



# **Oxfordshire County Council**

## **Equalities Impact Assessment**

Delegated Decision by the Cabinet Member for Place, Environment and Climate Action to adopt  
the North Wessex Downs National Landscape Management Plan

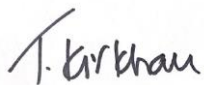
30<sup>th</sup> October 2025

## Contents

Section 1: Summary details .....	3
Section 2: Detail of proposal.....	4
Section 3: Impact Assessment - Protected Characteristics .....	10
Section 3: Impact Assessment - Additional Community Impacts.....	18
Section 3: Impact Assessment - Additional Wider Impacts.....	21
Section 4: Review .....	23

## Section 1: Summary details

<b>Directorate and Service Area</b>	Environment and Highways, Landscape and Nature Recovery Team
<b>What is being assessed</b> (e.g. name of policy, procedure, project, service or proposed service change).	Oxfordshire County Council are requested by the North Wessex Downs National Landscape (NWDNL) Council of Partners to formally adopt the new North Wessex Downs National Landscape Management Plan 2025-2030.
<b>Is this a new or existing function or policy?</b>	An existing function. The NWDNL Management Plan 2025-2030 is an update to the existing management plan, which was adopted by the council in 2019.
<b>Summary of assessment</b>  Briefly summarise the policy or proposed service change. Summarise possible impacts. Does the proposal bias, discriminate or unfairly disadvantage individuals or groups within the community? (following completion of the assessment).	<p>The management plan is considered to have a positive impact on equalities overall.</p> <p>The management plan includes priorities and policies relating to equalities, particularly in the context of access, social inclusion, community engagement, and equitable opportunities. The document demonstrates a commitment to addressing barriers for underrepresented and disadvantaged groups, promoting inclusive participation, and ensuring that access and the benefits of the landscape are available to all.</p> <p>This is reflected in its overarching principle 9, which highlights 'the importance of engagement, outreach and landscape accessibility for all, including underrepresented communities, removing physical, cultural and perceptual barriers and creating equitable opportunities to connect with the landscape and be active partners in its stewardship' which has informed priorities and policies of the plan.</p> <p>The plan also aligns with the priorities of the council's Strategic Plan 2025-2028 for a greener, fairer and healthier Oxfordshire.</p>
<b>Completed By</b>	Haidrun Breith

<b>Authorised By</b>	
<b>Date of Assessment</b>	29 <sup>th</sup> October 2025

## Section 2: Detail of proposal

<p><b>Context / Background</b></p> <p>Briefly summarise the background to the policy or proposed service change, including reasons for any changes from previous versions.</p>	<p><b>Background</b></p> <p>The NWDNL is one of the three National Landscapes extending into the Oxfordshire, which together make up approximately 26% of the county. The NWDNL can be found at the southern end of the county. The NWDNL has a resident population of approximately 100,000 people but only a relatively small proportion of this designated landscape extends into Oxfordshire.</p> <p>The NWDNL area within Oxfordshire is predominately rural with agricultural fields and farmsteads rising to an escarpment at the southern edge of the county. It does not include any towns within Oxfordshire but runs along the southern edge of Wantage, Didcot, Cholsey and Wallingford, as well as larger towns in Berkshire, Wiltshire and Hampshire.</p> <p>NWDNL Management Plan 2025-2030 is an update of the existing management plan, which was adopted by the council in 2019.</p> <p>The NWDNL is managed as a partnership, known as the Council of Partners (CoP). The Partnership works to an agreed five-year management plan and oversees the work of the National Landscape team. It consists of the nine local authorities in the area, Natural England, community groups and other associations such as the National Farmers Union. Oxfordshire County Council is one of the nine local authority partners.</p> <p>The NWDNL Management Plan 2025-2030 was approved by the CoP in July. The new management plan was drafted in consultation with partners (including the council), stakeholders, community groups and the public.</p>
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	<p><u>The NWDNL Management Plan</u></p> <p>It is intended to guide the activities of all who live and work in the National Landscape to help conserve and enhance the area's natural beauty. The plan policies are designed to be delivered by a wide range of stakeholders and partners in the National Landscape. It sets out a framework for action for the NWDNL team and all partners to deliver on the objectives and polies set out in the plan.</p> <p>The National Landscape team co-ordinates the monitoring and delivery of the plan policies and are directly responsible for the delivery of certain work areas.</p> <p>The management plan sets out a vision for the North Wessex Downs and is split into eight key themes designed to better focus the delivery of objectives. Each of the key themes is evaluated and described in detail and the key issues affecting them are drawn out. The key issues are used to identify the priorities which are supported by a number of policies. The themes are Landscape, Farming and Land Management, Biodiversity and Nature Recovery, Historic Environment, Natural Resources and Climate Change, Planning and Development, Communities and Access Recreation and Tourism.</p> <p>The communities and access recreation and tourism chapter is considered to be most relevant when assessing equalities.</p>
<p><b>Proposals</b></p> <p>Explain the detail of the proposals, including why this has been decided as the best course of action.</p>	<p><b>The proposal is for the council to adopt the NWDNL Management Plan 2025-2030.</b></p> <p>Under s.89 of the Countryside and Right of Way (CRoW) 2000 Act, local authorities have a statutory duty to produce a management plan for the NWDNL every 5 years. The council, like the other local authority partners to the NWDNL, delegate this authority to the NWDNL team to manage and create a management plan on behalf of the authorities.</p> <p>In addition, Section 85 of the CRoW 2000 Act (as amended by the <i>Levelling-up and Regeneration Act 2023</i>) requires 'relevant authorities', in exercising or performing any function that affect National Landscapes in England, to "seek to further the purpose of conserving and enhancing the natural beauty of the Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty." As such the council is required to ensure that it carries out work within or affecting the NWDNL in line with the policies and guidance in the management plan.</p>

	<p>The management plan includes numerous priorities and policies relating to equalities, particularly in the context of access, social inclusion, community engagement, and equitable opportunities. The document demonstrates a commitment to addressing barriers for underrepresented and disadvantaged groups, promoting inclusive participation, and ensuring that the benefits of the landscape are available to all.</p> <p>Overarching principle 9 states (p21)</p> <p><i>The importance of engagement, outreach and landscape accessibility for all, including underrepresented communities, removing physical, cultural and perceptual barriers and creating equitable opportunities to connect with the landscape and be active partners in its stewardship, should be recognised.</i></p> <p>The management plan includes the following priorities and policies relating to equalities:</p> <p><i>Communities (chapter 9)</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Encourage an enhanced sense of respect and pride in the North Wessex Downs amongst local people and their increased participation in activities that raise the understanding and profile of the National Landscape (priority 3)</i></li> <li>• <i>Assist the development of connectivity, based on principles of planning and integrating multi-functional green infrastructure assets, from neighbouring urban areas and within the area, facilitating active and sustainable access to and around the National Landscape to make it easier for communities to experience and benefit from the natural beauty of the North Wessex Downs (priority 4)</i></li> <li>• <i>Support initiatives to address the specific needs of different groups within and around the National Landscape, such as access to training and social activities for young people and engagement with under-represented and/or disadvantaged groups. (policy CO08)</i></li> <li>• <i>Support measures to enable active travel and provide integrated and demand-responsive passenger transport, including easily accessible information, across the North Wessex Downs that serves the needs of local people and visitors. (policy CO11)</i></li> </ul> <p><i>Access, Recreation and Tourism priorities (chapter 10)</i></p>
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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Facilitate opportunities for more people of all backgrounds and abilities to access and enjoy the North Wessex Downs in ways that respect and promote the valued qualities of the National Landscape and its setting (priority 1)</i></li> <li>• <i>Greater awareness of the value and benefits of access and enjoyment of the North Wessex Downs National Landscape for public health and well being (priority 2).</i></li> <li>• <i>Develop a strategic framework to guide the use of funding provided to the North Wessex Downs National Landscape for access enhancements (priority 3).</i></li> <li>• <i>Co-ordinated promotion of the North Wessex Downs National Landscape by the tourism and recreation sector as a destination for responsible access that respects and promotes the valued qualities of the protected landscape and its setting (priority 4).</i></li> <li>• <i>Enable greater accessibility to the North Wessex Downs National Landscape for users of all backgrounds and abilities for quiet enjoyment and improved health and well-being, consistent with National Landscape purposes. (policy Art 01)</i></li> </ul> <p>It also outlines the following actions for local authorities and transport operators (p30)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Protect and maintain rights of way</li> <li>• Require green travel plans for relevant developments</li> <li>• Use management plan and additional guidance when considering options and making decisions</li> <li>• Improve and promote access from public transport routes into the NWDNL</li> <li>• Install NWDNL signage and information e.g. at stations and on buses and trains</li> <li>• Support collaboration by operators with National Trail partnerships, rights of way authorities and access groups</li> </ul> <p><b><u>The council's Equalities, diversity and inclusion framework – Including Everyone 2025 - 2029</u></b></p> <p>The proposed measures align with the council's equalities, diversity and inclusion framework 2025-2029 especially with regard to the council's ambitions for:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Inclusive communities - we work with communities to help them thrive, and we support and encourage partners to be inclusive;</li> </ul>
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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Inclusive service delivery - we communicate and engage with our residents to plan and meet their diverse needs.</li> </ul> <p>It is important to note that the NWDNL Management Plan is a high-level framework to guide further detail work and actions. It is produced by the NWDNL team and as such the council has little control over actions and next steps. The NWDNL team also plans, implements and monitors actions within the NWDNL. It is therefore recommended that the council reviews and monitors this Equalities Impact Assessment as and when actions in their control come forward.</p>
<p><b>Evidence / Intelligence</b></p> <p>List and explain any data, consultation outcomes, research findings, feedback from service users and stakeholders etc, that supports your proposals and can help to inform the judgements you make about potential impact on different individuals, communities or groups and our ability to deliver our climate commitments.</p>	<p>The NWD Team carried out an extensive consultation with partners including the council, the public, external organisations and interest groups when drafting the plan.</p> <p>This included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Summary of main changes circulated among local authority partners.</li> <li>• Direct conversations with individual partners.</li> <li>• Six-week public consultation.</li> <li>• Web survey.</li> <li>• Online consultation on the draft Management Plan.</li> <li>• Three public webinars, attended by 30-40 people.</li> <li>• Promotion on the NWDNL website, newsletter and social media posts.</li> <li>• One-day facilitated workshop for key stakeholders – around 75 people invited, 26 attended.</li> <li>• Some consultees asked for and were given extensions to the deadline so they could still respond.</li> </ul> <p>Within the council, comments from various teams were collated by the council's Landscape Officer and submitted to the NWDNL team for consideration. Regarding equalities the comments Human Health &amp; Wellbeing officer and the Countryside access strategy &amp; development officer are considered particularly relevant.</p> <p>Officers concurred with many of the key issues raised in the Communities chapter, notably those around sustainable travel and managing the future demand on the network, the intention to advance the education of the public about the importance of the landscape including school children, the need to improve connections between those living in</p>



	<p>and around the national landscape, better information for less able and disadvantaged groups, e.g. by improving accessibility of paths for pushchair and wheelchair users.</p> <p>Council responses have informed the final version of the NWD Management Plan.</p>
<p><b>Alternatives considered / rejected</b></p> <p>Summarise any other approaches that have been considered in developing the policy or proposed service change, and the reasons why these were not adopted. This could include reasons why doing nothing is not an option.</p>	<p>The alternative would be not to adopt the management plan. This would result in the council not meeting its statutory duty under s.89 of the CRow Act, which requires local authorities including the council to <i>“prepare and publish a management plan which formulates [their] policy for the management of the AONB and for carrying out of their functions in relation to it”</i>.</p> <p>Not adopting the management plan would also have financial implications for the council as it would have to prepare its own Management Plan for the NWDNL, undertake public consultation and submit the plan to DEFRA and the Secretary of State.</p> <p>There would also be a reputational risk if not adopting or unduly delaying the adoption of the NWDNL management plan.</p>

### **Section 3: Impact Assessment - Protected Characteristics**

Protected Characteristic	No Impact	Positive	Negative	Description of Impact	Any actions or mitigation to reduce negative impacts	Action owner* (*Job Title, Organisation)	Timescale and monitoring arrangements
Age	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	It is understood that younger voices are often less-heard in decision-making processes. There could therefore be a negative impact on them if their priorities were not accurately captured. The management plan takes a proactive approach in engaging with young people (policy CO08).	The council has limited influence on this as the actions are initiated and managed by the NWD team. However, this often happens in collaboration with partners. The council will liaise with the NWDNL team on actions and will review and update this EIA as part of proposals.	NWDNL team; Landscape & GI Officer for the council	Annually  The NWDNL provides regular updates on work areas to the CoP.  The council will liaise with the NWDNL team on planned and completed actions in the NWDNL as part of their CoP in the first instance. The council's landscape & GI officer will act as a link between the NWDNL and relevant teams within the council.

<b>Disability</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<p>Access to the NWDNL and to green spaces is particularly difficult for people with disabilities. Physical barriers such as styles, surfacing can make access to the countryside difficult or even impossible.</p> <p>The management plan takes a proactive approach and seeks to encourage access by people of all abilities to the NWD (policy ART 01)</p>	<p>The council has limited influence on this as actions tend to be initiated and managed by the NWD team. The council is responsible for the management and maintenance of public rights of way in Oxfordshire and will continue to do this in line with its statutory duties. The council will liaise with the NWD team and review PRow improvements in relation to improving access for people of all abilities</p>	<p>NWDNL team; Landscape &amp; GI Officer for the council</p>	<p>Annually</p> <p>The NWDNL provides regular updates on work areas to the CoP.</p> <p>The council will liaise with the NWDNL team on planned and completed actions in the NWDNL as part of their CoP in the first instance. The council's landscape &amp; GI officer will act as a link between the NWDNL and relevant teams within the council.</p>
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<b>Gender Reassignment</b>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	The protection and enjoyment of the NWDNL is for the enjoyment for all and is not related to gender reassignments. The consultation on the management plan included a range of methods for engagement to ensure that everybody had the opportunity to respond to the plan.			
<b>Marriage &amp; Civil Partnership</b>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	The protection and enjoyment of the NWDNL is for the enjoyment for all and is not related to marriages & civil partnership. The consultation on the management plan included a range of methods for engagement to ensure that everybody had the opportunity to respond to the plan.			

<b>Pregnancy &amp; Maternity</b>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	The protection and enjoyment of the NWDNL is for the enjoyment for all and not related to pregnancy or maternity. The consultation on the management plan included a range of methods for engagement to ensure that everybody had the opportunity to respond to the plan.			
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<b>Race</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<p>The protection and enjoyment of the NWDNL is for the enjoyment for all and not related to race. However, people of race and ethnic minorities are often underrepresented in the NWD. The consultation on the management plan included a range of methods for engagement and responding to ensure that everybody had the opportunity to respond. The management plan also seeks to better engage with under-represented groups and to encourage people of all backgrounds to the NWD (policy ART 01)</p>	<p>The council has limited influence on this as actions tend to be initiated and managed by the NWD team. The council will liaise with the NWD team and review PRoW improvements in relation to improving access for people of all abilities</p>	<p>NWDNL team; Landscape &amp; GI Officer for the council</p>	<p>Annually</p> <p>The NWDNL provides regular updates on work areas to the CoP.</p> <p>The council will liaise with the NWDNL team on planned and completed actions in the NWDNL as part of their CoP in the first instance. The council's landscape &amp; GI officer will act as a link between the NWDNL and relevant teams within the council.</p>
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<b>Sex</b>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	The protection and enjoyment of the NWDNL is for the enjoyment for all and not related to sex. The consultation on the management plan included a range of methods for engagement and responding to ensure that everybody had the opportunity to respond.			
<b>Sexual Orientation</b>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	The protection and enjoyment of the NWDNL is for the enjoyment for all and not related to sex orientation. The consultation on the management plan included a range of methods for engagement and responding to ensure that everybody had the opportunity to respond.			



<b>Religion or Belief</b>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<p>The protection and enjoyment of the NWDNL is for the enjoyment for all and not related to religion or beliefs.</p> <p>The consultation on the management plan included a range of methods for engagement and responding to ensure that everybody had the opportunity to respond.</p>			
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### Section 3: Impact Assessment - Additional Community Impacts

Additional community impacts	No Impact	Positive	Negative	Description of impact	Any actions or mitigation to reduce negative impacts	Action owner (*Job Title, Organisation)	Timescale and monitoring arrangements
<b>Rural communities</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Rural communities often have little access to open space despite being surrounded by countryside. The management plan includes a section on communities in which it outlines priorities and policies that benefit rural communities ranging from increasing participation in activities (priority 3), improving connectivity to multi-functional green infrastructure assets, facilitating active and sustainable access to and around the NL (priority 4) It also supporting initiatives to address specific needs of different groups within and around the NL (policy CO08).	The council has limited influence on this, as actions tend to be initiated and managed by the NWD team. However, council will liaise and work closely with the NWD team on proposals that create better sustainable PRow networks, or the creation of multi-functional open spaces near urban areas.	NWDNL team;  Landscape & GI officer	Annually  The council's landscape & green infrastructure officer will act as a link between the NWDNL team and relevant teams within the council to agree and coordinate improvements.
<b>Armed Forces</b>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	There are no armed forces in the Oxfordshire part of the NWD but the management plan recognises that they			

Additional community impacts	No Impact	Positive	Negative	Description of impact	Any actions or mitigation to reduce negative impacts	Action owner (* Job Title, Organisation)	Timescale and monitoring arrangements
				continue to play a significant role in the local economy of the NWDNL in other counties.			
<b>Carers</b>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	The management plan is for guiding action for everyone and does not specifically impact on carers.			
<b>Areas of deprivation</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Areas of deprivation tend to have no or limited access to attractive multi-functional green space. The Oxfordshire part of the NWDNL does not include large conurbation or areas of deprivation but it is close to Didcot and urban centres outside the county like Reading. The management plan recognises limited connectivity and sustainable access from nearby urban areas, for communities to experience and benefit from the natural beauty of the NWD. The management plan seeks to	The council has limited influence on this as actions tend to be initiated and managed by the NWD team. However, council will liaise and work closely with the NWD team on proposals to improve connectivity and the creation of multi-functional open spaces. The council's landscape & green infrastructure officer will act as a link between the NWDNL team and the council's relevant teams to agree and coordinate improvements.	NWDNL team;  Landscape & GI officer	Annually  The council's landscape & green infrastructure officer will act as a link between the NWDNL team and relevant teams within the council to agree and coordinate improvements.

<b>Additional community impacts</b>	<b>No Impact</b>	<b>Positive</b>	<b>Negative</b>	<b>Description of impact</b>	<b>Any actions or mitigation to reduce negative impacts</b>	<b>Action owner</b> (* Job Title, Organisation)	<b>Timescale and monitoring arrangements</b>
				improve connectivity and access from urban areas to the countryside by facilitating sustainable travel.			

### Section 3: Impact Assessment - Additional Wider Impacts

Additional Wider Impacts	No Impact	Positive	Negative	Description of Impact	Any actions or mitigation to reduce negative impacts	Action owner* (*Job Title, Organisation)	Timescale and monitoring arrangements
<b>Staff</b>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	The council was consulted on the draft plan. Within the council different teams were consulted and their responses collated for consideration by the NWD team.			
<b>Other Council Services</b>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	All service areas doing work within the NWD or affecting it will have to have regard to the plan. Service areas were consulted on the plan and comments passed on to the NWD team for consideration. As the plan is a light touch update to the existing management plan, not many comments were received. The priorities of the management plan also mostly align with the council's vision and are already being integrated into the service areas.			

<b>Additional Wider Impacts</b>	<b>No Impact</b>	<b>Positive</b>	<b>Negative</b>	<b>Description of Impact</b>	<b>Any actions or mitigation to reduce negative impacts</b>	<b>Action owner* (* Job Title, Organisation)</b>	<b>Timescale and monitoring arrangements</b>
<b>Providers</b>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	The NWD team plans and undertake actions of the plan.			
<b>Social Value <sup>1</sup></b>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	The management plan offers social value to people across this county offering a range of benefits such as building a sense of place, recreation and leisure, access to nature, delivering nature improvements, all of which will improve the health and wellbeing of residents and visitors of Oxfordshire.			

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<sup>1</sup> If the Public Services (Social Value) Act 2012 applies to this proposal, please summarise here how you have considered how the contract might improve the economic, social, and environmental well-being of the relevant area

## Section 4: Review

Where bias, negative impact or disadvantage is identified, the proposal and/or implementation can be adapted or changed; meaning there is a need for regular review. This review may also be needed to reflect additional data and evidence for a fuller assessment (proportionate to the decision in question). Please state the agreed review timescale for the identified impacts of the policy implementation or service change.

<b>Review Date</b>	Annually. The NWDNL team will be monitoring achievements against the Management Plan objectives and actions. The NWDNL team provide regular updates on their work areas at the CoP meetings.
<b>Person Responsible for Review</b>	NWDNL team in liaison with the Council of Partners The council's Landscape & Green Infrastructure Technical Lead officer will act as a link between the NWDNL team and relevant functions in the council.
<b>Authorised By</b>	