

REPORT OF BUSINESS & PERFORMANCE MANAGER

SUBJECT: EQUALITIES PLAN

Purpose of Report

To request Members to adopt the Authority's Equality Plan

Introduction/Background

The Equality Act 2010 replaces 116 different equality statutes in one all encompassing statute. The Act requires local authorities to prepare an Equalities Plan by March 31st 2012. More details about the Act and this Authority's response are in the attached document.

Comparisons

Compared to local authorities, the National Park Authorities have limited powers, resources and services to make major contributions to reducing discrimination against specific protected characteristic groups, particularly in such a small area. However, the Plan identifies many areas where genuine, if small, contributions can be made.

Options

This is a statutory requirement.

Financial considerations

There is no requirement for additional staffing or financial resources.

Risk considerations

There is a reputational and legal risk if an Equalities Plan is not adopted.

Compliance

The Plan complies with Park Purposes and other WG requirements

Human Rights/Equality issues

Meets these

Biodiversity implications/Sustainability appraisal

No impact

Welsh Language statement

Plan will be available in Welsh on the Authority's website.

Conclusion

This is an essential addition to the Authority's policies and services which will further contribute to the reduction of in-equalities and discrimination both within the National Park and Wales.

Recommendation

Members are requested to ADOPT the Equality Plan

Background Documents

<http://wales.gov.uk/consultations/equality/equalityact2010/?lang=en>

Authors: Alan Hare ext 4810 and June Skilton ext 4835

Consultees: None

Pembrokeshire Coast National Park Authority Strategic Equality Plan



March 2012

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Introduction

Pembrokeshire Coast National Park

Pembrokeshire Coast National Park was designated in 1952 under the National Park and Access to the Countryside Act 1949.

The National Park covers 62,000 hectares, primarily along 416 kilometres of coastline and the Daugleddau Estuary, and with the historic Preseli Hills in the north. About 24,000 people live in the Park, which also receives about 4.7 million visitor days each year.

Approximately 16% of the residents of the National Park are Welsh speaking, mostly in the northern part of the Park.

Pembrokeshire Coast National Park Authority

Pembrokeshire Coast National Park Authority was established by the Environment Act 1995 as a single purpose local authority. It has the following purposes as defined by the Act:

- to conserve and enhance the natural beauty, wildlife and cultural heritage; and
- to promote opportunities for the understanding and enjoyment of the special qualities of the (National) Park by the public.

The Authority has responsibilities for planning, conservation, land management, access and recreation but not for elderly care, schools, highways, emptying bins and other Local Authority duties.

The Act goes on to say that in pursuing National Park Purposes the National Park Authority shall seek to foster the economic and social well being of local communities within the National Park and shall for that purpose co-operate with local authorities and public bodies whose functions include the promotion of economic and social development within the area of the National Park.

Additionally under the Environment Act 1995 the Authority is the local planning authority for the whole of the National Park. The Authority is therefore responsible for the production of the Park Management Plan, Local Development Plan and for the determination of planning applications.

The Equality Act 2010

The Equality Act 2010 is about ensuring a fair deal for everyone and focuses on ending discrimination, advancing equality of opportunity and outcome and fostering good relations between different individuals and communities.

It replaces the previous 116 different equality statutes in one all encompassing statute. It simplifies and clarifies the role of public Authorities as leaders in achieving equality improvements for their citizens and communities. Specific duties developed by the Welsh Government provide detailed and challenging requirements for Authorities but an overall emphasis on 'due regard' leaves authorities with greater freedom to produce distinctive local solutions and greater accountability to their communities.

Who is protected under the Act?

The Act sets out a new prescribed list of protected characteristics which replace what have traditionally been referred to as Equality Strands. These groups are protected through the general and specific duties of the Act.

The new general duty covers the following protected characteristics:

- **Age**
- **Gender reassignment**
- **Sex**
- **Race – including ethnic or national origin, colour or nationality**
- **Disability**
- **Pregnancy and maternity**
- **Sexual orientation**
- **Religion or belief**

It also applies to marriage and civil partnership, but only in respect of the requirement to have due regard to the need to eliminate discrimination.

The General Duty

Public authorities are required to have due regard to the need to:

1. Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other conduct that is prohibited by the Act.
2. Advance equality of opportunity between people who share a relevant protected characteristic and those who do not.
3. Foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.

Having due regard for advancing these equality aims involves:

- removing or minimising disadvantages experienced by people due to their protected characteristics;
- taking steps to meet the needs of people from protected groups where these are different from the needs of other people;
- encouraging people with protected characteristics to participate in public life or in other activities where their participation is disproportionately low.

Specific Duties

In addition to the general duty, the Welsh Assembly Government has introduced specific duties for public authorities in Wales. These specific duties are outlined in the Equality Act 2010 (Statutory Duties) (Wales) Regulations 2011.

The specific duties in Wales cover:

- Objectives
- Strategic Equality Plans
- Engagement
- Assessing impact
- Equality information
- Employment information
- Pay differences
- Staff training
- Procurement
- Annual reporting
- Publishing
- Welsh Minister's reporting
- Review
- Accessibility

How we developed our Objectives

Consultation and Engagement

This Strategic Equality Plan and in particular the Equality Objectives within it, must be the subject of extensive consultation and engagement with the local community and in particular a wide array of groups representing each of the protected characteristics.

The population of the county of Pembrokeshire is 120,000 and within the National Park just 25,000. Local representation and data of any of the characteristic groups is difficult to identify and often non-existent within the area of the National Park. In view of this we have taken information on a county wide when available. The Authority often consults local groups including disability, health etc for advice on specific projects.

The role and duties of a National Park Authority focus primarily on conservation and enjoyment of the National Park area which may mean we have relatively limited influence on some of these objectives. However, positive contributions can be made through individual work areas, to the benefit of both the local population, and the wider ‘national’ audience of visitors to the area.

The Authority has therefore decided to develop the draft Equality Plan based on existing knowledge and experience from previous consultations including its Local Development Plan and National Park Management Plan, and such data as is available from other sources, including the County Council, other Welsh National Parks, Local Health Board, and Office of National Statistics, and to use this as the basis of any future consultation process.

Equality Objectives

The four Equality Objectives adopted by Pembrokeshire Coast National Park Authority are:

1. To provide opportunities for improvements to health by using the National Park as a Green Space for recreation, and tranquillity to support both physical and mental well-being
2. To provide wider opportunities for access to the Authority’s services
3. To have greater engagement between decision making bodies and the communities they serve
4. To raise awareness about the impact of discrimination within society in general amongst staff and Members

Due to its specific role and duties, the National Park Authority, has limited influence on some of these objectives. However, positive contributions can be made through individual work areas, which will contribute to delivering results across the area and further afield in Wales.

Set below are the equality objectives to which the Authority can contribute through projects, initiatives and actions.

Objective One: To provide opportunities for improvements to health by using the National Park as a Green Space for recreation, and tranquillity to support both physical and mental well-being.

Research nationally shows that activity and access to ‘green space’ benefits every one both physically and mentally. UK health statistics show men are on average less healthy than women and have a shorter life expectancy. People from ethnic minority groups were less likely to take the recommended amount of physical exercise, and local visitor surveys indicate that ethnic groups are under represented. Research

published by Welsh Government shows that disabled people are more likely to have poor mental health.

Project / Initiative / Action	Timetable	How will this contribute to the action area?	Lead Officer
Develop and implement a comprehensive action plan for the Mosaic Project which will work towards improving access and attracting people from BEM groups to use the National Park.	During 2012 & 2013	By attracting more people from BEM groups into accessing and enjoying the countryside, this will lead to greater health benefits.	Director of Park Delivery & Discovery
Publish Easy Access Guide	June 2012	By identifying walks suitable for people with limited mobility possibly due to poor health, these people may be encouraged to take up gentle exercise possibly leading to improved mental well being.	Recreation Officer
Engage local health professionals, disability groups, Access Forums and other relevant groups to identify the development of any additional accessible footpaths projects.	Ongoing	This will ensure that accessibility issues and opportunities will be considered and incorporated at an early stage of projects.	Well being & tourism officer

Objective Two: To provide wider opportunities for access to the Authority's services

Research shows that by improving the use of language, presentation styles and even photographs in publications, websites, presentations etc may make the services more user-friendly and accessible.

Project / Initiative / Action	Timetable	How will this contribute to the action area?	Lead Officer
Communication Strategy 2009-12	December 2012	Information and communication will	Marketing and Communications

Action: Ensure that all relevant staff have received training in the provision of accessible information.		improve as it will be produced with good practice guidance regarding accessibility issues.	Manager
Implement Social Inclusion Action Plan and Child Poverty Plan	On going	Identifies actions to engage with and encourage involvement by a wide range of groups who would not normally make use of National Park services and facilities	Discovery team leader

Objective Three: To have greater engagement between decision making bodies and the communities they serve

Groups and individuals may be prevented from involvement with the NPA because the timing and location of meetings causes difficulties for them.

Project / Initiative / Action	Timetable	How will this contribute to the action area?	Lead Officer
Investigate possibilities of evening meetings and/or at other locations	July 2012	Provides opportunities for wider public to attend	Member Services Manager
Encourage applications for WG appointees from a wider range of groups	Dec 2012	Encourages under-represented groups to become involved	Member Services Manager

Objective Four: To raise awareness about the impact of discrimination on society in general amongst staff and Members.

Research shows evidence of rising hate crime against disabled people. Anti-social behaviour is often a concern amongst the elderly and other protected characteristic groups.

Project / Initiative / Action	Timetable	How will this contribute to the action area?	Lead Officer
Develop a role of equality champions in each department leading to a roll out of awareness training for	By December 2013	This will improve understanding and awareness of the impact of discrimination, both	Personnel Manager

staff and Members.		deliberate and unintentional.	
Raise awareness of hate crime and harassment and how it should be reported.	December 2012.	This will improve staff understanding and awareness of hate crime and harassment and will enable front line staff to assist members of the public with reporting incidents.	Health & Safety Advisor
Implement Workforce Plan	On going	Monitors rates of under-represented groups, ensures equal pay and identifies any actions required.	Personnel Manager

Equality Impact Assessments

The Authority is required by the legislation to make arrangements in order to assess the likely impact of proposed policies and practices on our ability to comply with the general duty, as well as the impact of any policy or practice that we have decided to review or any proposed revision to a policy or practice.

For each new policy or practice (or revision of an existing policy or practice) the authority will assess the likely impact for its effect on people who share protected characteristics by undertaking an initial screening assessment.

If the policy or practice is likely to have an impact, a full equality impact assessment will be undertaken and an assessment report will be produced. Each assessment report will include the following information:

- the purpose of the policy or practice being assessed whether that is a new policy or an existing policy that is being reviewed or revised;
- a summary of the steps taken to assess the likely impact of the proposed or revised policy or practice;
- a summary of the evidence considered as part of the assessment process;
- the results of the assessment; and
- any decisions taken following the assessment.

A new equality impact assessment form has been produced and training will be given to relevant staff on conducting full equality impact assessments. The outcome of the assessments undertaken will be reported annually.

Monitoring the Plan and Publishing Information

The actions outlined in this plan which contributes to the fulfilment of the equality objectives will be monitored regularly. The results will be reported to the Audit and Corporate Services Committee annually.

Each full Equality Impact Assessment undertaken on any new or revised policy or practice will be published by the Authority on its website. Additionally, a summary of all the Equality Impact Assessments undertaken will be reported to the Audit and Corporate Services Committee.

We are also required by the regulations to report annually and make progress statements on the following:

- the steps that the authority has taken to identify and collect relevant information;
- in respect of the information that it holds, how the authority has used the information for the purposes of complying with the general duty and the duties of the regulations:
- the reasons for not collecting the relevant information that it identifies but does not hold;
- progress made towards achieving the fulfilment of each equality objective;
- a statement about the effectiveness of the arrangements for identifying and collecting relevant information , and the steps taken towards achieving the fulfilment of each objectives; and
- the information the authority is required to publish in relation to employment information.

This Strategic Equality Plan will be in place for 4 years, but will be reviewed and amended as necessary on an annual basis.

Further information on the details set out in this Strategic Equality Plan by contacting

Pembrokeshire Coast National Park Authority
Llanion Park
Paembroke Dock
SA72 6DY

0845 345 7275

or e-mailing: info@pembrokeshirecoast.org.uk