

Somerset Equality Impact Assessment

Before completing this EIA please ensure you have read the EIA guidance notes – available from your Equality Officer or www.somerset.gov.uk/impactassessment

Organisation prepared for (mark as appropriate)	 Somerset Council	Y	 NHS Somerset		 Somerset NHS Foundation Trust	
Version	V1	Date Completed		7/2/25		
Description of what is being impact assessed						
Mendip Hills National Landscape Management Plan 2025-2030 The Plan for this nationally designated, protected landscape is overarching of local authority administrative boundaries, and other plans and strategies. It identifies what is necessary to conserve, enhance and to further the purposes of this special landscape.¹ The Mendip Hills NL Management Plan is a ‘material’ consideration in determining planning applications, and at appeals. Whilst set in the context of national and local policy, plans, and strategies, the NL Management Plan seeks to influence these as they evolve and are implemented, to ensure that they include policies to conserve, enhance and seek to further the purposes of the NL and support the aims of the Management Plan. The Plan plays a crucial part in obtaining commitment from public entities. The Countryside and Rights of Way (CROW) Act 2000 confirmed the significance of AONBs and Section 85 places a statutory legal duty on all relevant authorities to have regard to the purpose of conserving and enhancing natural beauty when discharging any function in relation to, or affecting land within an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. The Levelling Up and Regeneration Act 2023 brought amendment of section 85 (A1) into statute on 26 December 2023, whereby; Section 85 of the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 is amended as follows (emphasis added):						

¹ Paragraph 24 of the NPPF (2023) sets out that ‘Local planning authorities and county councils are under a duty to cooperate with each other, and with other prescribed bodies, on strategic matters that cross administrative boundaries’.

*A1) In exercising or performing any functions in relation to, or so as to affect, land in an area of outstanding natural beauty in England, a relevant authority other than a devolved Welsh authority must **seek to further the purpose** of conserving and enhancing the natural beauty of the area of outstanding natural beauty.*

The CRoW Act 2000 requires relevant local authorities to produce and adopt a plan which '*formulates policy for the management of the area, and for carrying out their functions in relation to it.*'

'90A Duty of public bodies etc in relation to management plans

(1) The Secretary of State may by regulations make provision—

(a) requiring a relevant authority other than a devolved Welsh authority to contribute to the preparation, implementation or review of plans under section 89 relating to an area of outstanding natural beauty in England;

(b) setting out how such a relevant authority may or must do so.'

The NL Partnership (comprising the local authorities and 12 other local, regional and national organisations), the advisory body for the Mendip Hills NL produces the Management Plan, on behalf of its local authority partners, Somerset Council, Bath and North-East Somerset Council, North Somerset Council.

The NL Partnership through engagement with other stakeholders seeks to deliver this Plan through a coordinated annual Delivery Plan of actions, assisted and managed by the National Landscape (NL) Team.

The Plan sets out what the special qualities of the Mendip Hills NL are in the Statement of Significance. It has considered current issues and future trends to devise objectives which address these, in order to conserve, enhance and restore the special qualities to achieve the Vision for the Mendip Hills NL.

The Plan's focus is with the designated area but what happens in the countryside adjacent to the boundary, or within view of the NL is also of significance.

This review of the 2025-2030 Management Plan was undertaken in accordance with the Guidance on the review of NL Management Plans, Countryside Agency (2006). A screening process to determine whether Strategic Environmental Assessment Screening (SEA) and/or a Habitat Regulation Assessment is required in accordance with the European Habitats Directive; and an Equalities Impact Assessment have been undertaken [prior to the plan's adoption].

The Mendip Hills NL Management Plan 2025-2030 has been considered to understand the potential impacts (positive, neutral or negative) as relates to the following protected characteristics: age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnerships, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex, sexual orientation and other considerations such as rurality, low income.

The vision in the management plan for People is improving participation, increasing awareness and understanding, particularly for those in harder to reach communities in our cities and towns. Provision for enjoyment by a diverse population, from both within and beyond the NL boundary, through a wide range of active, and quiet pursuits that the area can sustain. The area will be accessible, regardless of individual age, mobility, wealth or background.

Mendip Hills NL Management Plan 2025-2030 draft 'Recreation, Access, Tourism and Participation objectives':

PE1 Maintain, improve and promote public access and quiet recreational activities, addressing anti-social activities, with measures to ensure access for all in accordance with the purposes of the National Landscape designation.

PE2 Support the development of tourism that benefits the local economy, conserves and enhances the landscape and improves understanding of the Mendip Hills.

PE3 Develop and deliver a safe, accessible, connected strategic network of green infrastructure routes and space that works for people and nature , and promote more sustainable methods of travel to the NL for enjoyment and recreation.

PE4 Support healthy lifestyles by encouraging more people to use the Mendip Hills for sustainable outdoor activities.

PE5 Increase the opportunities for volunteering and the range of people participating, to benefit the environment, people's health and wellbeing and local communities in and around the NL.

PE6 Encourage the involvement of local people and the wider community in the management of the NL

PE7 Promote the Mendip Hills as an educational resource for all ages and encourage sharing of research and learning tools.

PE8 Improve equality, diversity and inclusivity in the management and governance of the Mendip Hills National Landscape.

Evidence
What data/information have you used to assess how this policy/service might impact on protected groups? Sources such as the Office of National Statistics, Somerset Intelligence Partnership, Somerset's Joint Strategic Needs Analysis (JSNA), Staff and/ or area profiles,, should be detailed here
Mendip Hills State of the AONB Report 2024 Mendip Hills State of Heritage Report 2024 Mendip Hills Nature Recovery Plan 2023
Who have you consulted with to assess possible impact on protected groups and what have they told you? If you have not consulted other people, please explain why?
3 stages of consultation have taken place so far, a further fourth stage will take place during the spring of 2025 with this EIA accompanying the draft management plan. Stage 1 Consultation with the NL Partnership to assess the existing objectives in the plan. Stage 2 A SWOT analysis with he NL Partnership on the four themes of Place, Nature, Climate and People Stage 3 Public consultation to understand priorities for the future of the Mendip Hills Stage 4 will be the formal 6 week consultation with the local authorities and other relevant statutory authorities, along with public consultation.

Analysis of impact on protected groups				
The Public Sector Equality Duty requires us to eliminate discrimination, advance equality of opportunity and foster good relations with protected groups. Consider how this policy/service will achieve these aims. In the table below, using the evidence outlined above and your own understanding, detail what considerations and potential impacts against each of the three aims of the Public Sector Equality Duty. Based on this information, make an assessment of the likely outcome, before you have implemented any mitigation.				
Protected group	Summary of impact	Negative outcome	Neutral outcome	Positive outcome
Age	•	☐	☐	☒
Disability	•	☐	☐	☒
Gender reassignment	•	☐	☒	☐
Marriage and civil partnership	•	☐	☒	☐
Pregnancy and maternity	•	☐	☒	☐

Race and ethnicity	•	☐	☐	☒
Religion or belief	•	☐	☒	☐
Sex	•	☐	☒	☐
Sexual orientation	•	☐	☒	☐
Armed Forces (including serving personnel, families and veterans)	•	☐	☒	☐
Other, e.g. carers, low income, rurality/isolation, etc.	•	☐	☐	☒

Negative outcomes action plan

Where you have ascertained that there will potentially be negative outcomes, you are required to mitigate the impact of these. Please detail below the actions that you intend to take.

Action taken/to be taken	Date	Person responsible	How will it be monitored?	Action complete
	Select date			☐
	Select date			☐
	Select date			☐
	Select date			☐
	Select date			☐
	Select date			☐
	Select date			☐
	Select date			☐

If negative impacts remain, please provide an explanation below.

Completed by:	Ian Bowen
Date	10/2/25
Signed off by:	Jim Hardcastle

Date	
Equality Lead sign off name:	
Equality Lead sign off date:	
To be reviewed by: (officer name)	
Review date:	