

Board Paper

18 December 2013

Paper Title	Equality and Diversity Way Forward
Paper Reference:	Paper NRW B O 52.13
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Purpose of Paper:	Discussion
Recommendation:	To note progress to date and future plans
Decision Required:	If applicable

Impact: To note – all headings might not be applicable to the topic	Impact on the Environment: Non applicable
	Impact on the Economy: Non applicable
	Impact on Community: As an employer of staff in Wales, working with partners and communities across the country, it is essential that NRW is compliant with the law and that it sets a high standard across the full range of the equality and diversity field.
	Impact on Knowledge: The development of a Strategic Equality Action Plan has required the capture and analysis of a comprehensive range of data relating to staff characteristics. This knowledge will inform and drive the key interventions set out in our Equality and Diversity Action Plan. It will be important to maintain a good foundation of staff data as work progresses.

Issue

1. To bring the Board up to date on the recent work on Equalities and Diversity and to advise of planned work over the next few months.

Summary

2. This paper sets out NRW's legal duties, in terms of equality and diversity, before then reviewing the good progress made over the last half year. The paper then focuses on the work we need to complete before 1 April 2014 in order to meet our legal obligations and also to deliver the wider business benefits from having a positive approach to equality and diversity.

Background

3. As a Welsh Government Sponsored Body, NRW 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.
 - To foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.
4. The specific duties contain additional requirements relating to the nine groups with protected characteristics¹.
5. 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.
6. A paper was submitted to the NRW Board in May², setting out how we would take forward the equality and diversity programme of work, both to ensure that NRW was legally compliant against our duties and also to secure the wider business benefits set out above.
7. Since that time good progress has been made and a range of actions have been completed. These include:
 - Putting in place governance arrangements for the management of this area, through the creation of an "Equality and Diversity Forum", comprising representatives from Organisational Development and People Management, the Trades Unions and representatives from some of the nine protected characteristics. We will be seeking to strengthen business-wide representation and input into the Forum in the coming months, very much to reflect our strategy of embedding equality and diversity into our business ways of working.

¹. The characteristics cover age, sex, disability, sexual orientation, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, marriage/civil partnership.

². NRW B(O) 9.13 May 2013.

- Madeleine Havard has joined us as the Board Champion and has been an active supporter of all our work, including attending the Forum.
- We have developed and publicised our Equality and Diversity policy. More broadly, we have put out a range of equality and diversity publicity, in particular to raise general awareness and to encourage staff to join (or in some cases form) networks relating to the nine protected characteristics.
- Three networks have formed to date³. We continue to support the creation of additional networks, but the real catalyst for this must come from the staffs themselves and very much depends upon their own needs.
- We have put in place a range of initiatives to demonstrate NRW's commitment under the "general duties" of the Equality Act 2010 to work with groups with protected characteristics. This has ranged from NRW's attendance at Gay Pride events across Wales, to specific events where, working with our partner, Myned, we have taken out disabled and ethnic minority groups to explore and enjoy the Welsh countryside. The feedback from such events has been positive.
- Working with our LGBT network and Stonewall, we have put forward a NRW submission for the Stonewall "Top 100 Employers" index for the most gay friendly workplaces. Although it is clearly early days for NRW, the submission makes a clear statement of our intent and also gives us a baseline from which to drive future improvement. We hope to hear the result early in the New Year.
- Our recent Skills Audit showed staff being extremely positive about equality and diversity, with 99.7% of staff seeing themselves as competent or higher in this area and with about 300 staff expressing a wish to strengthen their competence levels further.
- Carried out a staff questionnaire on equality and diversity (covered below).

Staff Questionnaire

8. The staff questionnaire was sent out for completion to all NRW staff. Its aim was for us to capture key data on staff in terms of age, gender, ethnicity, disability, sexual orientation etc, so that we could use the data to inform the development of our Strategic Equality and Diversity Action Plan, in particular the development of equality and diversity objectives.
9. Because of the recognised sensitivity to some individuals of many elements of the questionnaire, we asked staff to complete the survey on a voluntary basis. In the end, we had 1250 completed responses (60%) – whilst we were slightly disappointed with this number, our Diverse Cymru advisors, who have a lot of experience in this area across many different types of organisations, said this was a good response rate.
10. A summary of the data received is at Annex A. As the responses have only been received over the last couple of weeks, we are still very much in the data analysis stage but would offer the following early comments:
 - The "Prefer Not To Say" response rate is quite an interesting figure for us all to reflect on.
 - We will be seeking to relate key responses to our grade structures, to try and identify potential issues – eg, whilst the gender balance numbers are very evenly matched, how do these relate to grade structures and the number of women in middle and senior management positions etc?
 - We will be seeking to get comparator responses for the Welsh population as a whole to the key data results.
 - Very much aligned to the Corporate Plan direction, we will be seeking to benchmark our results with other similar organisations.

³ . LGBT, Assisted User's Group and Women's Network.

Next Steps

11. Both the staff questionnaire data and the other actions highlighted above, have given us an excellent platform to successfully deliver this challenging agenda. Following discussions with the office of the Wales Equalities and Human Rights Commissioner, we have identified the key actions to be completed between now and April 2014:
- Draft a progress report on our work on equality and diversity in 2013/14.
 - Draft a Strategic Equality Plan for 2014/15. Drawing upon our evidence in the staff survey, we should prepare a range of objectives against the nine protected characteristics and also explain NRW's strategy for equality and diversity.
 - Ensure that clear statements around equalities and diversity are included in the Corporate Plan and in next year's Business Plan – for the latter, we will identify a couple of high level objectives and, once the detail of the Strategic Equality Plan has been developed, ensure that the key performance targets are included in the NRW Dashboard.
 - Reflect the equalities and diversity work in the forthcoming People Strategy.
12. We will bring both the progress report and the draft Strategic Equality Plan to the Board in February 2014.
13. As well as the areas above, our priority will be to work closely with the business to ensure that planned change initiatives and projects continue to take full account of equality and diversity issues in their proposals – areas such as Directorate Restructuring and the Total Reward Package are key areas to work with. . The Equality Impact Assessment remains a key tool here.

Risks

14. The equality and diversity agenda has a high profile, both externally and also internally with staff. Putting in place the arrangements set out in this paper will ensure NRW fully delivers its commitments.

Financial Implications

15. This work is already funded and can be delivered by current staff resource.

Communications

16. We should continue to publicise our achievements and plans in respect of equality and diversity, not just to raise awareness and involvement but also to state clearly what type of organisation we want NRW to be. When the draft Strategic Equality Action Plan is ready to be launched this should be supported by its own detailed Communications Plan.

Equality impact assessment (EqIA)

17. Not required at this stage.

Annex:

A. Equality and Diversity Staff Questionnaire Summary Results.