

AM 685/24

NEW FOREST NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY

AUTHORITY MEETING – 25 JULY 2024

EQUALITY, DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION POLICY

Report by: Jim Mitchell, Access and Learning Manager (New Forest Voices' Lead) and Nigel Stone, Head of Resources.

1 Purpose

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to provide members with the proposed draft of a new Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy for the Authority. An earlier draft of the policy was taken to Resources, Audit and Performance Committee in June 2024 and, following some useful suggestions/updates from that committee, it was recommended for approval by members at this meeting.
- 1.2 The new Policy is designed for everyone within, and interacting with, the Authority, including our Members.

2 Summary

- 2.1 Since the establishment of our core Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) workstream in 2020, under the banner of 'New Forest Voices', we have delivered actions both internally within our organisation and externally throughout the National Park. Recognition internally has increased year-on-year (as evidenced by officer feedback and through direct questions in the recent staff survey), and the Authority's work with under-represented groups has also grown too.
- 2.2 In early 2023, in accordance with best practice, the New Forest Voices group felt the time was right to update our suite of EDI-related policies and procedures into a clearer, singular primary document. A small subgroup set about drafting the policy, utilising documents and expertise from national guidance, other local organisations/councils and from within the wider protected landscapes family.
- 2.3 The draft policy was then refined by the whole New Forest Voices group, which contains representatives from across the Authority's teams, sent out in early 2024 for a formal four-week staff and union consultation and went to the Resources, Audit and Performance Committee.

- 2.4 The consultation and committee feedback was very positive and the vast majority of the suggestions given have now been incorporated into the document. Each staff member that provided a consultation response has been contacted directly about how their feedback was considered/used.
- 2.5 Officers are now seeking final approval from members of the full Authority on the draft policy, subject of course to any further comments at the Authority meeting which can be incorporated into the document as necessary.
- 2.6 Prior to formal adoption, Officers will fully consider the appropriate method(s) of communicating it back to wider staff and have already approached a number of specialist training providers to run some staff/member EDI workshops later this year.

3 Recommendation

Subject to any amendments discussed at the meeting, that members approve the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy.

Papers:

NFNPA/AM 685/24

Cover paper

NFNPA/AM 685/24 Annex 1:

Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy

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Equality and Diversity Implications:

This policy is key to our current and future EDI work. It clearly sets out how we will ensure equitable treatment for all by our Authority, how we strive to be an organisation where diversity is celebrated and inclusion/belonging is felt by everyone.