

Board Paper

02 October 2014

Paper Title	Establishing a Strategic Equality Plan (2015-19) for Natural Resources Wales
Paper Reference:	NRW B B 70.14
Sponsor: Paper Prepared By:	Clive Thomas Derek Carpenter

Purpose of Paper:	Decision
Recommendation:	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. In order to fulfil our legal requirements under the Equality Act 2010, the proposed draft Strategic Equality Plan (SEP) objectives (annex 1) are approved and we can proceed in taking the objectives forward to public consultation. 2. The four year action plan developed from the draft objectives will fit in with the five 'goods' as outlined in the Corporate Plan.
Decision Required:	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. To agree the draft SEP Equality Objectives. 2. To agree that the subsequent actions, monitoring and reporting from the final SEP will belong equally to each directorate and sit within the Directorate Delivery Plans. Nominations will requested from across the business to attend quarterly E&D Forum meetings where ongoing progress can be reported and captured.

<p>Impact: To note – all headings might not be applicable to the topic</p>	<p>Impact on the Environment: A successful SEP launch and ongoing monitoring and reporting will help the people of Wales understand the messages and benefits of a good environment. It will also help us 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.</p> <p>Impact on the Economy: Not applicable</p> <p>Impact on Community: Through an effective SEP, 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 SEP will allow us to plan, prepare and deliver our services for the diverse people of Wales.</p> <p>Impact on Knowledge: In collection and the evaluation of evidence, we will ensure that it is free from bias and we will take decisions on policy that are subject to an Equality Impact Assessment.</p>
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Issue

1. The purpose of this paper is to present our draft Strategic Equality Plan (SEP) objectives following a number of involvement events throughout July and August 2014.
2. As well as being the right thing to do, we also have a legal duty as a listed public body under the Equality Act 2010 (Statutory Duties) (Wales) Regulations 2011 for us to have such a plan.
3. The act puts general requirements on us to have Equality objectives which give due regard to the need to eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation. We must aim to advance equality of opportunity between people who share a relevant protected characteristic and those who do not and also to foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.
4. Natural Resources Wales as a listed body in Wales must prepare and publish our Equality Objectives, make appropriate arrangements to monitor progress towards meeting those objectives and to give appropriate consideration to relevant equality information we hold when considering what our Equality objectives should be.
5. To enable us to do this, we have been engaging with staff, individuals and organisations across Wales to develop our draft Equality Objectives.

6. Our Equality Objectives will help ensure that public services and employment are fair, accessible, responsive to people's needs and that communities are inclusive. We want everyone to feel able to be themselves and for our staff to flourish in work. People should not be put at a disadvantage by belonging to any of the following protected characteristics.

The nine protected characteristics are:

- Sex (man or woman)
- Race
- Faith or belief
- Sexual orientation
- Age
- Pregnancy and maternity
- Being married or in a civil partnership
- Being a disabled person
- Being transgender

Background

7. The Executive Team held an initial SEP meeting, which included Diverse Cymru and our Equalities Senior Advisor on 29 July 2014. This meeting created a baseline of ideas around the direction the Executive Team thought the SEP should be taken and included a decision that the plan should follow the theme of the 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

8. In August 2014 a series of involvement events took place giving both members of staff and external customers the opportunity to contribute and help shape the development of our Equality objectives.

In all, six involvement events took place across Wales as follows:

- 14/08 – Llandrindod Wells (External)
- 14/08 – Llandrindod Wells (Internal)
- 20/08 - Garwnant visitor centre (External)
- 22/08 – Ty Cambria, Cardiff (Internal)
- 27/08 – Conwy Business Centre (External)
- 28/08 – Maes y Ffynnon, Bangor (Internal)

At the events, attendees were able to share ideas and identify potential barriers and suggest possible solutions whilst building relationships with us. The events were run by ODPM and supported by members of the Board, Executive Team and Leadership Team. See annex 2.

9. On the 9th of September the draft Equality Objectives (annex 1) were put to the Executive Team where comments were invited. These comments have been incorporated into this Board paper.

Summary

10. The SEP is a four year plan running from 2015 to 2019 and details how Natural Resources Wales will achieve our objectives to comply with the Equality Act 2010.
11. The Equality Objectives we decide upon will be supportive of the Corporate Plan and adopted into all eight Directorate Delivery Plans. Delivery of actions, along with monitoring and reporting of progress will be the responsibility of our directorates to ensure that equality and diversity is embedded in everything we do.
12. The final published SEP will ensure Natural Resources Wales is legally compliant and will help develop our culture to one which is fair, inclusive and respectful.

Next Steps

13. Before we can publish a final plan, we need to agree our draft Equality Objectives and put these in the public domain for consultation. Following the consultation and before publication in April 2015, we will produce a set of actions to enable us to meet our objectives which will be presented to the Executive Team and to the Board. These actions will be informed by responses during the consultation period and be measurable to enable us to report annually.
14. Directorates will report on quarterly in line with current corporate planning reporting mechanisms, ODPM will be responsible for collating the data and producing annual reports of our progress.

15. Nominations will be requested from across the business to attend quarterly E&D Forum meetings where ongoing progress can be reported and captured.

Risks

16. If poor selection of the Equality Objectives and their supporting Actions occur, or any extensive delays happen in publishing our plan, Natural Resources Wales will be in breach of our legal obligations under the Equality Act 2010. If we are in breach of the Act we will also suffer a lack of trust within and around the organisation, resulting in reputational damage. Failure will also result in a hindered ability to create the right culture at such an early impressionable stage of our development.

Financial Implications

17. If this process is agreed and equality and diversity is embedded in our everyday work, the opportunities and projects will have already been identified and funded by existing work streams.

Communications

18. Following endorsement by the Board, the draft Strategic Equality Objectives will be shared across the organisation and steps taken to ensure that staff are empowered to be involved in the process. At the same time the draft objectives will be published on our website as part of our 12 week public consultation which will conclude at the end of 2014. The SEP Action Plan will be developed as a result of feedback received from this consultation. A communication plan will also be developed during the consultation period.

Equality impact assessment (EqIA)

19. When the action plan is being developed, a full impact assessment will be undertaken. We need to wait until this point because until then we won't know what the actions are and how they could impact upon or improve our services for the protected characteristics.

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| Annex 1 | The proposed draft Equality Objectives to form our Strategic Equality Plan covering good for knowledge, good for environment, good for people, good for Business and good for organisation. |
| Annex 2 | A brief summary of the six involvement events (three external and three internal) held in Mid Wales, South Wales and North Wales during August 2014. |