

York Access Forum (YAF)
24th March 2026 1:30 – 4pm
Craven Room, West Offices and on Teams
Minutes

Attendees

Name	Organisation (if applicable)
Diane Roworth (DR)	Chair Independent
David Smith (DS)	Access Officer, City of York Council (CYC)
Marilyn Crawshaw (MC)	York Human Rights City Network + York Disability Rights Forum (YDRF)
David Carr (DC)	York Carers Action Group
Michael Cante (MC)	
Christine Kyte (CK)	Support Worker (CYC) – note taker
Tania Weston (TW)	Regeneration Programme Manager CYC
Tom Horner (TH)	Head of Active + Sustainable Travel CYC
Ben Murphy (BM)	Head of City Development CYC
Online	
Vicky Dixon (VD)	Social Worker CYC
Hilary Boon (HL)	Sightloss Council
Flick Williams (FW)	Retired Disability Trainer + Access Consultant
Phil Lee (PL)	
Lisa Grimbley (LG)	Head of Markets and Events, Make It York
Karen (K)	Interpreter
Tanya Lyon (TL)	Community Safety Manager CYC
Dionne Grover Jacques (DG)	
Laura Swiszcowski (LS)	Head of Equity Diversity and Inclusion CYC
Apologies	
Sian Balsom	
Abi Harrison	
Annabel Martin	
Jake Furby	
Libby Crofts	
Ashley Fisher	

No.	Item
1	Welcome, introductions and minutes
	DR Welcomed all, including 2 new members, and asked them to introduce themselves. General housekeeping and etiquette for hybrid meeting re questions, use of mic etc. New attendees were welcomed to the meeting. FW Highlighted that her apologies were missing from the minutes for the Access Forum in January 2026. She also commented that at a Council meeting the impression was given that the Access Forum was supportive of the Anti-Terror Traffic Regulation Order (ATTRO) and that this is inaccurate. She also requested a session on how the Forum is working with, and being used by, the Council. DR CYC acknowledge the need for accuracy of reporting and the importance that the views of the Forum are not misrepresented. DS Has spoken to Democratic Services and been informed that it is logistically impossible for them to check through all reports. Therefore, this issue needs to go back to the Executive. MC York Disability Rights Forum had also raised this issue in a written submission.
2	Access to 2026 Christmas Markets – Ben Murphy CYC, Head of City Development
	BM There are 4 options under consideration for city centre access during the Christmas Markets, 3 made little or no difference to the current provision, Discussion centred around the 4th option, the possibility of introducing a Residents Rest Day, which would mean operating the market for 6 rather than 7 days a week, so blue badge holders could access the city centre in their normal way during the rest day. BM Outlined work which has been done to understand the economic impact of the Christmas Market. There is a 17% increase in footfall due to the market which has been mapped against days of the week to see where the peaks are. Approximately 1/3 of the footfall is at the weekend. Tuesdays and Thursdays are each @ 12% of spend. Tuesday closure would have least economic impact, and this could become a resident rest day. BM would like feedback on the concept of a resident rest day. FW said that in light of geopolitical events and likely rise of terror threat alert, blue badge holders will be automatically excluded from the city centre.

BM A risk-based assessment of events was set out in the early March report to Executive. This assessment needs to be carefully designed so that the city centre will not close if the risk goes up a band. This would be very difficult to manage re resources needed. The permanent ATTRO is the underlying condition. We need to work carefully on the risk assessment, so it doesn't exclude people unnecessarily in the circumstances mentioned.

He confirmed that the resident rest day would be in addition to before 10:30am and after 7pm blue badge access on other days.

DR There are some advantages to this as some people avoid coming into York when the market is on, not just blue badge holders. She stated that her personal view is that it could be a good compromise.

MC Will take this back to the YDRF access group to discuss before making a commitment to support.

When choosing the day of the week, it is important to map what happens in the city centre (e.g. at Friargate, Spurriergate and St Sampsons) to avoid disruptions to regular events where disabled people may be coming into the city.

LG Asked for clarity on which day has been chosen. Also, who will carry out the risk-based assessment and what considerations are in this e.g. the impact on the highway and parking on the other 6 days.

BM We are still taking views on which is the best day however, the transport network is busier on Friday so closing on a Thursday may have a more severe impact on transport on Fridays. So, the Tuesday option is slightly preferential.

Risk assessment - event organisers will produce something to a template which is then assessed by Safety Advisory Group who will make a recommendation to the Highways Authority to implement measures on the ground.

The Police have indicated that they would be in agreement with this approach.

DR Asks Forum if they are happy with the principle of a rest day.

DS Asks if there are any objections from Forum members.

FW Resident rest day is better than nothing. There will be a backlash from other city centre businesses.

DS – summarised that YAF broadly support the principle of a resident's rest day.

3	Movement and Place Plan – Ben Murphy Head of City Development and Tom Horner Head of Active and Sustainable Travel CYC
	BM spoke to a presentation previously circulated. Movement and Place Plan (MPP) • This is at an early stage of the commission, and we have launched a tender for Reimagining York. • Reimagining York is a Public Realm project which takes the strategic vision 'Our City Centre' and applies this to the public realm at the heart of the city, (Parliament St, St Helen's Square, Coney St). • It is a physical scheme to improve those spaces and future proof them for a variety of uses and events in the future and make them accessible. Reimagining York Is being carried out at the same time as the MPP study so that we get a single set of consultants looking comprehensively across the two. • The MPP and its practical implementation is in Reimagining York. This will include practical installations bins, seating, cycle parking, blue badges and toilets as well as the more strategic level. The Highway Design Guide: Is also in the scope of the MPP. The Guide is very specific looking at the technical configuration of new and improved highways. There will be CYC client groups, (to including transport officers and regeneration) that the consultant's will report back to. FW Asked what understanding of accessibility the consultants have. The Martin Higgitt report understood accessibility, but this is often ignored when projects take place. BM It is an open tender process with 90 organisations having expressed an interest. We have adjusted the tender criteria to reduce the cash flow of organisations so smaller consultancies can bid. TH We have a Quality and Price tender exercise which requires applicants to score high on accessibility in order to be considered. Accessibility cuts across all parts of the Movement and Place Plan. DS It would be useful to review the element of the tender process on accessibility to see what CYC is asking each of the organisations. He requested if the YAF and YDRF could review the technical expertise of organisations from an accessibility perspective. TH This work is about setting standards for York including accessibility in all aspects of work undertaken.

There will be an interim Highway Design Guide which will be refined further through the above process.

TH would need to check with Procurement colleagues about what part of the tender process can be shared publicly.

MC It is important that the Council Officers also understand accessibility. Wasn't there a draft Movement and Place Plan already?

TH In the specification it is really clear how we want to engage with stakeholders. We want a long-lasting plan that transcends political variations. We want to find out at what points we should work with the YAF and YDRF, particularly the Highway Design Guide, as soon as possible.

FW raised concerns about the effectiveness of a Highway Design Guide. 2 examples of this; York Central – paving sets (cobble) used which are intolerable for some disabled people. There was no consultation about this aspect of the public realm. Also, recently the wrong colour tactile paving was laid in Blake St and has now been replaced at additional cost.

She highlighted there is a contradiction for disabled people between the 2 ideas of movement and place. Place element is about removing traffic which can greatly restrict access for disabled people.

BM. Some of these issues may not have arisen if we had had the Highways Design Guide in place.

The tender has been issued now, and consultants will be appointed late June.

Engagement will be from July – November 2026. The target for phase 1 of the MPP is December 2026. This will allow us to unlock business cases for further funding.

DR asked if the principles need to be established and the Highway Design Guide needs to be completed by December?

BM The guide will be in an interim version by then.

BM The MPP is a stepped process. E.g. for Reimagining York, the Royal Institute of British Architects (RIBA) stage 2 is where plans will have been drawn up, which will then unlock RIBA 3 which is planning consent stage. (RIBA Stage 0 – is concept design)

DR Asks about the principles of the plan e.g. about low car neighbourhoods which can be exclusive for disabled people. Are the same principles applied across the whole city?

BM The 'Place' components of MPP focus on the place making characteristics. We can reinforce this, and how we tell the story of the place, through the physical realm e.g. the palette of construction materials used as well as water management and greening.

TH It is partly about ensuring we don't do transport works in isolation. We will consider all the relevant Council teams and other stakeholders when doing a piece of work on a 'place'.

Parts of the city (places) will be targeted for improvement. We will then look at how people interact with these places and look at connections into the area.

DR asked that consideration be given to who is excluded from an area, not just who uses it, for example disabled people. If cars are excluded then anyone with a Blue Badge would be unable to access that area.

DS Accessibility isn't listed as a MPP outputs. It needs to be visible on information about the plans otherwise it could be forgotten about.

TH Accessibility is a critical component in each part of the plan.

MC Consider the language you use in public engagements so that it is accessible for people outside this forum.

DR queried the slide showing Parliament Street and St Sampsons Square – concept designs.

BM said this was one of the main public spaces set for redevelopment and it needed to have level surfaces.

FW pointed out that level surfaces don't work for everyone e.g. for blind people with guide dogs where kerbs are vital to navigating the space.

DS The minimal or non-use of shared surfaces needs to be included in the Highway Design Guide.

DR stated we should start from a position of no shared surfaces. We need flat surfaces but need to take into account the mobility needs of a range of people including those who need different levels and surfaces to navigate independently, such as blind and partially sighted people.

The city centre needs to have a range of facilities, not just restaurants and cafes, such as opticians, banks, retail so that people can undertake a variety of activities in one trip.

She expressed concerns about the amount of work that needs to be done before December, so it is important to plan the involvement of the YAF as early as possible so that we have sufficient time to plan.

BM agreed.

4	Human Rights and Equality Impact Assessments (HREA) Laura Swiszcowski Head of Equity, Diversity and Inclusion CYC
4.1	Disability Equity Training at CYC
	LS Reads through information about Disability Equity Training via PowerPoint slides pages 15- 17. 451 Managers and 23 Elected members have completed training. Comments and questions: FW Only half of the elected members have attended the training. How many of the remaining have signed up for the online sessions? Requests these members are encouraged as much as possible to take part. LS Because the trainer was unwell and the online training has been postponed; exact figures are unknown. DS Online sessions are staff only, but they could be considered for members. This will be followed up offline. DR Reinforces the need for elected members to do the training, so that all parts of the Council are working together from a shared understanding. DS There was very positive feedback about the training. Training provider will do an analysis of the feedback given and this analysis will be shared with the Forum. LS Has been invited to team meetings to summarise what the training covered and how it will impact their work. This included public health, housing teams and Human Resources. There is a corporate EDI board which the Chief Operating Officer sits on. Next steps are cascading learning to teams. FW Highlighted the inappropriate use of language. She quoted recent bad examples of what Combined Authority officers are saying e.g. overuse of “vulnerable” and using “people with additional needs”. Can we exert upward pressure as Noth Yorkshire Council hasn’t adopted the Social Model of Disability? LS Agreed to follow this up outside the meeting.
4.2	Human Rights Equality Assessment Tool (HREiA)
	LS Reads through information about HREA via PowerPoint slides pages 18- 21. LS In answer to DR’s query regarding the omission of the word ‘Impact’ in the Human Rights Equality Assessment tool, LS said this was to

reduce the number of letters in the title. But impact is considered throughout the assessment.

PCP = policy, criterion or practice.

DR When in the development of a project is the assessment undertaken and are the Champions involved with the completion of the assessment?

LS Champions are there to help with completing the assessment from the start. Champions have been shadowing **LS** in team meetings as they complete HREAs. There are 36 champions, and CYC want to recruit more.

FW With reference to when HREAs are completed, she highlighted the potential changes to traffic allowed on Rougier St. An Equalities Impact Assessment (EIA) on this was requested last April and we were told the detail wasn't fleshed out enough for this. Then the proposal went for consultation without an EIA. Now it is going to pre- decision scrutiny still without an EIA. How do we make the Authority deliver on this?

LS This is a challenge, and a culture shift is needed so people know the assessment needs to be done at inception stage and that money needs to be allocated to this.

MC Assessment needs to be done before something is decided. The tool needs to include how do you justify it if no mitigations have been put forward?

LS The assessment should be used from the generation of the idea of changing something. With regard to training new members of staff she advised that new employees at CYC will have a copy of the eBook from the DET and that managers should determine what training to offer new staff e.g. videos.

DR asked if there was a shared 'evidence base' that could be used to support people completing the HREA – for example supporting evidence regarding the numbers of blue badge holders would show that there are 1600 new blue badges issued a year indicating the increasing numbers of mobility impaired people in York.

LS replied that The Business Intelligence Unit holds a lot of demographic data. She advised she had been compiling resources for champions including completed HREAs. Over 20 HREAs have been done. We need anecdotal information as well as numerical data feeding into HREAs.

FW There is a lot of information collated related to SEND students which will be useful for forward planning, for example the biggest increase was in young people with a visual impairment.

DS CYC doesn't have a user-friendly way to filter the data that we have, and **LS** said this could be something to look into

	MC Data is of variable quality so needs to be interpreted critically. Suggests the term “easier to ignore” rather than “hard to reach” may help to identify people more accurately. She pointed out that in North Yorkshire Council every directorate now has a senior member of staff with accountability for access. DS Confirmed that the legal principle of due regard and adhering to the Social Model of Disability dictate that HREA must be done from the beginning.
5	Any Other Business
	FW Asked that LS be present for her AOB. She advised she was the disability rep on the Enhanced Bus Partnership which has not met for 11 months. It is required legally to meet twice a year. They now plan to have 2 x 6 hourly meetings per year running from 1-7pm. Parts of the meeting will be in person only. This is discriminatory and as a volunteer I can't ask for a reasonable adjustment to this plan. Can any pressure be put on the partnership to change this? DS YDRF emailed the Chair of Enhanced Bus Partnership about the principle of setting up meetings that seem designed to exclude people. He has spoken to TH about this. FW The Partnership is to go back to individual councils for one year.
6	Actions
	LS and DS to ask the CYC Business Intelligence Unit for a summary of the kind of data that they can supply in relation to demographic disability related data. CK Copy of HREiA to be circulated with the minutes. LS and DS will speak to TH and Garry Taylor about the Enhanced Bus Partnership, and wheelchair taxi scheme. DS Will check if the Partnership is for both York and North Yorkshire. TH Check on what involvement the Access Forum or DS can have in the procurement process. LS and DS to follow up re providing online DET for members.
7	Next Meeting
	Tuesday 26 May 2026 1:30 – 4pm