

York Access Forum (YAF)
23rd January 2025 1:30–4pm
Hudson Room, West Offices and on Teams
Minutes

Attendees

Name	Organisation (if applicable)
Dave Smith (DS)	Access Officer, (CYC)
Christine Kyte (CK)	Support Worker (CYC) – note taker
Diane Roworth (DR)	Chair of YAF
Anne Norton (AN)	York Disability Rights Forum
Belle Whitely (BW)	North Yorkshire Sight Loss Council
Jake Furby (JF)	York LGBT Forum
Sian Balsom(SB)	York Healthwatch
Rachel Barber (RB)	Living 4 Moments
Laura Williams (LW)	Assistant Director Housing + Communities CYC
Flick Williams (FW)	Independent
Srish Arjen (SA)	Independent
Anna Baldwin (AB)	York Macular Society
Matt Costa (MC)	Building Design Partnership (BDP)
Emma Beaumont (EB)	Designer BDP
Sally Cawthorn (SC)	Regeneration Project Officer CYC
Katie Peeke- Vout(KP)	Head of Regeneration CYC

Apologies

Dionne Grover-Jacques	York Access Hub + ME Society
------------------------------	------------------------------

No.	Item
1	Welcome and introductions
	DR Welcomed all and asked them to introduce themselves. DS General housekeeping re room and etiquette for hybrid meeting re questions, use of mic etc.

2	YAF updates.
	<p>DS summarised progress on projects underway from YAF and the Access Team. This updates document was also circulated by email prior to the meeting.</p> <p>DR updated the meeting on Blue Badge Access to the city centre. Richard Holland had advised that no changes were likely to happen in the near future.</p> <p>DR also advised that she had written to Tom Horner, CYC Head of Active and Sustainable Travel regarding a strategy to resolve potential conflict between pedestrians and cyclists, when implementing the Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plans (LCWIP).</p> <p>Station Gateway and York Central. FW expressed concern that the use of a contrasting colour for cycle lanes, which was agreed in the York Station Gateway workshops, will be jettisoned. Also that, in her view, the planning decision notice for York Central meant the Council does not meet its Public Sector Equality Duty e.g. for disabled employees accessing the government building. Additionally, there is nothing to prevent applications for occupancy of other buildings on the site. Issues arise because of the lack of consultation early enough in the planning process. FW requested that the Chair ask York Central partners to attend a future YAF meeting. Noted by chair.</p>
3	Equity, Diversity + Inclusion (EDI) Strategy Consultation
	<p>LW gave background to this consultation. Before 2016 CYC was graded as "excellent" on the Local Government (LG) equalities framework. There was an inequalities manager, but due to cost savings this post was amalgamated into a head of service post which LW held on secondment during 2019. During COVID, equalities sat in every senior leaders' portfolio. In 2022 LW returned to CYC, inclusion was part of her role. Following this the Access Officer post, and then YAF were set up. An external consultant was hired to reassess CYC against the LG equalities framework and produce a strategy. In relation to the LG framework, CYC was graded mainly as "developing". LW + DS are aware that the current strategy is generic, bland, and not specific to York with no voice of lived experience. Therefore, LW is seeking feedback to make the</p>

document more meaningful. The most important part is the action plan and the actual practical changes that we make. There is some training budget to procure training. Budget growth has enabled recent recruitment to post of head of EDI. The recruitment process has been more inclusive e.g. **DR** was part of the partners interview panel. The feedback from this consultation will give the Head of EDI, who starts in March, something to work with.

LW outlined the 5 objectives of the EDI strategy:

- Developing anti-discrimination policies.
- Improving EDI awareness across the council.
- Human Rights and Equity Impact Assessments (HREIA).
- EDI Training for CYC staff and Members.
- Consultation results feeding into EDI strategy.

HREIA are currently being trialled, providing more scaffolding within the human rights section. People who will be writing policies or making changes to services need to be capable of working through the HREIA.

The new EDI officer Laura will recruit EDI champions. The Centre for Applied Human Rights (CAHR) will train them to use HREIA and work to embed this approach across the workforce. The strategy should go to scrutiny in May and be signed off in June. CYC has a long way to go in terms of coproduction. We want to hear people's experience of discrimination in the city and in their contact with CYC. We must have a diverse and engaged workforce.

FW expressed that **LW**'s perspective is sound but has criticism of the strategy e.g. the confusion between the terms equity and equality. This confusion was confirmed by Cllr Lomas' use of the term equality in a recent scrutiny committee when talking about the Equity, Diversity + Inclusion strategy. **FW** also gave a concrete example of being denied a reasonable adjustment in relation to green bin charges. There is a danger that reasonable adjustments for disabled people become the poor relation in an EDI strategy.

LW acknowledges **FW**' comments and confirms that CYC is committed to following the social model of disability which it has signed up to. However, the lack of budget to train staff has made implementation of a change in culture very difficult.

RB Strategy is a good start. But we need to remember that disability is diverse. People need better understanding of this, that it is not just disabled or non-disabled. Training needs to represent as diverse a group of people as possible and no one voice should dominate others.

DR asked about the use of "equity" in the strategy where "Equality" is used elsewhere e.g. the Equality Act.

LW Often people feel they are doing the right things by treating everyone the same because that is equality. The nature of reasonable adjustments is to change things to get equity of outcomes for people. There is a lack of clarity in the strategy and that will be addressed in the next iteration.

DS CYC has an inclusive recruitment strategy, so each disabled person has fair process within the employment process. CYC will interview any disabled person that meets the minimum criteria. This is equality. Each applicant has their own needs and providing the specific reasonable adjustments for each person is equity. The term equity means that you will look at the individual rather than the homogeneous group of visually impaired people. Don't focus on the impairment. Focus on the support that is needed to enable the person to engage. Equity focuses on what you need.

DR raised closely linked themes of training and HREIAs and asks if the HREIA are ready to be used. Also raises that human rights are rarely mentioned in the strategy and asked if workplans will be developed.

LW HREIA are ready to use as they have been trialled and refined. Currently CYC does EIA for significant changes or new policies. **DS** advises on the accessibility sections, and she does the rest. There is a grid at the front of the document to record what the impacts are. CAHR experts will do a sort of dip test on a quarterly basis of CYC HREIAs which could lead to further training for a particular service area. The HREIA will be shared with YAF as soon as possible. The consultant didn't have much experience of human rights. The current strategy document is going to be shared with the Human Rights and Equalities board on 29.1.25, and with the York Human Rights City network executive. There are currently hundreds of actions arising from different workstreams including the anti-racism strategy, social model paper and work with the Travellers Trust which would link to this strategy. A priority for Laura, the new EDI officer

	<p>will be to work on developing actions and target dates from these.</p> <p>DS The strategy document emphasised protected characteristics. York is a human rights city but that must not overshadow the legal rights for people with protected characteristics.</p> <p>LW The tool is about making proportionate decisions. It is not a utilitarian approach based on numbers. The tool puts in scaffolding to help make proportionate decisions.</p> <p>DR asked about CYC's plans for more effective coproduction.</p> <p>LW There is a limited resource which is recognised by many people. CYC is not starting with a blank slate as there are clear parameters about what we can and cannot do. Also, the term coproduction is often misunderstood. CYC is looking at a more corporate approach to engagement and coproduction. We must be aware of consultation fatigue and not treat people as if they are a paid resource. We can build a repository of information from which we can learn. And balance this with not watering down people's opportunity to engage.</p> <p>FW raised concern about potential changes in disability benefits and the effect this may have on the time disabled people have to contribute to these kind of engagement activities.</p> <p>DR highlighted the wording in the questionnaire regarding outcome 5 of the strategy. CYC has a duty to comply with the Equality Act, therefore we should not be seeking views on implementing it.</p> <p>DR thanked LW for attending and urged all YAF members to respond to the consultation.</p>
4	Update on Castle Gateway/Eye of York Stage 3
	<p>The team from BDP and CYC were welcomed to the meeting. They were complimented on the much-improved plans which clearly had a high emphasis on access.</p> <p>MC This is an update since his last presentation at YAF. There has been a lot of change. A key priority is that we build accessibility into all aspects of the design. MC then talked through each PowerPoint slide. Key points are noted below.</p> <p>Arrival from Castlegate will be a raised table crossing.</p>

More curved pathways to increase the amount of green space within the site.

All crossings will have tactiles and will be easily identifiable.

All crossings will be dedicated crossings. There will be no informal crossings.

There will be raised curbs throughout.

There will be no shared space unlike the previous design.

The play space will have accessible play which has not yet been designed. There will also be accessible seating and equipment for sensory play.

All pathways will be a minimum of 2 metres but usually will be 3-4 metres wide. There are 2-metre-wide pathways to and from both ends of the car park.

All gradients are being improved.

The materials that are used for crossings will be contrasting.

Blue Badge car park. There are access points all across the car park, which has 30 spaces. There are 2 access points from the north and 2 access points from the south. They link either to the river or the green space or Coppergate.

Electric Vehicle charging points here are currently being explored, as is improving the connection to the riverfront.

There will be CCTV coverage and the correct lighting standards to make it safe to use day and night. Currently tracking the Eye of York area to see if Blue Badge spaces are feasible in this area.

The green space will be fully accessible.

At present principles for design are being set. Detailed design will start in a few months' time.

Due to feedback from the public the amount of planting in the swathe has been reduced.

Guidance from accessible seating for York will be followed so that all seating is correct and fit for purpose. There are 8 different areas of seating in the site and within each we will provide a range of different seating types. Seating will be located about every 40 metres.

Due to being over budget the Eye of York space had to be simplified. The road has been narrowed and a 2-metre pathway has been created around the central green space. The

current uses of the green space will remain although it isn't a dedicated performance space.

The boardwalk will be 3 metres wide, and its surface will have the right slip resistance.

Re loading bay outside the Hilton Hotel: Discussion with the hotel and Highways will take place about how the loading bay is enforced and how the taxi rank works. We will make sure that taxi access is allowed to both sides of the site.

SC Re accessible toilets in Coppergate: structural issues need to be dealt with before toilet upgrade can be carried out.

Contributions and questions:

FW raised Accessible Play Manifesto which is due to be launched by the Access Association UK in March 2025.

DR highlighted SNAPPY as a source of support in relation to development of the play space.

MC This kind of guidance can be referenced within the design and access statement.

FW Very pleased with overall design. Only concern is that the type of block paving appears to be that which comes apart over time and is difficult for people with mobility impairments to traverse.

MC Larger unit sizes of paving can be used. He will look into this and build it into the conditions of planning.

AB asked about small kerbs at the edge of paths, where they join the grass, for white cane users.

MC confirmed that these can be included in the design criteria specification for pathways.

DS requested no uplighters on site and for images of disabled people on the marketing materials.

DR checked that the boardwalk is not also a cycle path.

DR asked if it was possible to include some blue badge parking close to the museum.

MC This would be investigated, as would a way in and out of the car park close to the Drop.

Discussion about the need to progress with current plans as soon as possible in case of change of administration etc in CYC.

	BDP said they would build as much as possible into the conditions of the planning to avoid changes being made in the future. BDP were thanked for attending and for their clear desire to ensure access for all to Castle Gardens and the Eye of York.
5	Any Other Business
	<p>DS has contacted Brendan Murphy about ensuring terracotta tarmac for York Station Gateway cycle paths as this is not yet definite. He is also disappointed that the Blue Badge spaces in the North Shed are not being retained. This needs to be challenged. The south end where the new disabled parking will be, will have EV charging points.</p> <p>FW raised:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - grouping of bus stops in the reconfiguration at Station Gateway. The stops should be arranged so that passengers don't have to race between multiple stops to access different buses for the same destination. - rail replacement buses from the back of the station. This is unacceptable as there is no step free access at the back of the station. <p>DR confirmed DS /YAR should take both these issues forward.</p>
6	Next Meeting
	Thursday 20 th March 2025 1.30pm.