



**Cyfoeth
Naturiol**
Cymru
**Natural
Resources**
Wales

Strategic Equality Plan 2015-2020



Noddir gan
Lywodraeth Cymru
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Welcome

We are delighted to present our first four year Strategic Equality Plan covering 2015 to 2020, which sets out our response to the requirements of the Public Sector Duties of the Equality Act 2010.

Natural Resources Wales seeks to ensure that our visitors, customers and all those who work for us are treated with respect and that diverse needs are taken into consideration. By doing this we will develop an inclusive culture and be a more responsive organisation to our customers and staff. We aim to not only comply with, but exceed the requirements of legislation in relation to our visitors and customers. Our commitment to equality and diversity is not dependent on the wider economic circumstances, we are committed to this as a way of working and our own corporate values and behaviours set out the manner in which we want to deliver the work we do.

Our Strategic Equality Plan underpins the purpose of Natural Resources Wales to ensure that the natural resources of Wales are sustainably maintained, enhanced and used, now and in the future. We recognise that people have different needs, cultures, experiences and expectations, and by responding to these, we all benefit from an enriched experience of life and a broader outlook to deliver excellence for all our customers and meet our longterm goals.

Kevin Ingram
Executive Director
Finance and Corporate Services

Introduction

As a requirement of the Equality Act 2010 Natural Resources Wales has a duty to set out its objectives for equality in a Strategic Equality Plan. The plan will drive towards a holistic approach, encompassing all aspects of the protected characteristics included in the Act. We recognise that responding to the diverse needs of our staff, visitors and stakeholders will help to develop services that meet the needs of all, and will attract a workforce who are representative of the wider community.

Natural Resources Wales is committed to enabling all individuals to benefit from the sustainable management of the environment of Wales, irrespective of personal characteristics such as age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy or maternity, race, religion or belief, sex (male or female) or sexual orientation. Ensuring that we attract and retain the widest and most diverse range of talent in our staff is vital to developing a dynamic and creative environment which will benefit the whole of Natural Resources Wales and the people we serve.

This Strategic Equality Plan provides an overarching framework for advancing equality and diversity within Natural Resources Wales, for the benefit of all staff, customers and stakeholders. It is aimed at Executive Directors, Board Members and staff, relates to all functions of the organisation and reflect our corporate values and behaviours. All other organisations or individuals who have a relationship with Natural Resources Wales will also be asked to act in the spirit of this document. The plan includes a set of five Equality Objectives based on our Corporate Plan themes to help us embed equality and diversity in all that we do. In developing this plan we have drawn on a range of strategies, activities and action plans that are already in existence within Natural Resources Wales. This underlines the view that equalities should be embedded across the work of the organisation, and that it should not be seen as separate to the main work of Natural Resources Wales. Embedding equalities in this manner will enhance our approach to customer care and ensure that we consider the impact of the way in which we work as 'business as usual', not as an extra that can only be considered if we have time.

About Natural Resources Wales

NRW was established in 2013 to care for and advise on the natural environment in Wales and its natural resources. We are the largest Welsh Government sponsored body and have a wide range of roles:

- Adviser to the Welsh Government and to industry, land owners/managers, the wider public and voluntary sector
- Regulator of industry and waste sites, and marine, forest and Designated Sites for example, protecting people and the natural environment
- Designator for Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs), Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONBs) and National Parks and declaring National Nature Reserves (NNRs)
- Responder to about 9,000 reported environmental incidents a year as a Category 1 emergency responder
- Statutory consultee to about 9,000 planning applications a year
- Manager of 7% of Wales' land area, including Welsh Government Woodland Estate, National Nature Reserves and flood defences and running recreation facilities and a laboratory
- Partner, educator and enabler, supporting and facilitating other organisations' work and helping people learn in and about the natural environment
- Evidence gatherer, monitoring the environment, commissioning and undertaking research, developing and sharing knowledge and holding public records
- Employer of about 1,800 staff as well as contractors and volunteers The breadth of our work can be seen in this video [What We Do](#).

The Legal Context

The Equality Act, which consolidates existing anti-discrimination law into a single legal framework, came into force in October 2010. In total nine pieces of primary legislation and over 100 pieces of secondary legislation have been incorporated into the Act, including Race Relations Act 1976, the Sex Discrimination Act 1975, and the Disability Discrimination Act 1995. The consolidation of the legislation and the bringing together of these acts into one piece of legislation makes the law easier to understand and apply.

The Act protects people with certain characteristics, we also recognise that some share multiple characteristics, as follows (in alphabetical order):

- Age
- Disability
- Gender reassignment
- Marriage and civil partnership (for employment issues)
- Pregnancy and maternity
- Race
- Religion and belief
- Sex (male or female)
- Sexual orientation

The Equality Act 2010 requires public authorities to meet both **general** and **specific** duties:

General duties. Natural Resources Wales has a legal obligation to:

- eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other conduct prohibited by the Equality Act 2010
 - advance equality of opportunity between people from different groups
 - foster good relations between people from different groups – this involves tackling prejudice and promoting understanding between people from different groups
- Specific duties.** The Public Sector Duties for Wales came into force in April 2011. There are 20 regulations with inter-linked requirements including:
- Setting of equality objectives for each of the protected characteristics
 - Monitoring and reporting on employment information by protected characteristic:
 - number employed
 - recruitment (including applicants and those changing positions)

- leavers
 - training
 - grievance, disciplinary
 - additionally for gender by job, grades, pay, contract type, working patterns
- Gathering other relevant equality information
 - Assessment of relevant information, including pay information
 - Assessing the impact of policies and practices
 - Publishing a Strategic Equality Plan
 - Publishing an annual report on compliance with the Specific Duties

Our Duties as an Employer

We recognise that having a diverse workforce is crucial to being able to achieve our vision and meet our strategic aims. We have a variety of policies and practices in place that support inclusion and diversity. We aim to ensure that we support and encourage our employees to play their part in ensuring we have a fair and inclusive work environment that is free from any form of discrimination or bullying. Staff are being made aware of their duties under equalities legislation during their induction and by undergoing training on equality and diversity and also act responsibly and professionally as individuals. As part of their appraisals, all staff should have regard to equality and diversity. These measures also help to ensure we meet our legislative responsibilities.

Our Duties as a Provider of a Public Service

As a public sector body, we provide facilities and services to a local, national and international public. Our duty in delivering these services is to ensure that we take account of the diversity of our customers and that our procurement processes operate in line with legislation and reflect our responsibilities in this area. We also need to be mindful and proactive about the methods of communication that are utilised and ensure that these are sensitive to the needs of the public and are effective in providing information in the format that is required.

Engagement and Consultation

Equality legislation recognises the importance of engagement with people with protected characteristics in order to shape practices to ensure that the needs of all are identified and considered.

Consultation and engagement helped develop a local evidence base for the formation of our objectives. It is understood that this is a vital part of the process and that continued involvement of people with protected characteristics will help to provide solutions to problems in addition to highlighting where most change may need to take place. The draft Equality Objectives were made available for comment on our website to both staff and the public between the 28th October 2014 and the 6th January 2015. People were invited to review the Equality Objectives and to submit responses electronically or by post.

We also sought to consult with groups who represent those with protected characteristics in the wider community. Examples of this have been the external and internal involvement events held in Bangor, Llandrindod Wells, Merthyr Tydfil, Llandudno Junction and Cardiff. We will continue to seek the views of staff, visitors and stakeholders representing those with protected characteristics to further inform the development of our objectives and the associated action plan. Consultation and engagement will be ongoing and therefore we aim to improve our approach by investigating alternative methods of engagement, in addition to continuing work with local groups (both internal and external) and liaising with other public authorities including other government sponsored bodies. Our Equality and Diversity Forum also provided comments and feedback on the Equality Objectives and Action Plan.

Equality and Diversity Plan

Natural Resources Wales is committed to mainstreaming equality and diversity throughout all our activities, as well as meeting the general and specific duties imposed on us through legislation. This plan builds upon the Natural Resources Wales's vision and strategic priorities.

This plan outlines our commitment to ensure that every job applicant, employee, visitor, stakeholder or contractor should be treated fairly and this protection is extended based on association and perception to the protected characteristics. Natural Resources Wales wishes to promote and sustain a culture through our values and behaviours where mutual trust and respect are the foundation for our working relationships.

The promotion of equality and diversity is a duty and a challenge to everyone, whether employee, Board member, or any person or organisation which provides services for, or in partnership with, Natural Resources Wales. In practical terms this means that everyone must treat others fairly and with dignity and respect. Natural Resources Wales will address any issues of discrimination or inappropriate practice, and will foster staff awareness through a programme of staff development. All are actively encouraged to challenge and report any incidents of discrimination.

Natural Resources Wales's overall commitment to Equality and Diversity

Natural Resources Wales will:

- Cherish people irrespective of their protected characteristics
- Live out our values through our behaviours and deliver our ambitions.
- Ensure that our policies, procedures and strategies reflect Natural Resources Wales's commitment to equality.
- Expect all staff, visitors and stakeholders to treat each other with dignity and respect.
- Expect committees and other working groups to have due regard to the diversity of their membership, and to consider the impact of their decisions on those with protected characteristics.
- Expect all staff to ensure that they are aware of equality issues and take responsibility for their actions both individually and collectively.
- Ensure that all of our training provision is accessible and inclusive
- Not tolerate behaviour which results in the creation of an intimidating and hostile environment.

Introduction to Equality Objectives

The Equality Act 2010 specific duties state that the development of equality objectives for each of the protected characteristics and we have set objectives in line with our Corporate Plan's five 'good' programmes which are individually inclusive of all protected characteristics. The objectives have been set using the outcomes from our involvement events and consultation. We are an evidence based organisation and achievement of our objectives must be measurable. Where gaps have been identified in the level of information we hold as a new organisation, we aim to gather baseline data during the first year of the plan to benchmark ourselves with. Some protected characteristics have more requirements than others as they have been covered explicitly by legislation for many years, for example disability. The characteristics which have recently been defined as protected by the Equality Act 2010 have less of an evidence base on which to set actions and it will take time to build this information. It is recognised that as individuals we rarely fit into one category and that our personal characteristics are inextricably linked and may impact on the different aspects of our lives. Legislation also requires public authorities to set out a specific objective to address the gender pay gap in addition to any objectives set for the protected characteristic of sex. Our objectives for equal pay take forward actions identified in the latest Equal Pay Review.

In the autumn of 2018, and following advice from the Equality and Human Rights Commission, we reviewed and extended this Strategic Equality Plan for a further twelve months to 2020 in order to align ourselves with other public bodies in Wales. The benefits of working collaboratively are many. By working together we can engage in a better way with the population of Wales by doing so together.

In our new Corporate Plan we have revealed our Well-being Objectives and have taken the opportunity to review the following equalities objectives to ensure they remain 'fit for purpose' for the additional twelve months before we publicly consult.

The objectives below are indexed with the Well-being Objective numbering and has its own 'WBO' number.

Our equality objectives

1. Good for knowledge – WBO1

We collect and evaluate data and evidence, ensuring that it is free from bias, and using equality data to identify different needs and experiences of people from protected characteristic groups. We make decisions, subjected to equality impact assessments, on our plans, policies and processes that are based on our data and evidence.

2. Good for the environment – WBO1 and WBO5

We help all of the people of Wales and visitors to Wales, taking into account the differing needs of people with different protected characteristics, to understand the benefits of a good environment and to actively promote the use of the natural resources of Wales.

3. Good for people – WBO5

We understand how communities access the services we provide and any barriers our customers face. We will engage with individuals and user groups to make sure our plans and services are suitable, understood and needed as well as addressing any barriers and inequalities identified.

4. Good for business – WBO6

We set clear standards and expectations in both our service delivery and procurement that enable and drive equality of opportunity, access and service. We ensure we perform to these standards and check they are embedded in all that we do.

5. Good organisation – WBO7

We aspire for our workforce to be more representative of the protected characteristics, and to develop a working culture where people feel able to be themselves at work and are both valued and respected.

Monitoring of progress

The Equality and Diversity Forum currently meets four times each year with representation from the Board, all Directorates, staff networks, and Trade Unions. In addition there are specifically appointed members of staff who concentrate on issues related to equalities. The objectives in this plan will be reviewed annually to ensure that they are still relevant, with the associated action plan being a working document with new actions added where necessary in response to evidence and consultation that is not available at the time of writing. An annual update on the progress of the objectives will be produced to fit in with Natural Resources Wales's reporting cycle and presented to the Executive Team and Board.

The Executive Directors are asked to take direct responsibility for how the objectives and actions identified in this plan will be embedded within their Directorate Delivery Plans, to consider where their priorities lie and, after consultation and involvement of their stakeholders, to also add actions which they consider particularly relevant to their areas. The actions will be reported on during the year at the Equality and Diversity Forum meetings.

Assessing the impact of policies and practices

An effective Equality Impact Assessment system will assist Natural Resources Wales in its duty to promote equality. Undertaking this assessment will help to mainstream equality and diversity issues and promote a culture where everyone considers the equality relevance and impact of their actions and decisions on others. Discrimination is rarely intentional but by carefully focussing on each of the protected characteristics, we can highlight the different ways in which groups of people are affected by our practices and take action to eliminate any negative consequences, and can also help to highlight the potential positive impacts of our policies and practices. Training and workshops will be delivered for Executive Directors as they are involved in the development or review of policies and in decision making. Completed Equality Impact Assessments are available via our Equality and Diversity page of the Natural Resources Wales website.

Identifying and publishing relevant equality information

The numbers of staff are will be monitored by protected characteristic. This information will be collected from staff at the time of application and appointment, and also updated by staff during data verification exercises. We will also draw on results of internal projects and reports such as the Equal Pay Review. We will produce an annual report on the relevant information

in line with the requirements of the Equality Act 2010. The information available will be considered by the Equality and Diversity Forum in order to inform the objectives and actions of our Strategic Equality Plan, and to provide evidence on the impact of the Strategic Equality Plan objectives.

The Equality and Diversity web page on our website will be the main method used to disseminate a range of information which when available will include:

- Our Strategic Equality Plan and supporting Action Plan
- An annual report on the progress of the plans
- An annual statistical report on employment information
- Other relevant equality information
- Results of equality impact assessments

We will make such information available on request in alternative formats such as large print.

Equality Action Plan and specific aims

An Action Plan has been developed to outline the steps that will need to be taken to achieve the objectives. The plan also details the reasons why the actions are being undertaken, linking to internal or national reports, statistics, or engagement with those of protected characteristics.

In order for the actions to be embedded into our day to day activities, they need to be linked to the functions of the Directorates and have been set out to reflect this. In this way the actions can be built into the running of Natural Resources Wales at both a strategic and operational level.

The Equality Action Plan is available on our website and can be requested in alternative formats using the contact details on the back cover.

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Natural Resources Wales
Cambria House
29 Newport Road
Cardiff
CF24 0TP

0300 065 3000 (Mon-Fri, 9am - 5pm)

enquiries@naturalresourceswales.gov.uk www.naturalresourceswales.gov.uk

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