



## Equality Impact Assessment (EqIA) Template

Before completing the EQIA please have a look at the [Dorset Council style guide](#) and also use the [accessibility checker](#) to make sure your document is easy for people of all abilities to read.

### Some key tips

- avoid tables and charts, if possible, please provide raw data
- avoid pictures and maps if possible.
- avoid using bold, italics or colour to highlight or stress a point.
- when using numbering or bullet points avoid using capitals at the beginning unless the name of something
- date format is dd month yyyy (1 June 2021)
- use clear and simple language.
- where you need to use technical terms, abbreviations, or acronyms, explain what they mean the first time you use them.
- if using hyperlinks, make sure the link text describes where the link goes rather than 'click here' Please note equality impact assessments are published on the Dorset Council [website](#)

Before completing this form, please refer to the [supporting guidance](#). The aim of an Equality Impact Assessment (EqIA) is to consider the equality implications of your policy, strategy, project, or service on different groups of people including employees of Dorset Council, residents, and users of our services and to consider if there are ways to proactively advance equality.

Where further guidance is needed, please contact the Inclusion Champion or the [Diversity & Inclusion Officer](#).

### Initial information

1. Name of the policy, project, strategy, project, or service being assessed:  
Future of Wareham Pedestrian Level Crossing
2. This is a:  
Review of service
3. This is:  
External (residents, communities, partners)

4. Please provide a brief overview of its aims and objectives:

The main aims and objectives are:

- to assess the impact of potential changes to the existing arrangements at Wareham pedestrian level crossing on those who have protected characteristics.
- to assess the impacts on those who have protected characteristics of a yet to be determined, long-term solution for step free access crossing the railway line in Wareham for when the lease agreement with Network Rail ends in 2038.

5. Please provide the background to this proposal.

Since 2009, Dorset Council has provided attendants at the Wareham pedestrian level crossing. This was meant to be a short-term safety improvement until a long-term solution to remove the risk of serious and fatal injury occurring could be implemented. The level crossing is the only step free access between the north and south of the town.

Although the council and Network Rail have been working together since 2009 to find a long-term solution, a suitable step-free alternative crossing point has not been achieved.

There is a lease agreement in place between Dorset Council and Network Rail which expires in 2038. This gives Dorset Council permissive rights over the level crossing which is owned by Network Rail. Network Rail has been consistently clear that they do not intend to keep the crossing open beyond this date.

Dorset Council is responsible for meeting the annual costs of the attendant operated crossing, currently £100,456 (2023/24), increasing to £120,000 in 2024/25. These costs will increase due to wage increases and increased utility costs. The contract is due for renewal in 2025/26 and therefore there is some uncertainty and risk associated with predicting the future cost to the council. Due to the significant ongoing costs and because of council budget pressures, it is highly undesirable that the existing arrangements continue in the long term through to 2038.

If Dorset Council withdraws provision of the attendants at the level crossing, the level crossing will be considered unsafe and will not be permitted to remain open.

Dorset Council does not have any powers to prevent the pedestrian level crossing closing sooner than 2038 if a safety improvement notice is issued by the Office of Rail and Road and further control measures cannot be justified or prove undeliverable.

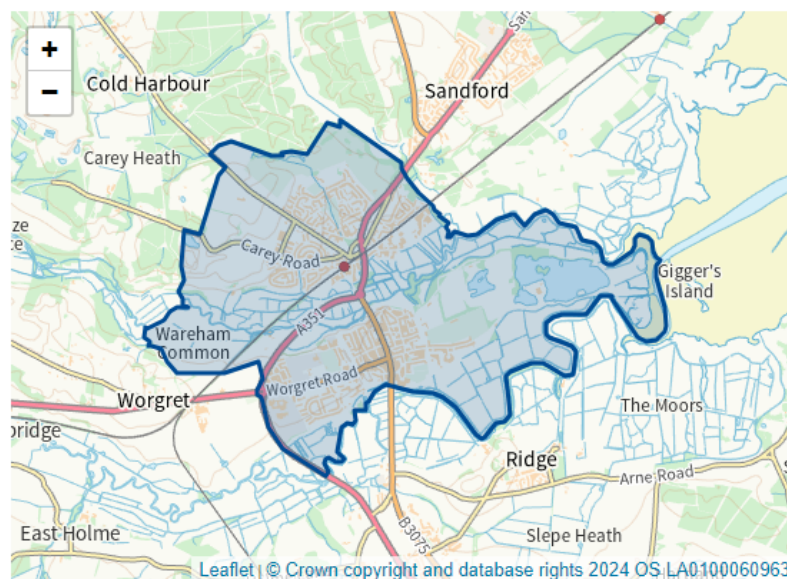
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Failure to secure an alternative long-term solution prior to 2038 would cause severe difficulties for the local community resulting from severance between Northport and Wareham town centre.

Evidence gathering and engagement.

6. What sources of data, evidence or research has been used for this assessment? (e.g. national statistics, employee data):
- A five-day pedestrian census was conducted by Sotera for Network Rail during September 2022 and October 2022.
  - Data about users of the existing level crossing was collected by Dorset County Council through two surveys conducted in July 2016.
  - Dorset Council Dorset Insights [Area profile for Wareham Town - Dorset Council](#) which uses Office for National Statistics data, including the 2021 Census.

Map of area



- Dorset Council Wards 2019 on Dorset Insights [Dorset Council Wards 2019 - Dorset Council](#)
- The Department for Transport report [Inclusive Mobility. A Guide to Best Practice on Access to Pedestrian and Transport Infrastructure \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](#), “Inclusive Mobility” December 2021

## 7. What did this tell you?

If either the attendants are withdrawn, or the lease agreement expires leading to the closure of the existing level crossing, this will have a negative impact on users who have a protected characteristic and require step free access. They will be unable to use the existing stepped footbridge over the crossing and would have to rely on using a private vehicle or public transport to travel, unless a new form of step free access is designed and constructed.

Disability: The Department for Transport report [Inclusive Mobility. A Guide to Best Practice on Access to Pedestrian and Transport Infrastructure \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](https://www.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/101421/inclusive-mobility-report.pdf), "Inclusive Mobility" December 2021, states:

- mobility impairments include people who use wheelchairs and those who can walk but only with difficulty, often using some form of aid such as a stick or walking frame. Approaching 70% of disabled people have a mobility impairment; those with walking difficulties outnumber wheelchair users by about 10:1.
- vision impairments: vision impaired people include blind people and partially sighted people. According to the National Health Service ([www.nhs.uk/conditions/vision-loss](http://www.nhs.uk/conditions/vision-loss)), there are almost two million people in the UK living with sight loss. Of these, around 360,000 are registered as blind or partially sighted.
- limitations with reaching, stretching and dexterity: these are frequently the result of arthritis, which can make these movements painful and difficult, or of muscular dystrophy causing a loss of muscular strength, or of complaints of the nervous system

These disability groups are the ones most likely to find the use of stairs difficult or cannot use them at all. It should be noted, these groups are not mutually exclusive. Many disabled people, particularly older people, have more than one impairment.

Age: Age Concern UK and the NHS highlight the stairs as a major hazard that increase the risk of falls by elderly people. Removal of step free access will increase the risk of a fall for an elderly user. Also, some elderly are unable to use stairs due to a health condition or associated disability.

Pregnancy and maternity: those using a pushchair for young children require step free access. Stairs introduce the requirement to lift a pushchair thereby increasing risk of trips and fall and may not be possible for some pregnancy related conditions.

Religious: the three protected characteristics previously mentioned may also need to access a place of worship via step free routes.

From the five-day pedestrian census was conducted by Sotera for Network Rail during September 2022 and October 2022, a seven-day average of 861

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pedestrians/cyclists per day was recorded. The crossing is well-used by the elderly (4.1%), children (7.8%), pram/pushchair users (2.8%), mobility impaired (0.9%) and cyclists (21.2%).

Data about users of the existing level crossing was collected by Dorset County Council through two surveys conducted in July 2016.

These surveys categorised users based on their reason for using the level crossing instead of the adjacent stairs and footbridge. Based on the survey responses the pedestrian crossing users can be allocated proportionally to protected characteristic categories as follows:

- Age: twenty-one users (3.6% of total count) completing the questionnaire identified the reason for not using stairs was because they were elderly.
- Pregnancy and maternity: twenty-eight users (4.6% of total count) completing the questionnaire identified the reason for not using the stairs because they were using a pushchair.
- Disability: sixty users (9.8% of total count) completing the questionnaire identified the reason for not using the crossing was due to mobility or health issues.

Survey results attributed to the protected characteristic disability can be broken down into more specific defined groups.

Of the users surveyed fourteen identified as mobility scooter users, thirty-one identified as having undefined mobility issues, twelve identified as having health issues or an injury and five were wheel chair users. All wheelchair users were either assisted or using an electric mobility device.

For other users attributed to disability, route analysis was completed to identify where users were travelling to and from. Nineteen of those who identify as having a mobility issue were travelling to or from Wareham Town Centre back to a home.

For the twelve users with a mobility issue not travelling to the town centre from a north Wareham address, journeys completed are random and no further patterns can be identified.

For the age protected characteristic, a similar analysis was completed to assess where users were travelling to and from. Of the twenty-one users, fifteen were travelling to or from a home address in the North of Wareham to or from the town centre.

Of all the 109 users of the crossing who can be attributed to a protected characteristic, nineteen identified themselves as rail passengers.

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Statistics provided by the 2016 survey data show that 76% of users of the crossing live north of the railway line. On this basis it is important that engagement and consultation, if required, focuses on users living in this area.

To confirm the residential areas north of the railway line are representative of users of the level crossing the former Dorset County Council's research team completed a study on the local population. This showed that approximately 7% of the population are limited a lot by a long-term illness/disability, which closely aligns with users of the crossing who identified as having a disability.

Dorset Council Dorset Insights [Area profile for Wareham Town - Dorset Council](#) which uses Office for National Statistics data, including the 2021 Census shows that:

- 31% of the population is over 65 years old. This is slightly higher than the South East Dorset and Dorset Council averages, and significantly higher than the average for England and Wales. This figure is significantly higher than those who identified as elderly as part of the 2016 Dorset County Council survey. This would imply that not all elderly users of the crossing would require step free access, and therefore ramps would not have a negative impact on everyone who has the protected characteristic age.
- There is limited ethnic diversity within the Wareham Town area with 95% identifying as British White and 5% black and minority ethnicity.
- Most of the population, 53%, is Christian. It would not be unreasonable to assume that a proportion live in the northern residential area and would want pedestrian access to one of the five churches located south of the railway line.
- 10.3% of residents aged 5 and over provide unpaid care.
- 18% of households don't have a car or van.

Dorset Council Wards 2019 on Dorset Insights [Dorset Council Wards 2019 - Dorset Council](#) shows that in 2019 17% of the Wareham Ward are living with a long term illness or disability which is lower than the Dorset Council and BCP averages.

8. Who have you engaged and consulted with as part of this assessment?

Participants of the 2016 surveys

9. Is further information needed to help inform decision making?

At present there is no plan to complete further engagement or consultation for this EqIA.

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Further engagement may be required if:

- the existing arrangements are no longer considered viable and steps are taken to withdraw them.

or

- there is progression to find a long-term solution for step free access crossing the railway line in Wareham when the lease agreement with Network Rail ends in 2038 leading to the closure of the existing level crossing.

Is an EQIA required?

Not every proposal will need an EqlA. The data and research should inform your decision whether to continue with this EqlA. If you decide that your proposal does not need an EqlA, please answer the following question:

This policy, strategy, project, or service does not require an EqlA because (provide details): N/A

Assessing the impact on different groups of people.

For each of the protected characteristics groups below, please explain whether your proposal could have a positive, negative, unclear or no impact. Where an impact has been identified, please explain what it is and if unclear or negative please explain what mitigating actions will be taken.

- use the evidence you have gathered to inform your decision making.
- consider impacts on residents, service users and employees separately.
- if your strategy, policy, project, or service contains options you may wish to consider providing an assessment for each option.
- see guidance for more information about the different [protected characteristics](#).

Key to impacts:

Positive Impact	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• the proposal eliminates discrimination, advances equality of opportunity and/or fosters good relations with protected groups.</li></ul>
Negative Impact	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• protected characteristic group(s) could be disadvantaged or discriminated against</li></ul>
Neutral Impact	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• no change/ no assessed significant impact of protected characteristic groups</li></ul>
Unclear	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• not enough data/evidence has been collected to make an informed decision.</li></ul>

Impacts on who or what?	Choose impact	How
Age	<p>Negative Impact</p> <p>and</p> <p>Unclear</p> <p>and</p> <p>Positive</p>	<p>If either the attendants are withdrawn, or the lease agreement expires leading to the full closure of the existing level crossing, this will have a negative impact on users who have a protected characteristic and require step free access.</p> <p>There will be an increased risk of a fall for an elderly user as stairs are identified as a major hazard. Some elderly are unable to use stairs due to a health condition or associated disability.</p> <p>If unable to use the existing stepped footbridge over the crossing they would have to rely on using a private vehicle or public transport to travel, unless a new form of step free access is designed and constructed.</p> <p>As a viable, alternative step free access across the rail tracks has yet to be progressed, it is unclear what the impacts will be.</p> <p>Key considerations – the additional distance; gradient of ramps; reliability, safety and security of lifts.</p> <p>If a solution is implemented there will be 24 hour, 7 days a week, step free, access over the railway tracks.</p>
Disability	Negative Impact	<p>If either the attendants are withdrawn, or the lease agreement expires leading to the full closure of the existing level crossing, this will have a</p>



Impacts on who or what?	Choose impact	How
	<p>and</p> <p>Unclear</p> <p>and</p> <p>Positive</p>	<p>negative impact on users who have a protected characteristic and require step free access.</p> <p>If unable to use the existing stepped footbridge over the crossing they would have to rely on using a private vehicle or public transport to travel, unless a new form of step free access is designed and constructed.</p> <p>As a viable, alternative step free access across the rail tracks has yet to be progressed, it is unclear what the impacts will be.</p> <p>Key considerations – the additional distance; gradient of ramps; reliability, safety and security of lifts.</p> <p>If a solution is implemented there will be 24 hour, 7 days a week, step free access over the railway tracks.</p>
Gender reassignment and Gender Identity	<p>Neutral Impact</p> <p>and</p> <p>Positive</p>	<p>If a solution is implemented there will be 24 hour, 7 days a week, step free, access over the railway tracks.</p>
Marriage or civil partnership	<p>Neutral Impact</p> <p>and</p> <p>Positive</p>	<p>If a solution is implemented there will be 24 hour, 7 days a week, step free, access over the railway tracks.</p>

Impacts on who or what?	Choose impact	How
Pregnancy and maternity	<p>Negative Impact</p> <p>and</p> <p>Unclear</p> <p>and</p> <p>Positive</p>	<p>If either the attendants are withdrawn, or the lease agreement expires leading to the full closure of the existing level crossing, this will have a negative impact on users who have a protected characteristic and require step free access.</p> <p>There will be need for pushchairs and prams to be carried over the stepped footbridge increasing the risk of trips and falls. Some pregnant people and those who have recently given birth are unable to lift prams and pushchairs stairs due to pregnancy related conditions.</p> <p>If unable to use the existing stepped footbridge over the crossing they would have to rely on using a private vehicle or public transport to travel, unless a new form of step free access is designed and constructed.</p> <p>As a viable, alternative step free access across the rail tracks has yet to be progressed, it is unclear what the impacts will be.</p> <p>Key considerations – the additional distance; gradient of ramps; reliability, safety and security of lifts.</p> <p>If a solution is implemented there will be 24 hour, 7 days a week, step free, access over the railway tracks.</p>
Race and Ethnicity	<p>Neutral Impact</p> <p>and</p>	

Impacts on who or what?	Choose impact	How
	Positive	If a solution is implemented there will be 24 hour, 7 days a week, step free, access over the railway tracks.
Religion and belief	Negative Impact           and           Unclear           and           Positive           and           Neutral Impact	If either the attendants are withdrawn, or the lease agreement expires leading to the full closure of the existing level crossing, this will have a negative impact on users who have a protected characteristic and require step free access.           If unable to use the existing stepped footbridge over the crossing they would have to rely on using a private vehicle or public transport to access places of worship located in the south of the town, unless a new form of step free access is designed and constructed.           As a viable, alternative step free access across the rail tracks has yet to be progressed, it is unclear what the impacts will be.           Key considerations – the additional distance; gradient of ramps; reliability, safety and security of lifts.           If a solution is implemented there will be 24 hour, 7 days a week, step free access over the railway tracks.           If no other protected characteristics that need step free access are present, there is a neutral impact.
Sex (consider men and women)	Neutral Impact           and	

Impacts on who or what?	Choose impact	How
	Positive	If a solution is implemented there will be 24 hour, 7 days a week, step free, access over the railway tracks.
Sexual orientation	Neutral Impact  and  Positive	If a solution is implemented there will be 24 hour, 7 days a week, step free, access over the railway tracks.
People with caring responsibilities	Negative Impact    and    Unclear    and    Positive	<p>If either the attendants are withdrawn, or the lease agreement expires leading to the full closure of the existing level crossing, this will have a negative impact on users who have a protected characteristic and require step free access.</p> <p>If unable to use the existing stepped footbridge over the crossing they would have to rely on using a private vehicle or public transport to travel, unless a new form of step free access is designed and constructed.</p> <p>As a viable, alternative step free access across the rail tracks has yet to be progressed, it is unclear what the impacts will be.</p> <p>Key considerations – the additional distance; gradient of ramps; reliability, safety and security of lifts.</p> <p>If a solution is implemented there will be 24 hour, 7 days a week, step free access over the railway tracks.</p>
Rural isolation	Neutral Impact	

Impacts on who or what?	Choose impact	How
	<p>and</p> <p>Positive</p>	<p>If a solution is implemented there will be 24 hour, 7 days a week, step free, access over the railway tracks.</p>
Socio-economic deprivation	<p>Neutral Impact</p> <p>and</p> <p>Positive</p>	<p>If a solution is implemented there will be 24 hour, 7 days a week, step free, access over the railway tracks.</p>
Single parents	<p>Negative Impact</p> <p>and</p> <p>Unclear</p>	<p>If either the attendants are withdrawn, or the lease agreement expires leading to the full closure of the existing level crossing, this will have a negative impact on users who have a protected characteristic and require step free access.</p> <p>There will be need for pushchairs and prams to be carried over the stepped footbridge increasing the risk of trips and falls. This could be challenging for single parents with multiple children.</p> <p>If unable to use the existing stepped footbridge over the crossing they would have to rely on using a private vehicle or public transport to travel, unless a new form of step free access is designed and constructed.</p> <p>As a viable, alternative step free access across the rail tracks has yet to be progressed, it is unclear what the impacts will be.</p>

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Impacts on who or what?	Choose impact	How
	and  Positive	Key considerations – the additional distance; gradient of ramps; reliability, safety and security of lifts.  If a solution is implemented there will be 24 hour, 7 days a week, step free, access over the railway tracks.
Armed forces communities	Neutral Impact  and  Positive	If a solution is implemented there will be 24 hour, 7 days a week, step free, access over the railway tracks.

Please provide a summary of the impacts:

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Action Plan

Summarise any actions required as a result of this EqIA:

Issue	Action to be taken	Person(s) responsible	Date for completion
<p>If either the attendants are withdrawn, or the lease agreement expires leading to the full closure of the existing level crossing, this will have a negative impact on users who have a protected characteristic and require step free access.</p>	<p>Submit a report to Dorset Council Cabinet so that a decision can be made as to if and how to progress with a new step free route over the railway line following the expected full closure of the pedestrian level crossing in 2038.</p> <p>Review and revise EqIA once Dorset Council Cabinet has agreed which, if any, alternative step free access over the railway line should be progressed.</p>	<p>Owen Clark/Jack Wiltshire</p> <p>Kelly Flynn, Owen Clark and/or Highways Engineer/Project lead</p>	<p>November 2024</p> <p>Spring/Summer 2025</p>
<p>It is unclear what the impacts will be of a new, step free access over the railway until a decision has been made by Dorset Council which option should be pursued and engagement/consultation has happened.</p>	<p>Review and revise EqIA once Dorset Council Cabinet has agreed which, if any, alternative step free access over the railway line should be progressed.</p> <p>Consult/engage with residents and groups which represent the protected characteristics who are most affected about the key considerations of ramps or lifts as a solution to step free access over the railway should the existing pedestrian level crossing close. This would include impacts of additional distance and gradient of ramps; or the reliability, safety and security of lifts.</p>	<p>Kelly Flynn, Owen Clark and/or Highways Engineer/Project lead</p> <p>Highways Engineer/Project Lead</p>	<p>Spring/Summer 2025</p>

Sign Off

**Updated April 2023**

Officer completing this EqIA: Kelly Flynn, Transport Planner

Officers involved in completing the EqIA: Kelly Flynn, Transport Planner and Owen Clark,

Date of completion: 31/08/2024

Version Number: 1.0

EqIA review date: Post 19 November 2024 Cabinet meeting      Equality Lead Sign Off:

**Next Steps:**

- the EqIA will be reviewed by Communications and Engagement and, if in agreement, your EqIA will be signed off.
- if not, we will get in touch to chat further about the EqIA, to get a better understanding.
- EqIA authors are responsible for ensuring any actions in the action plan are implemented.

Please send to [Diversity and Inclusion Officer](#)