox"/> Disability <input type="checkbox"/> Gender <input type="checkbox"/> Age <input type="checkbox"/> Sexual Orientation <input type="checkbox"/> Religion or belief
<p>What evidence is there to suggest an impact/adverse impact?</p>	<p>Evidence from the GreenStat electronic visitor survey and resident surveys indicate a high satisfaction level with green spaces. Comments received are taken into account on an ongoing basis.</p>	
<p>On what grounds can impact or adverse impact be justified?</p>	<p>There may be some areas of parks and countryside where people with limited mobility have difficulty accessing but it is not possible to make all areas accessible without destroying the inherent green characteristics and attractiveness of these spaces. A reasonable balance has to be achieved if other objectives are also to be met.</p>	
<p>Is there any current action that addresses issues for any of the groups impacted/adversely impacted?</p>	<p>A draft Green Space Strategy has been produced. This takes into account measures to promote the equalities agenda. This will replace the previous Parks & Open Spaces Strategy which is now out-of-date.</p> <p>The Rights of Way Improvement Plan identifies countryside</p>	

	<p>access issues and prioritises improvements.</p> <p>Access audits have been carried out and improvements made in priority order based on the findings of these audits.</p> <p>All publicity material is available in a range of languages/large print/Braille on request.</p> <p>The events programme constantly seeks to attract new audiences and to reduce barriers to access.</p> <p>Opportunities are provided for voluntary conservation work with a range of groups of differing abilities.</p> <p>A nature trail for those with wheelchairs and pushchairs is provided at Ambarrow Court. Easy access trails have been identified and promoted elsewhere.</p>
What changes will you make to the activity reduce or remove any differential/adverse impact?	<p>We will implement the Rights of Way Improvement Plan to improve access for people with disabilities.</p> <p>The landscape restoration project at Lily Hill Park has made this park much more accessible to disabled groups as new path surfaces have been installed. It is the intention that similar improvements will be made as part of the restoration scheme at South Hill Park.</p> <p>Discussions are to be held with the Green Machine, a recently set up social enterprise about providing work opportunities in parks for people with disabilities.</p> <p>Removing overgrown vegetation is considered important to reduce the fear of crime and make the natural environment less intimidating. The Ranger teams have an important role in dealing with anti-social behaviour and so minimising the effects of this barrier to access.</p>
Into which action plan/s will these actions be incorporated?	Green Space Strategy and departmental service plans.
Who is responsible for the action plan?	Richard Walton, Parks and Countryside Manager
Have any examples of good practise been identified as part of the EIA?	The good performance of the service has been recognised through the Green Flag Award scheme. This is the only authority in Berkshire to currently have three award winning parks.
Has the EIA been published on the Council website?	Yes
Who is the relevant Chief Officer and have they signed off the EIA?	Mark Devon, Chief Officer: Leisure & Culture
Which PMR will this EIA be reported in?	Q1 2009/10