

**NEW FOREST NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY**

**AUTHORITY MEETING 22 FEBRUARY 2007**

**Disability Equality Scheme 2007 - 2010**

**Report by:** Cathie Turner-Jones, Human Resource Manager

**Summary:**

This paper sets out recommendations for the production of the Authority's Disability Equality Scheme. The paper presents proposed outline principles and a timetable for their development as a formally adopted scheme.

**Recommendations:**

- 1 That the Authority agrees, subject to points raised in discussion, that the Disability Equality Scheme should be developed and adopted in accordance with the principles and timetable set out in this paper.**
- 2 That members note the draft action plan.**

**Resources:**

- Training and development activities to raise awareness and knowledge of equality and diversity issues.
- Potential adjustments to current accommodation, systems and communications formats following impact assessments.

**Papers:**

NFNPA 163/07: cover paper  
Disability Discrimination Act 2005

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**Disability Equality Scheme 2007 - 2010**

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**1 Purpose**

- 1.1 This paper seeks the Authority's approval of the proposed approach for the production of the Authority's Disability Equality Scheme. The paper presents proposed outline principles and a timetable for their development as a formally adopted scheme.
- 1.2 The paper sets out the proposed draft Disability Equality Scheme action plan in **Annex 1**.

**2 Background**

- 2.1 The Disability Discrimination Acts of 1995 and 2005 place statutory duties on the Authority. Among other specific and general duties the Authority is required to publish a Disability Equality Scheme. The legislation also sets down the deadline for publication as December 2006.
- 2.2 As a new Authority, with a permanent HR manager in post from mid-September 2006, no Director of Corporate Services from July until mid-November 2006 and all available resources focused on completing staff recruitment, it was not feasible to develop a scheme in the time available. Indeed most other public bodies were beginning to work on building connections and establishing resources to facilitate the publication of their schemes at least a year in advance of the deadline.
- 2.3 Developing a high quality Disability Equality Scheme that is a result of inclusive and extensive consultation, engaging with disabled people who have an interest in the New Forest National Park, will take a great deal of focused energy and resource.
- 2.4 Many Authorities have worked with their disabled community groups over many years and have established a mutual understanding and respect based on a track record of positive outcomes.

- 2.5 In order to achieve the desired outcome the work will need to be scheduled and resourced over several months. The action plan and approval schedule are based on a programme duration of six months. The programme is premised on building trusting relationships with interest groups very quickly and acquiring stakeholder buy in over a relatively short period of time.

### **3 Guiding principles**

- 3.1 The Authority recognises that the statutory deadline has passed but as a new Authority wishes to invest both time and other resources in developing an excellent scheme as a result of a high quality process.
- 3.2 The Authority will actively seek to support and encourage all groups representing the disabled who wish to contribute to the drafting of the scheme both locally and nationally.

### **4 Activity already in place**

- 4.1 The Authority has completed the recruitment of key staff including, in the last four months, the Director of Corporate Services and Human Resources Manager, both of whom have service responsibility to ensure the Authority meets its obligations under the Disability Equality Scheme.
- 4.2 Awareness of the Disability Equality Scheme has been raised through Senior Management Team meetings and this ensured that each Directorate appointed a Disability Champion.
- 4.3 John Sanger has volunteered to be the lead member and had some involvement in the staff training programme on Equality and Diversity.
- 4.4 A programme of corporate Equality and Diversity training, which started in February 2007, is being rolled out to all members and staff with additional sessions for line managers.
- 4.5 Officers are working with external organisations to produce a portfolio of policies and procedures that include Equal Opportunities and Bullying and Harassment.
- 4.6 The Authority website is being worked on currently to ensure that it meets the Disability Rights Commission guidance, but as a new site it has the functionality to meet many of those standards.

- 4.7 As a new Authority, involving disabled people has been one of the more difficult areas to progress. Advice has been sought from neighbouring authorities and our own staff who may have had contact with individuals or groups.
- 4.8 This has resulted in officers contacting several local and county groups to ask for expressions of interest in partnership working with the National Park. An inaugural meeting is planned for February 2007 to which all potential partners, internal Disability Champions and our Lead Member will be invited.

## **5 Further areas of activity**

- 5.1 Officers will seek to extend the consultation and engagement to as many groups or associations representing the disabled as have an interest in the National Park but may not be locally based.
- 5.2 A full range of impact assessments are planned for February and March 2007. We will be talking to our potential partners about how we can gain maximum benefit from these via our Directorate Disability Champions. We need to ensure that nothing is missed in terms of any actions that need to be identified on the action plan.
- 5.3 **Annex 1** sets out further tasks in the outline draft action plan for the development of the scheme.

## **6 Drafting timetable**

- 6.1 A first full draft Disability Equality Scheme will be presented at the Annual Authority meeting in June 2007.
- 6.2 The final draft to be presented for approval at September 2007 Authority meeting.

### **Recommendations:**

- 1 That the Authority agrees, subject to points raised in discussion, that the Disability Equality Scheme should be developed and adopted in accordance with the principles and timetable set out in this paper.**
- 2 That members note the draft action plan.**

**Draft Disability Equality Scheme - Action Plan**

This 3 year plan outlines the objectives of the Authority and the actions required to achieve the objectives.

**Corporate Objectives:**

Objective 1 – To eliminate discrimination against disabled people

Objective 2 – Accessible Services and Information

Objective 3 – A developed workforce and positive working environment

<b>Objective 1 - To eliminate discrimination against disabled people</b>			
<b>Outcome required</b>	<b>Action needed</b>	<b>Responsible</b>	<b>Date to be completed</b>
Set out plan for Impact Assessments within Directorates	Screen Directorates for adverse impacts on disabled people	Directors and Directorate Champions	31 March 2007
	Plan full impact assessment agreed by Senior Management Team	Senior Management Team	
Publish outcomes of impact assessments	Annual progress report by Authority	Disability Equality Scheme Group	March 2008
	Publish on web site	Communications Team	March 2008
All business plans, new and revised policies include outcome of impact	Guidance / Training for Managers / Disability Champions	Director of Corporate Services /HR Manager / Partners	September 2007

assessment	Ensure Senior Management Team understand requirement		
Report and monitor incidents of harassment or discrimination of disabled people	Ensure Authority has systems in place to capture information	HR Manager	Ongoing
<b>Objective 2 - Accessible Services and Information</b>			
<b>Outcome required</b>	<b>Action needed</b>	<b>Responsible</b>	<b>Date to be completed</b>
Consult stakeholders to assess impact of the Authority's policies and procedures	Consult with local disability groups / individuals  Undertake impact assessments on Authority policies and procedures	Director of Corporate Services /HR Manager  Directors / Disability Champions / Director of Corporate Services /HR Manager	April 2007
Complete review work of Authority website	Review content and structure of web site in line with Disability Rights Commission Guidance	Communications Team	April 2007
Review procurement process to ensure equality considerations are incorporated at tender and delivery stages	Review processes in house to include impact assessments	Directors / Director of Corporate Services / HR Manager / Office Services Manager	September 2007
Increase / review accessibility to Authority building and regular meeting venues	Impact assessment on headquarters and other meeting venues	Director of Corporate Services /Office Services Manager	September 2007
Involve the disability partner	Work collaboratively with partner	Director of Corporate	April 2008

organisations in design / impact assessment of new Authority Headquarters.	organisations from early stage	Services /Office Services Manager	ongoing
<b>Objective 3 – A developed workforce and a positive working environment</b>			
Undertake equality monitoring for recruitment and selection processes, training and development activities, discipline, grievance and dismissals	Ensure that Equal Opportunity statistics are produced.	HR Manager	April 2007
	Ensure monitoring data are accurate by giving staff the responsibility to update personal data.	HR Manager	May 2007
	Analysis of trends and produce annual report for Management Board.	HR Manager	April 2008
Review draft Recruitment and Selection procedures to incorporate best practice including the 2 Tick Disability Scheme	Ensure Authority is compliant with best practice guidance  Add 2 Tick Disability logo to all advertisement services, recruitment paperwork and web site	HR Manager  HR Manager / Head of Communications	September 2007
Provide impact equality assessment training to Disability Champions / Directors / Senior Managers	Workshops to be rolled out during 2007/2008	HR Manager	September 2008

with responsibility for corporate strategy and policy			
Provide Equality and Diversity training to all members and staff	Source training to be rolled out to all members and staff	HR Manager	April 2007
Brief staff on Disability Equality Scheme and individual responsibilities	Utilise bi monthly Team meeting to raise awareness  Issue master copy of scheme to each Directorate	HR Manager / Director of Corporate Services	On adoption of Disability Equality Scheme
Undertake Authority's first Staff Survey: ensure we improve on satisfaction levels, progress any identified issues demonstrating clear commitment to our staff	Source survey provider, roll survey out, report findings to Management Board, action plan collated based on survey results and shared with staff Review of action plan	HR Manager / Head of Communications	April 2007  April 2009  April 2008
Produce a tender for Authority's Occupational Health provider	Develop tender document, progress tender exercise, appoint successful applicant and agree initial work streams	Director of Corporate Services /HR Manager	April 2007
Ensure reasonable adjustments are made to support Authority employees with disabilities	Financial support identified in budgets  Build a supportive working environment with staff to ensure that issues are identified early in conjunction with Occupational Health	Business Manager / Director of Corporate Services  HR Manager	April 2007 on going  April 2007 ongoing