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Equality Impact Assessment (EqIA)

Proposal for the introduction of e-scooter rental services

1. Initial information

Dorset Council have been granted provisional permission by the Department for Transport (DfT) to take part in the national rental e-scooter trial. The two areas under consideration are:

Corfe Mullen and Upton – an e-bike rental service run by Beryl bikes has been operating in the area since June 2023. The scheme is part of a wider Beryl run service operating in the Bournemouth, Christchurch, and Poole (BCP) Council area. The BCP scheme has been licensed by the DfT for e-scooters since 2023 and they have been successfully operating since then.

Weymouth, Dorchester, Portland and Chickerell – a bike rental service run by Beryl under a concession contract has been operating in the area since July 2024.

2. This is a new project (with links to an existing e-bike hire scheme)

This is external (residents, communities, partners), and has great potential to support carbon reduction targets set by both Dorset Council and the Central Government Net Zero strategy. It applies to specific parts of the county.

3. Aims and objectives:

<u>Aims</u>

- **Enhance Sustainable and Low Carbon Transport Options**
    - Provide residents and visitors with additional sustainable travel choices that reduce reliance on private cars and support the authority's long-term climate and transport strategies.
- **Improve First- and Last Mile Connectivity**
    - Strengthen the local transport network by offering flexible, accessible micromobility options that support public transport usage and improve travel links between key destinations.
- **Reduce Road Congestion and Improve Air Quality**
    - Encourage modal shift from short car journeys to low emission alternatives, helping to reduce congestion, carbon emissions, and local air pollution.
- **Support Economic Activity and Access to Opportunities**

    - Enable easier access to employment, education, retail and leisure destinations through affordable, convenient transport options.
- **Deliver an Integrated, Well Managed Micromobility System**
    - Ensure e-scooters complement the existing e-bike scheme, creating a seamless, safe and efficient shared transport offer.

Objectives

- **Launch a Managed E-Scooter Hire Trial**
    - Introduce a fleet of rental e-scooters by May 2027, operating under a controlled trial framework with clear geofencing, speed limits, and safety rules.
- **Integrate E-Scooters with the Existing E-Bike System**
    - Implement unified infrastructure (parking bays), pricing structures, and app-based access so users can switch easily between e-bikes and e-scooters.
- **Improve Network Coverage and Accessibility**
    - Expand micromobility coverage to areas underserved by public transport, ensuring more micromobility parking bays are installed allowing easier access to the scheme for residents.
- **Achieve Modal Shift from Private Vehicles**
    - Reduction of short car journeys by providing e-scooters for journeys
- **Ensure Safe Operation and Responsible Use**
    - Ensure robust safety measures including designated parking zones, mandatory user verification, incident reporting mechanisms are in place.
- **Gather Data to Inform Future Policy Decisions**
    - Collect and analyse usage, safety, environmental and economic data throughout the trial period to evaluate long-term suitability and inform decisions on permanent adoption.
- **Promote Social Inclusion and Affordable Mobility**
    - Maintain affordable pricing structures, concession options, and targeted outreach to ensure e-scooters are accessible to residents with varying needs and income levels.
- **Support Local Economic Growth**
    - Encourage increased footfall in local centres by improving transport links, and create local operational jobs through scheme delivery, maintenance and customer support.
- **Align with the Authority's Climate and Transport Strategies**
    - Demonstrate measurable contributions toward emissions reduction targets, improved air quality, and sustainable travel goals set in local transport plans.

4. Please provide the background to this proposal

The Department for Transport have given conditional approval for Dorset Council to take part in the national trials of e-scooter rental services.

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Dorset Council are considering implementing an e-scooter scheme to run alongside the current e-bike hire schemes already in place. At present, Dorset Council has two e-bike only schemes. One located in the east of the county that borders the Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole Council e-bike and e-scooter scheme run by Beryl, and a standalone scheme covering Dorchester, Weymouth and Portland which is also operated by Beryl.

BCP council, who border with the Dorset Council area, already participate in the e-scooter trial initiated by the government in January 2021. Reports from BCP have indicated that their scheme was assessed as one of the safest in the country, valued by users and delivers against many desirable outcomes including carbon reductions and increased access to affordable mobility.

- National evaluation of rental e-scooter use indicates that these legal schemes reduce the number of car journeys being undertaken (https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/national-evaluation-of-e-scooter-trials-report)
- Shared e-scooter schemes increase both access to employment, and greater high street spending, which in turn indirectly supports and sustains local jobs (https://eu-central-1-shared-euc1-02.graphassets.com/AMcYXQcgeRNu5q0szWSm1z/Tu3ILtOSRZiZtusAKIlK
- Beryl report that their scheme in the BCP area has a higher level of mode shift: On average, 27% of e-scooter trips replace a car/van/taxi trip, which is 3% higher than e-bikes (24% mode shift). (Internal Beryl report data 2025)
- An inclusive mode of transport: On average, 12% of Beryl e-bike riders report having a disability, and for e-scooters, this figure increases to 13%. (Internal Beryl report data 2025)

A rental e-scooter scheme has the potential to deliver mixed but manageable health and well-being impacts. Positively, e-scooters can support everyday physical activity, widen access to affordable transport, and improve independence for people who may find walking longer distances, cycling, or using public transport difficult. By enabling short trips to be made without a car, the scheme may also contribute to reduced traffic congestion and improved air quality, with associated public health benefits.

However, there are recognised risks, particularly in relation to collisions and potential interaction with pedestrians, which could negatively affect perceived safety and confidence. These risks can be mitigated through strong scheme design, including speed limits, geofencing, appropriate parking arrangements, clear rider guidance, enforcement, and ongoing monitoring. Overall, when introduced as a regulated rental scheme with appropriate safeguards, e-scooters can offer a net positive contribution to health and well-being.

Improved Mobility & Equity: Both schemes enhance transportation options in areas with limited public transport (e.g., rural routes across Weymouth to Dorchester).

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Evidence gathering and engagement

5. What sources of data, evidence or research has been used for this assessment? (e.g national statistics, employee data):

The Department for Transport's independent National Evaluation of E-Scooter Trials (2022) provides the primary national evidence base. This evaluation examined usage, safety, accessibility, and wider social impacts across trial areas in England. [gov.uk] https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/national-evaluation-of-e-scooter-trials-report

- The evaluation identified significant concerns from pedestrians, particularly relating to pavement riding, rider behaviour, parking and street clutter. [roadsafety...tre.org.uk] https://www.roadsafetyknowledgecentre.org.uk/national-evaluation-of-e-scooter-trials-findings-report/
- It also highlighted concerns about vehicle characteristics, including low audibility, rapid acceleration and visibility, which can create safety issues for vulnerable pedestrians. [roadsafety...tre.org.uk] https://www.roadsafetyknowledgecentre.org.uk/national-evaluation-of-e-scooter-trials-findings-report/
- The report specifically notes that these issues disproportionately affect blind and partially sighted people and those with mobility impairments. [roadsafety...tre.org.uk] https://www.roadsafetyknowledgecentre.org.uk/national-evaluation-of-e-scooter-trials-findings-report/

  This national evidence establishes that e-scooters introduce new risks in shared pedestrian environments, with particular relevance for disabled groups.

  a. Operational and performance data from the Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole (BCP) Council shared micromobility scheme, including usage levels, car trip replacement, CO_2 savings and safety records.
  b. National road safety and casualty analysis, including PACTS research on private versus rental e-scooter safety outcomes.
  c. Dorset Council's adopted policies, including the Local Transport Plan, Climate and Ecological Emergency Strategy, and Sustainable Transport Plan.
  d. Feedback from local and national disability organisations, including Dorset Blind Association members, RNIB and Guide Dogs.
  e. Professional input and formal responses from Dorset Police and the Dorset Police and Crime Commissioner.
  f. Equality impact assessments and learning from other UK local authority trials (e.g. Transport for London, York and Portsmouth).

6. What did this tell you?

The evidence demonstrates that regulated e-scooter rental schemes can deliver both positive and negative equality impacts, depending on how they are designed and managed:

- Positive impacts
    - Improved access to affordable, low-carbon transport for some groups, including people who find walking longer distances, cycling, or conventional public transport difficult.
    - Increased independence and first-/last-mile connectivity for certain users with limited mobility who are able to stand but cannot cycle.
    - Benefits for younger adults, people without access to a car, shift workers and those accessing employment, education or services in areas with limited bus provision.
    - Wider community benefits through reduced car use, lower emissions and improved access to town centres.
- Negative or adverse impacts
    - Evidence consistently highlights disproportionate impacts on blind, partially sighted and mobility-impaired pedestrians, particularly where scooters are ridden on pavements or poorly parked.
    - Anxiety, reduced confidence and avoidance of journeys may occur for some disabled residents if footways are obstructed or vehicle movements are unpredictable.
    - The requirement for a driving licence and minimum age means that under-17s are excluded, limiting access for this age group.
- Key mitigating insight
    - National evidence shows that risks are significantly lower in regulated rental schemes than with illegal private e-scooters, provided there are strong controls such as geofencing, speed limits, designated parking, enforcement, and clear accountability.
    - Equality impacts are not fixed outcomes; they are highly dependent on scheme governance, design, enforcement and ongoing engagement with affected groups.

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

Engagement and consultation has included:

- Internal Dorset Council officers, including transport, highways, legal and equalities leads, contributing to the EqIA and scheme design.
- Dorset Police, who have provided a formal response and ongoing advice focused on safety, enforcement, vulnerable road users and governance.
- The Dorset Police and Crime Commissioner, who has raised concerns and set expectations around mitigation, enforcement clarity and resource impacts.

- Local disability organisations and representatives, including Dorset Blind Association members, RNIB, Guide Dogs and local Equality, Diversity and Inclusion group representatives which includes representatives from:
    - Kushti Bok
    - Homestart Blackmore Vale
    - Dorpip
    - Space Youth Project
    - DREC
    - SENDMe2Work
    - Weymouth Town Council (Community)
    - Encompass Care
    - The Harmony Centre
    - Weymouth Access Group

- Consideration of feedback and findings from national disability organisations and consultation undertaken in other UK trial areas.
- Review of user surveys and evaluation data collected through national and neighbouring local authority trials.

This engagement has directly informed the identification of risks, mitigation measures and conditions recommended for any scheme introduction.

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

It is the view of Transport Planning Officers that sufficient information has been provided for Dorset Council Cabinet members to reach a decision. However, should further information come to light or be required as the result of a recommendation from the Place and Resources Overview Committee and/or Dorset Council Cabinet then this EqIA will be amended accordingly.

Is an EQIA required? **Yes**

Key to impacts

Positive Impact	• the proposal eliminates discrimination, advances equality of opportunity and/or fosters good relations with protected groups.
Negative Impact	• protected characteristic group(s) could be disadvantaged or discriminated against
Neutral Impact	• no change/ no assessed significant impact of protected characteristic groups
Unclear	• not enough data/evidence has been collected to make an informed decision.

Impacts on who or what?	Choose impact	How
Age	Positive and Negative	**Positive:** Evidence from national trials shows strong take-up among **young adults (18–35)**, supporting access to work, education and services, particularly for those without access to a car. **Negative: Children and young people under 16/17** are excluded due to age and licence requirements, limiting transport options for this group. **Older people:** Some older adults benefit where walking longer distances or cycling is difficult, but others may feel less confident around faster micromobility modes in pedestrian areas.
Disability	Positive and Negative	**Positive:** National EqIAs (DfT, TfL) show some people with **limited mobility, stamina or balance issues** who cannot cycle can benefit from e-scooters, particularly for short, step-free journeys. **Negative:** Strong evidence from RNIB, Guide Dogs and local disability groups highlights **adverse impacts on blind, partially sighted and mobility-impaired pedestrians**, including footway obstruction, anxiety and reduced independence.
Gender reassignment and Gender Identity	Neutral	There is **no evidence from published EqIAs or other sources** to indicate differential impacts specific to gender reassignment or gender identity. Use, access and safety issues mirror those experienced by the wider population. Insufficient evidence exists to indicate either positive or negative differential impacts.

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Impacts on who or what?	Choose impact	How
Marriage or civil partnership	Neutral	No evidence suggests that marital or partnership status affects access to, or impacts from, an e-scooter rental scheme. Published EqIAs consistently record no differential effects.
Pregnancy and maternity	Neutral	E-scooters maybe considered by some to be generally unsuitable during pregnancy due to balance, comfort and safety considerations; most operators advise against use. Pregnant people may also experience increased anxiety around interactions with e-scooters as pedestrians. However, evidence is limited and largely cautionary rather than quantitative.
Race and Ethnicity	Neutral	Evidence from DfT and TfL trials shows higher usage among ethnically diverse populations in urban areas, particularly where public transport accessibility is limited or unaffordable. However, there is no evidence that this nationally observed behaviour translates to the areas of Dorset where the trial will take place. No evidence of disproportionate negative impacts by race or ethnicity has been identified, provided enforcement and communications are fair and accessible. Overall impact is neutral
Religion and belief	Neutral	There is no evidence that e-scooter use or availability interacts directly with religion or belief.

Impacts on who or what?	Choose impact	How
		Indirect issues (e.g. clothing or dress affecting use) are speculative and not evidenced in published EqIAs
Sex (consider men and women)	Neutral	National data shows **higher usage by men**, consistent with patterns seen for cycling and other micromobility modes. Women report **greater safety concerns**, particularly around traffic interaction and behaviour of other users. While women benefit from improved access, perceived safety may reduce uptake relative to men.
Sexual orientation	Neutral	There is **no available evidence** indicating differential impacts based on sexual orientation. Experiences reflect broader personal safety and public space issues rather than scheme-specific impacts.
People with caring responsibilities	Positive and negative	**Positive:** Carers undertaking short, time-pressured journeys may benefit from faster, low-cost trips where pushing a buggy or walking long distances is difficult. **Negative:** Carers with young children, pushchairs or dependants generally cannot use e-scooters directly and may experience reduced footway accessibility if parking is poorly managed.
Rural isolation	Positive and negative	**Positive:** In towns and edge-of-urban areas, e-scooters can improve connectivity for short trips where bus services are infrequent.

Impacts on who or what?	Choose impact	How
		Negative: Benefits are **limited in rural areas** due to distance, road speeds and infrastructure, meaning impacts are spatially uneven.
Socio-economic deprivation	Positive	Strong evidence from national trials indicates e-scooters are used by people **without access to a car**, lower-income households and shift workers. Pay-as-you-go pricing can offer a more affordable alternative to taxis or multiple bus fares for short journeys. Care must be taken to avoid digital or payment exclusion.
Single parents	Positive and negative	**Positive:** Single parents without car access may benefit for solo trips (e.g. commuting). **Negative:** E-scooters are **not suitable when travelling with children**, and poor parking can impede movement with pushchairs. Evidence is limited and impacts vary by circumstances.
Armed forces communities	Neutral	No evidence of adverse impacts. Potential benefits include improved access to employment sites, training and services, particularly for younger service leavers without a car. Impacts align with the general population.

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Impact Summary:

- **Positive impacts** are most evident for: people on lower incomes, some disabled people, young adults, carers undertaking short trips, and some rural/edge-of-urban communities.
- **Negative impacts** are most clearly evidenced for: blind and partially sighted people, some mobility-impaired pedestrians, pregnant people, and groups excluded by age or licensing requirements.
- **Many characteristics show neutral or unclear impacts**, reflecting a lack of specific evidence rather than confirmed absence of impact.

The evidence consistently shows that outcomes depend on scheme design, enforcement and ongoing engagement, and that impacts should be reviewed and mitigated throughout operation rather than treated as static.

Action Plan

Summarise any actions required as a result of this EqIA.

Issue	Action to be taken	Person(s) responsible	Date to be completed by
Footway obstruction causing risk to blind, partially sighted and mobility-impaired pedestrians	Require mandatory use of designated parking bays only, enforced through geofencing that prevents trip completion outside approved locations. Introduce rapid-response removal times for obstructive scooters and contractual penalties for poor compliance. Impose fines for users for leaving e-scooters out of bay.	Transport Planning Team and Operator	At implementation/by May 2027
Pavement riding and unpredictable rider behaviour	Implement hard geofencing to enforce no-ride and low-speed zones in pedestrian-heavy areas, with automatic speed reduction and trip termination for repeated misuse. Limit e-scooter speed.	Transport Planning Team and Operator	At implementation/by May 2027
Anxiety and reduced confidence among disabled pedestrians	Co-design parking layouts and no-ride zones with local disability groups prior to launch. Establish ongoing review points where routes and controls can be adjusted based on lived experience feedback.	Transport Planning Team and Operator	Prior to launch/by May 2027
Low detectability of e-scooters for blind and partially sighted people	Require operators to explore audible alerts or sound cues at low speeds, subject to national guidance and technological feasibility, and to clearly label vehicles with tactile and high-contrast features.	Transport Planning Team and Operator	At implementation/by May 2027
Age-related exclusion of under-16s / under-17s	Clearly communicate age and licence requirements and ensure the scheme is promoted as complementary to, not a replacement for, youth transport modes (walking,	Transport Planning Team and Operator	At implementation/by May 2027

Issue	Action to be taken	Person(s) responsible	Date to be completed by
	cycling, buses). Monitor equity impacts as national regulations evolve.		
Lower uptake by women due to safety concerns	Restrict use to roads with lower speed limits and cycle infrastructure where possible, apply reduced maximum speeds, and include visible parking in well-lit, overlooked locations to improve personal safety perceptions.	Transport Planning Team and Operator	At implementation/by May 2027

Sign Off

Officer completing this EqIA: Christopher Whitehouse

Officers involved in completing the EqIA: Rachel Thistlewood, Darren Orchard, Christopher Whitehouse

Date of completion: 10th June 2026

Version Number: V1

EqIA review date: 26 February 2027

Equality Lead Sign Off: James Palfreman-Kay

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 to ensuring any actions in the action plan are implemented.

Please send to Diversity and Inclusion Officer