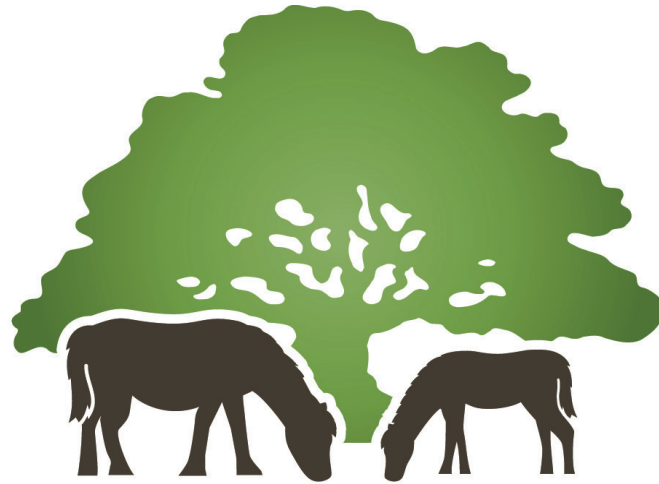


NFNPA 201/07

Annex 1



**NEW FOREST
NATIONAL PARK**

NEW FOREST NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY

EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY STRATEGY

September 2007

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FOREWORD

Authority members are routinely pressed to volunteer for lead roles and extra responsibilities. Accepting the role of diversity champion was easy for me because I think it is important.

Had I been offered the role, which wouldn't have existed, 30 years ago, I would probably have thought of it as faddish, unnecessary, and peripheral to people's real experience. But society has become more sensitive to individuals, and my experience has shown me that how we treat one another, and how we feel we are treated, go to the heart of how we function as a society and how worthwhile that society is.

Mahatma Ghandi said that you can judge how civilised a society is by how it treats its poor. I think you can judge an organisation by how well it treats its members when they are at their most vulnerable. Perhaps, also, by what efforts it makes to protect them in advance.

Diversity is a cumbersome word, but it should communicate to us both the diversity in society and also the diversity in any one of us as an individual.

This Strategy is for members and staff of the National Park Authority. We all have the potential to cause or suffer damage because of direct or indirect discrimination and this Strategy will give us the chance to recognise areas of potential discrimination and learn how to avoid it, both at work and outside. It could help us to be better people to work and live with.

Diversity isn't about minorities; it's about seeing each person as an entire person.

John Sanger
Lead Member for Equality and Diversity

FOREWORD

This is the Authority's first Equality and Diversity Strategy which brings together in one document how we will implement our responsibilities for disability and gender equality and race relations.

The Strategy is an important step in our own development as a new organisation, enabling us to start as we mean to go on.

The preparation of the Strategy has encouraged us to embed equality and diversity into everything we do, making them an integral part of our plans and actions. The values we espouse will apply equally to our staff and to our customers.

It has also provided us with a welcome opportunity to establish contacts and work with a range of groups representing people with disabilities and to learn from others. I would like to record my thanks for the assistance they have willingly given us in developing the Strategy.

And it has ensured that we have assessed our readiness to implement our various duties and developed a three year action plan to secure our ambitions and develop and improve our services where necessary.

John Sanger, our member Equality and Diversity Champion, and I will take personal responsibility for delivering the Authority's commitment to this work. We will monitor progress with the action plan and ensure that we achieve the highest possible standards for our staff and customers through our Strategy.

Lindsay Cornish
Chief Executive

EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY STRATEGY

Introduction

- 1.1 The New Forest National Park Authority (the Authority) is committed to providing equal access to services and employment opportunities. The Equality and Diversity Strategy (the Strategy) has been drawn up to ensure that equality and diversity is part of the mainstream day to day business of the Authority and is an inherent part of its planning, decision making, employment and service delivery functions. The Strategy incorporates the policies, action plans and practices operated by the Authority in one place and provides a single focus for the development of policy in the future.
- 1.2 As a new organisation which only became fully operational in April 2006, and only completed its staff recruitment in January 2007, the Authority was unable to comply with the requirement to prepare a Disability Equality Scheme in December 2006. The delay has, however, enabled the Authority to incorporate the new Gender Equality Duty requirements (effective from April 2007), together with its duties under the Race Relations Amendment Act 2000, into a single Equality and Diversity Strategy.

2 What is Equality and Diversity

- 2.1 Equality is about creating a fairer society where everyone can participate and has the opportunity to fulfil their potential. This is backed up by legislation and is often called 'Equal Opportunities'.
- 2.2 Diversity is about recognising and valuing difference in its widest sense. It means establishing a culture where difference is valued and respected for the benefit of the organisation and the individual.

3 Vision and aims

- 3.1 The Authority's **vision** for the Strategy is to :

Challenge, inspire, support, champion, share knowledge and experience to ensure equality for anyone accessing our services including our own staff.

We recognise that as a new Authority we have a substantial amount of work to do to meet our statutory obligations and we will go beyond the minimum requirements. Our ambition is to achieve the highest level of the Equality Standard for Local Government. We want consideration of diversity and equality issues to become a way of life in the organisation.

3.2 Through developing and implementing the Strategy the Authority **aims** to :

- achieve a better understanding of what the public want and need from the way we deliver our services
- improve customer satisfaction with fewer complaints about diversity and equality issues
- improve our recruitment processes to ensure opportunities are available to all
- ensure flexible working is available to as many staff as possible
- ensure equal pay for jobs of equal value
- maximise the development and use of the talents of our staff.

4 Focus

4.1 The Strategy is designed to ensure that equality and diversity are considered every day in the areas of service delivery and employment. In particular the Strategy will focus on:

Service delivery

4.2 The Strategy will set out ways for the Authority to identify and remove any discriminatory barriers that prevent equal access to our services, and monitor the progress that we make.

Employment

4.3 The Authority aims to ensure that as far as possible opportunities for employment are available to all and that the workforce is representative of the local community.

Policy consultation

4.4 The Strategy will lead to the development of stronger consultation and monitoring processes to ensure real progress is made in ensuring everyone has an opportunity to make their views known, if they wish. This consultation will involve employees, members and local communities.

5 Specific Duties

Disability Equality Duty

5.1 The Disability Discrimination Acts of 1995 and 2005 place statutory duties on the Authority to publish a Disability Equality Scheme (by December 2006) and to promote equality of opportunity between disabled people and others, eliminate discrimination, eliminate disability related harassment, promote positive attitudes towards disabled people, encourage participation of disabled people in public life, and take steps to meet disabled people's needs.

- 5.2 The Authority will ensure that its buildings and the buildings it uses are assessed in the light of the Disability Discrimination Act and that services are accessible and appropriate for people with disabilities. The Authority will ensure that it works with staff who have, or develop, a disability to consider reasonable adjustments in their employment.
- 5.3 Monitoring progress against the Disability Equality Scheme Action Plan (**Annex C**) will take place annually via the Authority's Management Board. The Authority will also monitor progress against the performance indicators identified in the Corporate Plan, namely BV16: % of Authority employees with a disability; BV156: % of Authority buildings open to the public in which all public areas are suitable for/accessible to disabled people.

Gender Equality Duty

- 5.4 The Gender Equality Duty, which came into force in April 2007, requires public authorities to promote gender equality of opportunity and eliminate sex discrimination and harassment. The duty has changed the emphasis of discrimination from one in which action was dependant on an individual making a complaint to one in which it is the legal responsibility of public authorities to demonstrate that they treat women and men fairly. This will require a process of cultural change within organisations. The Authority will promote equality and ensure that it meets or exceeds the necessary requirements.
- 5.5 The current employment profile of the Authority is set out in the table below. The Authority will monitor the breakdown of its staff groups to ensure that we continue to strive towards gender equality in all areas of its workforce.

| Authority employs 65 staff | | Part time staff 13.8% of total staff group | Breakdown of management staff |
|---------------------------------------|----|---|--|
| Female Staff | 39 | 8 (12.3%) | 8 (12.3%) |
| Male Staff | 26 | 1 (1.5%) | 13 (20%) |
| * As at 10.8.07 | | | |

- 5.6 The following checklist shows those issues which public authorities most commonly consider when identifying actions on **employment** aimed at addressing the Gender Equality duty, and how the Authority is responding:

| Issue | Authority action |
|--|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Ensuring fair recruitment processes | Draft Recruitment and Selection Policy awaiting consultation with staff. All recruitment undertaken in an equitable way |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Avoiding concentration of women and men in particular work areas 'occupational segregation' | An area for improvement particularly amongst administration staff who are mainly female and part time. However in other fields there are female staff in what may have been traditionally considered male occupations e.g. enforcement officers, planning officers, and environmental design |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Promoting and managing flexible working | Draft Work Life Balance policy offers flexible working rights to all staff not just carers and parents |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Ensuring high level part time work and supporting part time workers | 13.8% of workforce part time including three senior managers, job share opportunities and nine day fortnights also offered |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Managing leave for parents and carers | Draft Work Life Balance policy offers flexible working for all staff and time off in an emergency |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Managing pregnancy and return from maternity leave | Draft Maternity Policy which meets all the new legislation requirements awaiting consultation with staff. The policy will be applied for any expectant staff prior to consultation |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Eliminating harassment including sexual harassment | All staff have received Equality and Diversity training. Draft Bullying and Harassment Policy awaiting consultation with staff. Any complaints would be dealt with under the draft policy |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Eliminating discrimination against, and harassment of, transsexual staff and potential staff | All staff have received Equality and Diversity training. Draft Bullying and Harassment Policy awaiting consultation with staff. Any complaints would be dealt with under the draft policy |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Grievance and disciplinary procedures | Draft Grievance and Disciplinary Policy awaiting consultation with staff. Any complaints would be dealt with under the draft policy |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Redundancy | Draft Redundancy Policy awaiting consultation with staff |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Retirement | Draft Retirement Policy awaiting consultation with staff. Retirement age the same for male and female staff |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Equal pay | This has been considered. Authority has contracted an external Job Evaluation provider to complete all Job Evaluations off site to enable an independent evaluation by experts |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Work based training opportunities | Training provided as need identified in first year. In 2007 Authority Training Plan being developed and informed through new staff Appraisal system. In house training offered on more than one occasion to ensure that all staff have an opportunity to attend. Aim is to hold training on days when the majority of staff including part time are in work |

Race Relations Amendment Act 2000

5.7 The key duties under the act to promote race equality are to :

- eliminate unlawful racial discrimination
- promote equal opportunities
- promote good relations between people of different racial groups.

5.8 The employment duty under the Race Equality Duty ensures that the Authority monitors by racial group the numbers of:

| | |
|---|--|
| Staff in post | The Authority monitors this through its current recruitment processes and equal opportunity monitoring |
| Applicants for employment, training and promotion | |

5.9 Where an authority has more than 150 full time staff it must meet the requirements set out below. Although the Authority has less than 150 staff it has decided to monitor the information to ensure that it is able to respond effectively to any underlying reasons for difference and clearly identify any variation in how diverse racial groups are treated. An annual report will be presented to the Management Board which will monitor progress.

| | |
|--|---|
| Monitor by number of staff from each racial group: | The Authority monitors these issues through its current recruitment processes, equal opportunity monitoring, Authority wide training plan, tracking all grievance, disciplinary procedures and recording those that leave the Authority and why via exit interviews with HR |
| ▪ who receives training | |
| ▪ benefit or suffer detriment as a result of its performance assessment procedures | |
| ▪ are involved in grievance procedures | |
| ▪ are the subject of disciplinary procedures | |
| ▪ cease employment | |

6 Implementation

Work to date

6.1 In preparing the Strategy the Authority :

- gave approval, at its meeting on 22 February 2007 to the main principles and a timetable for delivering the Strategy by September 2007;

- maintained links with external disability groups to enable consultation throughout the process of establishing the Strategy;
- held meetings in March and May 2007 with staff Equality Champions and external groups to develop Impact Assessment Forms;
- provided training for staff Equality Champions on Disability Awareness and a more practical session focusing on impact assessments, both facilitated by a representative from a local Disability Information Service;
- used impact assessments to assess the Authority's functions and services under the full range of equality and diversity legislation; **Annex A** is an index of all the completed assessments available; **Annex B** is an example of a completed impact assessment.
- developed a Three Year Action Plan (**Annex C**) from the results of the impact assessments.

6.2 In addition, the Authority has:

- appointed a lead member for Equality and Diversity who has attended all Equality Meetings and undertaken Equality and Diversity Training;
- implemented a programme of Equality and Diversity training for all staff and members, starting in February 2007, with additional sessions for line managers;
- worked with external experts to produce a portfolio of policies and procedures that include Equal Opportunities, and Bullying and Harassment which are now at the stage of consultation with staff before being implemented;
- reviewed the website content and accessibility in line with Disability Rights Commission guidance.