



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

Strategic Equality Plan 2015-19: a consultation

27 October 2014 – 06 January 2015



Noddir gan
Lywodraeth Cymru
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Foreword

Natural Resources Wales is a new organisation. We are determined to optimise the opportunities that this presents to be **passionate and ambitious** about equality and diversity both for our staff and for those using the natural resources of Wales. There is much to do, but to be successful we need to be **disciplined** and **focussed** in our endeavours. We will look for **opportunities** to raise equality and diversity awareness through a wide range of communication, initiative and be more responsive and be better connected to our customers and stakeholders. We are committed to being a **learning organisation** – to learn from our own and others' experiences and practice across the world and gain wisdom in the process.

By concentrating on **outcomes**, we aim to develop the full potential of our staff, working with partners and ensuring all decisions are based on **sound evidence** and judgement. We intend to be **trusted** by our staff, their representatives and the people of Wales – and we will be **professional** in all we do.

We recently asked a range of stakeholders about the ways we work and the priorities we should adopt for our Strategic Equality Plan. We are now taking this a step further by setting out our **Equality Objectives** for formal public consultation. We would like your views on our proposals for Natural Resources Wales over the next four years, which we will then use to develop our Strategic Equality Plan.

We hope that you enjoy reading this consultation and that you are inspired to send in your comments to help shape the Strategic Equality Plan, and to work with us in making its aspirations a reality.

Ashleigh Dunn
Executive Director designate
Organisational Development and People Matters

Reason for this public consultation

This consultation contains a series of equality objective proposals which set out our intentions for the next four years and will be the main component of our Strategic Equality Plan. We would like you to consider and comment on these proposed objectives, which will help us prepare our Strategic Equality Plan for 2015–2019.

We are a new organisation and this will be our first Strategic Equality Plan. We want to ensure that we have considered our stakeholders' views: we are keen to hear your ideas.

We have a very wide remit and limited resources so we won't be able to do everything everywhere. We also have a large number of statutory duties; these responsibilities are laid down by law and we must fulfil them. We can't – and don't want to – do it alone. And we don't have all the answers; we want to hear how we can learn and work with other organisations and groups in the best ways possible for the benefit of Wales.

We will publish our first Strategic Equality Plan in April 2015. It will set out our strategic direction for the next four years.

During the summer of 2014 we hosted 6 events in partnership with Diverse Cymru where we and other organisations came together to talk about what we do and how we work. This gave us a wide range of views which we have taken on board in preparing this document and will take forwards along with consultation responses when finalising the plan.

By taking this time and listening to our stakeholders we already feel that we are in a stronger position to go forward. We now want to build on this and run a formal public consultation on our proposals. This will give an opportunity for an even wider range of contributions to help finalise our Strategic Equality Plan.

How to take part in this consultation

We would like your views on whether our proposed equality objectives set the right direction for Natural Resources Wales. The consultation is around a series of proposals about how we want to work.

We would like you to tell us whether you think we are focussing on the right areas of work, whether there are any significant gaps, and how we could work together in partnership to deliver our proposals. In short, how can we get the best results for Wales?

Following this consultation we will develop our full Strategic Equality Plan.

Tell us what you think by completing the response form alongside this consultation and sending it to equalities@naturalresourceswales.gov.uk

Or

Equality and Diversity Team
Natural Resources Wales
Floor 3
Cambria House
29 Newport Road
Cardiff
CF24 0TP

The consultation ends on **06 January 2015**.

Who we are and what we do

This section gives some background information on Natural Resources Wales before we set out the proposals we would like you to comment on.

Our purpose...

Is to ensure that the environment and natural resources of Wales are sustainably maintained, sustainably enhanced and sustainably used, now and in the future.

Our People

We have some 2,000 staff located throughout Wales – scientists, engineers, foresters, recreation and education experts, people working with local communities, as well as many others who enable our organisation to work effectively and efficiently.

We want Wales...

To be a place where our air, land and water are managed sustainably and the people who work and use the natural resources for recreation are treated equally and with dignity and respect.

As a Welsh Government Sponsored Body, Natural Resources Wales has a legal and moral responsibility to comply with the “general” and “specific” duties outlined in the Equality Act 2010. The general duties place three specific responsibilities upon us:

- To eliminate discrimination, harassment and victimisation;
- To advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and those that do not; and
- To foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.

We have a wide range of roles and responsibilities. Some are statutory, which means they are laid down by law and we have to carry them out. For others we have discretion in carrying them out but they contribute to our overall purpose.

Our roles and responsibilities include...

- **Recreation provider and enabler:** operating visitor centres across Wales, 550 kilometres of mountain bike trails, 135 kilometres of horse riding trails, 450 kilometres of walking trails and numerous picnic sites, as well as helping others to provide recreation opportunities
- **Principal adviser:** to Welsh Government on the environment and natural resources
- **Statutory consultee:** we respond to approximately 9,000 planning applications each year
- **Designating authority:** for Sites of Special Scientific Interest – areas of particular value for their wildlife or geology, and Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty
- **Regulator:** protecting people and the environment using over 40 different sets of regulation including those for designated sites, the marine environment, forestry and the nuclear, waste and water industries
- **Land manager:** for 7% of the land area of Wales including woodlands, water and National Nature Reserves
- **Environmental operator:** managing over 120,000 hectares of woodland, maintaining almost 2,000 miles of flood defences and running our own laboratory
- **Incident responder:** dealing with approximately 9,000 reported incidents and issuing flood warnings to over 100,000 people
- **Commercial operator:** marketing some 825,000 cubic metres of timber fulfilling around 300 tree harvesting contracts
- **Prosecutor:** taking enforcement action and prosecuting those who contravene the regulations and laws that we are responsible for upholding
- **Partner:** key collaborator with the public, private and voluntary sectors delivering projects for the benefit of Wales
- **Educator:** helping almost 20,000 children and young people each year learn in, and about, the natural environment and helping others use the environment as a learning resource
- **Enabler:** providing some £10 million of funding directly to partners for environmental and community benefits
- **Evidence gatherer:** monitoring our environment, commissioning and undertaking research, and developing knowledge

We work with a wide range of people and organisations in a variety of different ways: from farmers and land managers to business, industry, planners and developers; from national and local government to interest groups and local communities, scientists and academic institutions. We make an important contribution to virtually all aspects of life in Wales.

We are committed to promoting equality and diversity – we value the diversity of our staff, our stakeholders and the public in Wales. This will be embedded into our Strategic Equality Plan and in how we deliver our services to the people of Wales and we will meet our full commitments from the Equality Act 2010.

Establishing our Strategic Equality Plan

This consultation sets out the high level equality objectives that Natural Resources Wales intend to use to set the direction for our Strategic Equality Plan, in order to meet our legal obligations and also to deliver the wider business benefits from having a positive approach to equality and diversity.

The specific duties contain additional requirements relating to the nine groups with protected characteristics.

- Age
- Belief or non-belief
- Disability
- Gender Reassignment
- Marriage and Civil Partnership
- Pregnancy and Maternity
- Race
- Sex (gender)
- Sexual Orientation

We have decided that our Strategic Equality Plan should follow the theme of our Corporate Plan and be based on the five 'good' programmes. Each programme will incorporate all of the protected characteristics unless the plan states an objective or action is aimed at specific characteristics.

The five 'good' programmes:

- Good for knowledge
- Good for environment
- Good for people
- Good for business
- Good for organisation

Our aims

A successful Strategic Equality Plan launch and subsequent monitoring and reporting will help all of the people of Wales understand the messages about, and benefits of, a good environment. We will strive to communicate in appropriate ways so that messages reach the appropriate (targeted) groups and allow us to check how effective we have been in reaching the audiences we are trying to reach. Through an effective Strategic Equality Plan, we will understand how a broad range of communities access our services and any barriers they face in trying to benefit from this. In addition, the Strategic Equality Plan will allow us to plan, prepare and deliver our services for the diverse people of Wales and through the collection and evaluation of evidence, we will ensure that it is free from bias and that we will take decisions on our policies, plans and projects that are subject to an Equality Impact Assessment.

Apart from our legal responsibilities, there is a growing body of evidence to show that focusing on equality brings business benefits not just related to fulfilling equality objectives but also to achieving wider improvements in services, organisational culture and effectiveness. They can also improve our employment practices, our advice giving process and the access and outcomes for the Welsh public. Essentially, equality and diversity drive us to be and do better.

How we work with Welsh Government

We are a Welsh Government Sponsored Body. We have functions which are independent of Government but recognise the need for us to work closely together. For that reason, we have agreed a set of shared outcomes. Everything we do needs to contribute to one or more of these, which are:

- Enhancing our environment
- Protecting people
- Supporting enterprise and jobs
- Improving the nation's health
- Viable and vibrant places
- Delivering social justice
- Supporting skills and knowledge.

They also lie at the heart of the priorities for action set out in 'Shaping a more Prosperous and Resilient Future', the Autumn statement in 2013, made by Alun Davies AM the then Minister for Natural Resources and Food. These priorities for action are delivering **green growth, using resources efficiently, tackling poverty and enhancing the resilience and diversity** of our natural resources.

These shared outcomes lock us into the wider life of Wales, provide us with an enduring focus, and connect us with a wide range of partners. In this way, our work not only contributes to plans and strategies dealing with the environment, climate change and the transition to a low carbon economy, but also those strategies dealing with health and wellbeing, poverty, education, equality and diversity, and building resilient communities.

We receive a remit letter at the start of each financial year setting out what Welsh Government wants us to achieve during that year. The current Remit Letter can be found in the publications section of the Welsh Government website.

Questions: Our purpose

1. Are our purpose and aims clear and understandable?
2. Are there any ways that you would like to work with us to achieve these shared outcomes?
3. Do you have any ideas of new ways we can fund our activities with our partners?

Our work: What we do

In this section we set out some further context from our Corporate Plan and then identify our proposed Equality Objective and set out how we would like to work.

Each section is followed by a set of further questions which we would like you to consider.

A Good Environment – ecosystems are resilient and secured for the future, wildlife and landscapes are enhanced, and the use of our natural resources is carefully managed

Equality Objective:

We help all of the people of Wales and visitors to Wales, irrespective of any protected characteristics, to understand the benefits of a good environment and to actively promote the use of the natural resources we manage.

Our thinking

A lot of the messages that organisations send out can be very scientific, not particularly easy to read nor targeted at, or explicitly inclusive of, protected characteristic groups. Therefore to follow a similar style of communicating, we may not be reaching the people we want to reach.

Our communications need to be available in the formats that people need and in a language which explains our organisation's focus and direction and also explains the role we all play in delivery and ensure our messages contain useful and clear information that reach our target audiences. If we fail to reach this objective then we may disadvantage certain communities or user groups.

A point raised at the involvement events was that our information is not always helpful and we should seek to engage more with user groups to ensure that where possible, the information needed is provided.

Questions: A Good Environment

4. Do you agree with our proposals and suggested ways of delivering them?
5. Have we missed out anything significant?
6. How do we best work in partnership with you to deliver these? What can you do to help?

Good for People – people enjoying, valuing and benefiting from our natural environment and understanding its relevance in our day to day lives

Equality Objective:

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.

Our thinking

Engaging with protected characteristic groups will help to obtain the vital input we need to get things right. This will help build relationships with those groups which will help us to provide the right services in the right way. We should also aim to make our education and learning programmes, and our estate and recreational facilities, as accessible as possible to all the people of Wales so that as many as possible benefit from them.

We cannot achieve this fully ourselves, therefore it is of paramount importance that we actively seek and engage with protected characteristic groups externally to work with us in providing services to the people of Wales and its visitors.

We will carry out Equality Impact Assessments (EqIA) for our plans, policies and projects so that we can anticipate the impacts of Natural Resources Wales functions and policies on protected characteristic groups. EqIAs will help us to understand the needs of groups to make sure that as far as possible any potential adverse impacts are eliminated and that opportunities for maximising opportunities to promote equality are identified.

Questions: Good for People

7. Do you agree with our proposals and suggested ways of delivering them?
8. Have we missed out anything significant?
9. How do we best work in partnership with you to deliver these? What can you do to help?

Good for Business – a ‘location of choice’ for business and enterprise and a place where best practice environmental management is adopted and encouraged

Equality Objective:

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

Our thinking

Good business includes the areas of giving advice, regulation, enforcement and the way in which we procure services. There are opportunities in all of these for good practice in relation to the protected characteristic groups.

We should ensure our advice and guidance is accessible to all which may mean tailoring what we do and how we do it to meet the needs of different groups. In procurement, we need to ensure that organisations who supply us comply with our own standards and ethics, including how they ensure the equality of opportunity in their own organisations happen.

We can achieve this by engaging with small and medium-sized enterprises, tailoring our messages and be clear in the way they are delivered to meet the needs of different groups who run those businesses (eg: ethnic minority run businesses may not have access to the same networks of advice as others at present)

Questions: Good for business

10. Do you agree with our proposals and suggested ways of delivering them?
11. Have we missed out anything significant?
12. How can you best work in partnership with us to deliver these?

Good Knowledge – gaining wisdom and understanding our natural environment and how we affect it – using evidence and applying learning from experience, so that we make good decisions

Equality Objective:

We collect and evaluate data and evidence, ensuring that it is free from bias and that we make decisions, subjected to equality impact assessments, on our plans, policies and processes that are based on our data and evidence.

Our thinking

There are many opportunities for good practice here in relation to protected characteristic groups, such as ensuring that we commission data gathering that is informative and allows us to make decisions based on that data with confidence. We need to remove any barriers that people may face accessing our information regardless of how it is delivered.

By having a knowledge base we can trust, we will be able to share our data sets both internally and externally either to those with a protected characteristic or with those who make decisions which may affect protected characteristic groups to allow them to make educated choices such as accessing the natural resources we manage.

Viewing knowledge sharing as a process of bridging interdependencies expands our understanding of what impacts we have on the people of Wales and beyond our borders.

This is an exciting opportunity for Natural Resources Wales to ensure our organisation has a strong and important message with no shortage of content to help us tell our story. We need to ensure that we focus on what we share instead of why it is being shared.

Questions: Using good knowledge

13. Do you agree with our proposals and suggested ways of delivering them?
14. Have we missed out anything significant?
15. How can you best work in partnership with us to deliver these?

Good Organisation –

Equality Objective:

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

Our thinking

By encouraging and working with Natural Resources Wales staff at all levels and their representative staff networks, we can better understand the issues and barriers which face staff who belong to protected characteristic group(s).

We know that our workforce is not currently representative of the people we serve and that there will be limited external recruitment over the coming years so this will not change greatly. However, there are areas where steps can be taken to remedy this as far as we can and will look for opportunities such as apprenticeship schemes and volunteering.

We need to collect accurate data on who our workforce are at the moment and monitor this closely, act where we can to concentrate proactively on areas where we are underrepresented and report our findings. A breakdown of staff information will be reported in our Equality and Diversity Annual Reports. Natural Resources Wales will treat any equality information gathered with the upmost confidentiality and use the information responsibly.

It is important that Natural Resources Wales has the right culture so that people feel confident to naturally be who they are in the workplace.

Once we have a better understanding of who we are as an organisation and engage with staff of different protected characteristic groups, we will be better places to nurture our staff networks and help them grow in number.

Our culture is of upmost value to us and a good culture of equality and respect is critical to the success of our Strategic Equality Plan.

Questions: How we will work

16. Do you agree with how we plan to develop our organisation?
17. What would make it easier for you to work with us?

How we will measure success: Reporting our delivery

As a delivery organisation we need to be able to demonstrate how well we have performed, both individually and in conjunction with our partners, and whether people and communities are better off as a result.

This consultation, and the conversations we have been having with our stakeholders, will give us clarity on what our customers want us to do, identifying what success will look like and allowing us to develop our goals.

Our Strategic Equality Plan will include these goals and a framework for assessing our performance in achieving them. This will reflect our contribution to achievement of the shared outcomes mentioned earlier in this document.

We will publish indicators for these outcomes which we can then track. We will also set performance measures to show how much we have done, how well we have done it, and what the results are.

We will be open about reporting our delivery against our Corporate Plan and annual Business Plans. We will publish results in our Annual Report and our Board will publicly discuss performance at least three times a year.

Questions: Reporting our delivery

18. Is this the right approach to assessing our delivery?
19. Do you know of specific indicators you think we should track?
20. What will success look like?

...and finally:

21. Are there any further comments you would like to make?

Thank you for taking part in this consultation.

We will publish a summary of the responses on our website and use your views to help develop our Strategic Equality Plan.

For any further comments or queries, or to obtain this document in an alternative format, please contact equalities@naturalresourceswales.gov.uk

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