**Lisburn & Castlereagh City Council**

**Section 75 Equality and Good Relations Screening template**

**Part 1. Information about the activity/policy/project being screened**

**Name of the activity/policy/project**

Development of Digital Sculpture Trail in Hillsborough Forest.

# **Is this activity/policy/project – an existing one, a revised one, a new one?**

The Digital Sculpture Trail is part of an ongoing project to enhance Hillsborough Forest as a tourist and leisure attraction.

The Digital Sculpture Trail comprises ten new sculptures sited around the lake in Hillsborough Forest. A digital App has been developed to guide visitors to and between the sculptures using augmented reality way-finding. All sculptures are now in place and the App is up and running.

There have been two Equality Screening exercises carried out on this project to date (2019 and 2021) and this is the third one as the project is now complete.

Council commissioned an accessibility audit through Disability Action which was received in July 2022 and its findings and recommendations were considered and some recommendations were implemented. These included:

* Providing firmer ground surfaces to enable more access for wheelchair users;
* Way-markers installed on DST route;
* Inspect and make good potholes regularly;
* Provided DST – specific interpretation panels with Braille for those with limited/no sight; and
* Provided angled signage at each sculpture

**What are the intended aims/outcomes the activity/policy/project is trying to achieve?**

The overall aim of the Digital Sculpture Trail development is to further enhance the natural facility that is Hillsborough Forest, attracting new visitors and improving the experience for regular users.

Specifically it is intended to:

* Encourage the participation of as many visitors as practicably possible, taking account of the site constraints

* Further enhance the forest environment to promote physical, mental and social health and wellbeing
* Improve opportunity, access and participation for all visitors by reducing barriers to access for as many groups as possible (including older people, children and those with disabilities).

**Who is the activity/policy/project targeted at and who will benefit? Are there any expected benefits for specific Section 75 categories/groups from this activity/policy/project? If so, please explain.**

The new Digital Sculpture Trail is intended to provide an enhanced visitor experience for everyone who visits Hillsborough Forest. The forest is used by all people from all Section 75 groups. However, we know from visitor activity and feedback to date, that it is likely to be of particular interest to children and families. The accessibility features that are being built into the design mean that it may particularly benefit people with disabilities, including children.

**Who initiated or developed the activity/policy/project?**

Tourism Development Unit in LCCC

**Who owns and who implements the activity/policy/project?**

Owned by LCCC Service Transformation Directorate; implemented by the Tourism Development Unit

**Are there any factors which could contribute to/detract from the intended aim/outcome of the activity/policy/project?**

**If yes, give brief details of any significant factors.**

**Financial** - Thedevelopment and implementation of detailed designs was dependent on a funding award from DAERA. This funding has been approved and the majority of this has been paid by the funders.

**Legislative:** The land on which the Trail is sited is owned by Forest Service and therefore all Forest Service legislation with regard to the protection of the flora and fauna in the forest must be adhered to and may take precedence over actions to make the site accessible. Accessibility provisions of the Disability Discrimination Act have to be complied with as far as is practicable and Health and Safety issues on site must be complied with.

**Planning:** Some of the sculptures required planning permission. Planning was applied for on 31 October 2019 and approved on 4 June 2020 under planning application ref: LA05/2019/1127/F. There were no responses from the public on this planning application. On clarification of some concerns from the Historical Environment Department (HED) there were no issues from any other public departments.

**Other:** Due to the pandemic the original completion date had to be extended and the project was completed in October 2023.

**Who are the internal and external stakeholders (actual or potential) that the activity/policy/project will impact upon? Delete if not applicable**

**Staff**  - all LCCC staff involved in the project, Tourism staff in particular

**Service users**  - wide range of local and out of state visitors anticipated

**Other public sector organisations** - Forest Service: DAERA (funder); Visitors anticipated from education and health promotion sectors

**Voluntary/community/trade unions** - May be used by groups from community and voluntary sector

**Other** – Elected Members involved in decision making; project designers/artists and contractors

**Other policies/strategies/plans with a bearing on this activity/policy/project**

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| **Name of policy/strategy/plan** | **Who owns or implements?** |
| Lisburn & Castlereagh Community Plan | Lisburn & Castlereagh City Council |
| Hillsborough Master Plan | LCCC |
| Interim Corporate Plan 2021-24 | LCCC |
| Making Life Better | Public Health Agency |
| Rural Tourism Scheme | DAERA |
| Forest Service NI Business Plan | DAERA |
| Northern Ireland Tourism Priorities for Growth; Operating Plan | Tourism NI |
| Draft NI Programme for Government | Northern Ireland Executive |
| NI Economic Strategy – Vision for 2030 | Department for the Economy |
| Together: Building a United Community | TEO |
| LCCC Equality Scheme and associated equality action plans and policies | LCCC |
| Children’s Services Co-operation (NI) Act 2016 | TEO/Department of Education |

**Available evidence**

**What evidence/information (qualitative and quantitative) have you gathered or considered to inform this activity/policy? Specify details for each Section 75 category.**

In developing the original concepts for the forest enhancement and installation of the sculpture trail, a wide range of information, research and expert advice was considered.

We have considered feedback gathered from public consultations which have taken place since 2015 about the upgrading of Hillsborough Forest which included the addition of a sculpture trail. Consultations carried out were reported in the previous Equality Screening document. During consultation, detailed proposals for the trail and the sculptures themselves, including illustrative pictures and detailed information on design, scale, etc, were made available.

Since the sculpture installation began we have received feedback from numerous groups consisting of the very young, older people, people with disabilities and those with mental health conditions who all use the forest on a regular basis.

We have received and considered compliments and complaints received via Council’s customer care system since installation of sculptures began.

The findings and recommendations of a Disability Audit of Hillsborough Forest undertaken by Disability Action (July 2022) were considered and some elements of the recommendations were applied.

We have also considered the most up to date NISRA population data from Census 2021 (published 22/09/22) [Lisburn and Castlereagh Census Data](https://explore.nisra.gov.uk/area-explorer-2021/N09000007/)

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| **Section 75 Category** | **Details of evidence/information** |
| Religious Belief | As a well-known tourist attraction for both local and out of state visitors, it is likely that the forest is visited by people from all religions and those with no religious beliefs. During consultation, we did not gather information on the religious background of respondents as it was not considered particularly relevant and no issues were raised to suggest this was appropriate.  Since sculptures were installed, and following an article in the Newsletter on the 10th June 2022 a number of complaints have been received from faith based people demonstrating opposition to one particular sculpture.  All complaints were responded to at that time and no further complaints were received. |
| Political Opinion | There is no evidence of the political opinion of visitors to Hillsborough Forest. It is likely that the forest will be visited by people with different political opinions, reflecting the local and wider population. |
| Racial Group | A Forest Service survey of all forests in Northern Ireland in 2019 suggested that 1% of visitors to Hillsborough Forest were from Black, Asian & Minority Ethnic (BAME) groups. This is lower than the percentage of the LCCC and wider NI population that are from BME communities according to the latest Census 2021 analysis (4%).  However, the forest/attraction is likely to be visited by people (local and visiting) of all races and nationalities. |
| Age | The 2021 census showed the population in the Lisburn Castlereagh area totalled 149,106.  19% = (0-14 years)  30% = (15-39 years)  33% = (40-64 years)  18% = (65+ years).  Hillsborough Forest is used by people of all ages for leisure activities but the play park and the sculpture trail are popular with children and family groups. |
| Marital Status | We do not have information on the marital status of people who visit Hillsborough Forest or the sculpture trail. |
| Sexual Orientation | We do not have information on the sexual orientation of people who visit Hillsborough Forest or the sculpture trail. |
| Men & Women Generally | We do not have information on the precise gender make-up of visitors to the sculpture trail but a Forest Service survey in 2019 reported that 46% of visitors to Hillsborough Forest were male and 54% female. There was no breakdown in relation to transgender or non-binary people. |
| Disability | Latest Census data (2011) and LGD boundary data (2014) indicates that 18.29% of the population have a disability or long-term health condition. This includes a wide range of disabilities, including physical, sensory and communication disabilities. The childhood disability figure for Northern Ireland is 5.5%, highest in UK (2017 Research Report, Caring More Than Most, Leeds University on behalf of Contact). Observation and feedback to date suggests that the new sculpture trail is being used by school groups of disabled children. |
| People with and without Dependants | Evidence suggests the forest and sculpture trail are being accessed by people with and without dependants. Evidence to date suggests the new sculpture trail is well used by family groups. |

### Needs, experiences and priorities

**Taking into account the information referred to above, what are the different needs, experiences and priorities of each of the following categories, in relation to the particular activity/policy/decision? Specify details for each of the Section 75 categories**

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| **Section 75 Category** | **Details of needs/experiences/priorities** |
| Religious Belief | During the consultations on the proposed sculpture trail, there were no issues raised in relation to religious belief. Since installation, the vast majority of visitors appear happy with the sculptures. There have, however, been a number of complaints that one particular sculpture, ‘Bigfoot’, is offensive to some people who hold a particular faith, with claims that it is Pagan and anti-Christian. The feedback has included calls to remove the sculpture and it appears there was a concerted campaign by one particular church to lobby council on the matter.  All complaints received were replied to at the time and no further complaints have been received. |
| Political Opinion | No evidence of issues in relation to political opinion from public consultation or since the sculptures were installed. |
| Racial Group | No issues related to race were raised during consultation but we are aware that BME residents and visitors may be under-represented as users of the Hillsborough Forest facility. We recognise that there is a need to ensure that people know about this free facility and are encouraged to use it. There is a need to ensure that information about the Sculpture Trail is available in other languages for those who do not have English as a first language. This has been taken into account when developing the interpretative app. The App is available in 4 different languages these are: Spanish, French, German and Chinese. |
| Age | There is a need to provide a sculpture trail that is designed to be safe, accessible and attractive for all age groups, including children and young people. Older people may be less mobile even if they don’t have a recognised disability so may have access issues to some of the sculptures. Paths have been made as safe as possible with consideration been given to the flora and fauna. Consultation with local schools and feedback from visiting groups have not highlighted any new needs or issues not already identified in the pre-installation phase. However, a number of visitors raised safety concerns in relation to the installation of one sculpture and this was addressed.  A small number of people have raised concerns that one particular sculpture, Big Foot, may be scary for young children. |
| Marital Status | No issues raised during consultation or identified since installation began. |
| Sexual Orientation | No issues raised during consultation or identified since installation began. |
| Men & Women Generally | No issues raised during consultation in relation to gender. However council staff are aware of the need to ensure that forest facilities are perceived to be safe for lone visitors (especially females, young people, older visitors). No new issues raised since sculptures have been installed.  Although only a small proportion of those who have provided feedback to date have provided negative comments, more negative feedback has been received from females. |
| Disability | From the outset, the Sculpture Trail has been designed to allow as many people as possible of different abilities to enjoy it. To enable full understanding of different abilities/disabilities a detailed accessibility audit carried out by Disability Action on the whole forest has highlighted a number of areas where accessibility could be further enhanced to meet the needs of wheelchair users, those with reduced/no sight, and older people with mobility issues. Details on the report specifically relating to the Digital Sculpture Trail were included in the previous Equality Screening document. Issues that have been raised include the need for handrails, a range of seating options to meet different needs, and more compact pathways around the sculptures. Some of these issues have been addressed by providing more compact areas around some of the sculptures and including Brialle on signage at each sculpture.  We have had feedback from a small number of people that one particular sculpture, Big Foot, may be negative for mental health. |
| People with and without Dependants | Parents with buggies or people who care for those with physical disabilities may have accessibility issues. Parents with young children may need rest areas that can accommodate buggies, etc. |

**Part 2. Screening questions**

**1 What is the likely impact on equality of opportunity for those affected by this activity/policy, for each of the Section 75 equality categories?**

The majority of feedback on the sculpture trail to date has been on the aesthetic appearance of the sculptures and on the overall visitor experience.

Positive feedback is mostly from families with young children who enjoy the interactive facilities of the Fox and the Lamp Shade.

Negative feedback is mostly from faith based groups who have a concern over the Big Foot sculpture.

On the whole, feedback has been overwhelmingly positive, however, there have been some negative reactions.

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| **Section 75 Category** | **Details of likely impact – will it be positive or negative? If none anticipated, say none** | **Level of impact -** **major or minor\*** - see guidance below |
| Religious Belief | For most visitors to the forest, there is no impact based on religious belief – people respond to the overall visitor experience and the aesthetics of the new sculptures depending on personal taste. However, a number of people have taken strong exception to the Bigfoot sculpture and have attributed meaning to it (pagan connotations) that was not intended by the commissioned artist. Some have objected to the location of the sculpture saying it is too close to the path. | No impact for the majority of visitors or potential visitors.  Minor negative impact reported for a small number of people on faith grounds |
| Political Opinion | No different impact identified to date | None |
| Racial Group | No different impact for people of different racial groups identified to date. The planned interpretative App has been developed in a way that enables content to be translated into different languages. | None |
| Age | The sculpture trail has been designed using themes relevant to the surroundings of the forest to be appealing to people of all ages. However, from the response to date, there is no doubt that it is particularly attractive to children.  The physical enhancements to the forest trail – paths, signage, etc – may increase the appeal for older people and contribute to wellbeing.  Young people/school groups may benefit in particular from the added accessibility and new recreational offering.  A small number of people have claimed that the Big Foot sculpture may be scary for young children. | Minor – positive - for children/young people and school groups  Minor – positive - for older people |
| Marital Status | No specific or different impact identified in relation to marital status | None |
| Sexual Orientation | No specific or different impact identified in relation to sexual orientation | None |
| Men & Women Generally | No different impact by gender identified for the sculpture trail to date. Positive feedback has been received from both male and female visitors. However, analysis of negative feedback suggests that more women than men feel negatively about the sculptures. | None |
| Disability | Feedback on the improvements to the forest generally and on the sculptures that have been installed to date suggest that they are received very positively by disabled people of different ages. Feedback from parents, special schools and other visiting groups have highlighted that their visit was a positive experience.  Two of the sculptures that are interactive have been made as accessible as possible given the natural terrain of the forest and the need to protect the flora and fauna and this has been welcomed.  Further improvements following recommendations from the accessibility audit may further enhance the visitor experience for those with disabilities.  There has been a small number of negative comments that the Big Foot sculpture has a negative impact on mental health. | Minor - positive - for most disabled people.  Minor – negative – noted for a small number of visitors |
| People with and without Dependants | Children, older people, family groups and those with a disability have all reported a positive experience when visiting the Digital Sculpture Trail to date. The further improvements that are planned are likely to lead to further positive experiences. | Minor - positive |

**2(a) Are there opportunities to better promote equality of opportunity for people within the Section 75 equality categories?**

As feedback is received, consideration will be given to any issue raised before installation of the trail is completed and into the future.

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| **Section 75 Category** | **IF Yes, provide details** | **If No, provide details** |
| Religious Belief | Feedback from those who have concerns with the Bigfoot sculpture have been considered and mitigation measures proposed. |  |
| Political Opinion |  | No need or opportunity identified |
| Racial Group | Information about the sculpture trail and the planned interpretative App have been developed with the needs of those who do not have English as a first language in mind. |  |
| Age |  | No further opportunities identified at this stage but any measures that improve accessibility for disabled people may also benefit some older people. |
| Marital Status |  | No need or opportunity identified |
| Sexual Orientation |  | No need or opportunity identified |
| Men & Women Generally |  | No need or opportunity identified |
| Disability | Consultation was undertaken with the Digital Consultant and an audio description of the Sculptures has been made available via the App to inform those individuals with a visual impairment about the sculptures.  While accessibility has already been built into the project, recommendations from the Disability Action Audit will be implemented as far as budget and the physical environment allow.  Specific steps have been taken to promote awareness of the sculpture trail and to provide advance information for visitors with a disability. Signage on site has been provided in Braille. The needs of people with different disabilities have been taken into account in developing the interpretative App. There are plans for targeted consultation to ensure the App is fully accessible. |  |
| People with and without Dependants |  | The needs of some people with dependants have already been considered but will be kept under review as the project develops. |

**Equality Action Plan 2021-2025**

Does the activity/policy/project being screened relate to an action in the [Equality Action Plan 2021-2025](https://www.lisburncastlereagh.gov.uk/council/publications/equality-section-75/action-plans-equality-and-disability)? Yes/No If yes, specify which action.

Yes, Actions 2.1 Access to Information and 3.4 Digital inclusion

**2(b) DDA Disability Duties (see Disability Action Plan 2021-2025)**

Does this policy/activity present opportunities to contribute to the actions in our [Disability Action Plan](https://www.lisburncastlereagh.gov.uk/council/publications/equality-section-75/action-plans-equality-and-disability):

* to promote positive attitudes towards disabled people?
* to encourage the participation of disabled people in public life?

Potentially yes, in relation to promotional/information material and ongoing consultation with disabled people and groups.

**3 To what extent is the activity/policy/project likely to impact on good relations between people of different religious belief, political opinion or racial group?**

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| **Good Relations Category** | **Details of likely impact. Will it be positive or negative?** [if no specific impact identified, say none] | **Level of impact –** **minor/major\*** |
| Religious Belief  Political Opinion  Racial Group | We know that the forest and the Digital Sculpture Trail is already used by school groups and community groups for cross-community activities. There may be further opportunities in future for increased activities, sports, education, social and cultural programmes and to promote use of the Trail and the forest in general as a shared space. | Minor - positive |

**4 Are there opportunities to better promote good relations between people of different religious belief, political opinion or racial group?**

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| **Good Relations Category** | **IF Yes, provide details** | **If No, provide details** |
| Religious Belief  Political Opinion  Racial Group |  | No, there are no further opportunities to better promote good relations between these groups. All opportunities are currently being addressed. |

**Multiple identity**

**Provide details of any data on the impact of the activity/policy/project on people with multiple identities. Specify relevant Section 75 categories concerned.**

We have taken into account the needs of different multiple identities in the development of the sculpture trail. For example, children with disabilities or older people with disabilities will benefit from enhanced accessibility measures.

**Part 3. Screening decision/outcome**

Equality and good relations screening is used to identify whether there is a need to carry out a **full equality impact assessment** on a proposed policy or project. There are 3 possible outcomes:

1. **Screen out** - no need for a full equality impact assessment and no mitigations required because no relevance to equality, no negative impacts identified or only very minor positive impacts for all groups. This may be the case for a purely technical policy for example.
2. **Screen out with mitigation** - no need for a full equality impact assessment but some minor potential impacts or opportunities to better promote equality and/or good relations identified, so mitigations appropriate. Much of our activity will probably fall into this category.
3. **Screen in for full equality impact assessment** – potential for significant and/or potentially negative impact identified for one or more groups so proposal requires a more detailed impact assessment. [See Equality Commission guidance on justifying a screening decision.]

**Choose only one of these** and provide reasons for your decision and ensure evidence is noted/referenced for any decision reached.

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| **Screening Decision/Outcome** | **Reasons/Evidence** |
| Option 1  **Screen out** – no equality impact assessment and no mitigation required [go to Monitoring section] |  |
| Option 2  **Screen out with mitigation** – some potential impacts identified but they can be addressed with appropriate mitigation or some opportunities to better promote equality and/or good relations identified [complete mitigation section below] | The screening has identified that impacts will be minor and positive for most groups. Feedback from visitors to date and from extensive consultation has been overwhelmingly positive.  However, we have had some negative reaction on religious grounds, including from two faith-based groups. We have also had concerns from four members of the public on grounds of mental health and the potential to scare some children.  We have concluded that there is insufficient grounds to conduct a full equality impact assessment but we do need to take on board the feedback to date and implement mitigation measures – see below.  Limitations regarding accessibility will always be a challenge given the location of this project but all feasible recommendations from the Disability Audit will also be implemented.  Council will work with the artists, the digital consultant, Forest Service and stakeholders to ensure maximum inclusion/accessibility without compromising the design and the forest infrastructure. |
| Option 3  **Screen in** for a full Equality Impact Assessment (EQIA)  [If option 3, complete timetabling and prioritising section below] |  |

**Mitigation (Only relevant to Option 2)**

**Can the activity/policy/project plan be amended or an alternative activity/policy introduced to better promote equality of opportunity and/or good relations?**

If so, give the **reasons** to support your decision, together with the proposed changes/amendments or alternative activity/policy and ensure the mitigations are included in a revised/updated policy or plan.

Ongoing feedback from the public will be considered now that the sculptures are complete.

There will be further targeted consultation and testing of the App design to ensure maximum accessibility. Mitigations already considered and implemented include accessibility considerations for different disabilities, older people, families and those who do not have English as a first language.

**Mitigations regarding Bigfoot**

In response to the negative feedback from a number of visitors, which is on the basis of religious and mental health grounds, and following advice from the Equality Commission, Council is considered the following options in relation to the Big Foot sculpture. Options were brought to the relevant council committee.

1. Status quo – do nothing
2. Maintain sculpture in current location, in addition provide planting which would limit the visual impact as well as provide appropriate/parental guidance information within the App and on signage in the car park (Cost £4.5k)
3. Maintain sculpture in current location and re-align the adjacent path so those who wish to can avoid it more easily (approx. 120m of pathway)
4. Remove or re-locate the sculpture.

The Council agreed to implement option 2, additional planting around the sculpture has been completed the remaining elements of this option will be implemented at the earliest possible time.

**Timetabling and prioritising for full EQIA (only relevant to Option 3)**

If the activity/policy has been **‘screened in’** for full equality impact assessment, give details of any factors to be considered and the next steps for progressing the EQIA, including a proposed timetable.

Is the activity/policy affected by timetables established by other relevant public authorities? Yes/No. If yes, please provide details.

Not applicable

**Part 4. Monitoring**

Public authorities should consider the guidance contained in the Commission’s Monitoring Guidance for Use by Public Authorities (July 2007).

Effective monitoring will help a public authority identify any future adverse impact arising from the activity/policy which may lead the public authority to conduct an equality impact assessment, as well as help with future planning and activity/policy development.

**What will be monitored and how? What specific equality monitoring will be done? Who will undertake and sign-off the monitoring of this activity/policy and on what frequency?** Please give details:

The Tourism team will be responsible for monitoring of this project that will involve logging feedback and complaints from users and taking action when required. The Council will proactively seek feedback from users by way of surveys in the forest next spring when the Tourism Trailer will be back on site.

We will particularly monitor reactions and responses from the public on the issues that have been raised to date.

In line with Council policy there will be ongoing maintenance of each of the sculptures which will ensure safety and accessibility is regularly checked.

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We will particularly monitor reactions and responses from the public on the issues that have been raised to date.

In line with Council policy there will be ongoing maintenance of each of the sculptures which will ensure safety and accessibility is regularly checked.

**Part 5 - Approval and authorisation**

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|  | **Position/Job Title** | **Date** |
| Screened by: | Margaret McAvoy  Tourism Development Officer | 19/3/2024 |
| Reviewed by: Annie Wilson | Equality Officer | 02/05/24 |
| **Approved by:** |  | 02/05/2024 |

Note: On completion of the screening exercise, a copy of the completed Screening Report should be:

* approved and ‘signed off’ by a senior manager responsible for the activity/policy
* included with Committee reports, as appropriate
* sent to the Equality Officer for the quarterly screening report to consultees, internal reporting and publishing on the LCCC website
* shared with relevant colleagues
* made available to the public on request.

Evidence and documents referenced in the screening report should also be available if requested.