

South Downs National Park Authority

Equality & Diversity Policy

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SDNPA Equality and Diversity Policy

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I. Introduction

- I.1. South Downs National Park Authority ('the Authority') is committed to tackling discrimination and promoting equality and diversity in all areas of its work, including service provision, access to services¹, employment and policy development. We aim to do so in a manner which is transparent and in line with our guiding principles and values and we expect all who are associated with the Authority – members, staff and volunteers, as well as partners and contractors who work with us – to uphold the policy and actively promote it when representing the Authority.
- I.2. The Authority aims to be an inclusive organisation, where diversity is respected, valued and promoted. The Authority is committed to comply with the Equality Act 2010, along with relevant best practice guidelines and Codes of Practice, as outlined by the Equality and Human Rights Commission.
- I.3. Where possible the Authority will tackle discrimination or disadvantage to ensure that no group is directly or indirectly discriminated against when accessing services or employment opportunities.
- I.4. This policy exists in conjunction with other policies relating to recruitment and Human Resources, which includes the following:
 - Bullying and harassment policy and procedure;
 - Flexible working policy;
 - Family friendly policy;
 - Policy and procedure for reporting and managing sickness absence; and
 - Recruitment policy.
- I.5. All policies are intended to promote equal opportunity and protection against discrimination for all employees, and to ensure access to services and to the National Park for all.
- I.6. When drawing up policies, or in changing service provision, Equality Impact Assessments will be used. These will ensure that the potential impact of a policy, strategy or service on people who have one or more of the protected characteristics is considered.

¹ Within this policy, reference to 'services' refers to the actions the Authority takes to enable people to access, work in and enjoy the park and conservation.

2. The Definition of Equality and Diversity

- 2.1. Equality can be described as being equal, especially in terms of status, rights or opportunities. It can also refer to breaking down barriers, eliminating discrimination and ensuring equal opportunity and access for all groups in society.
- 2.2. Diversity can be described as the state or fact of being different. Promoting diversity seeks to celebrate difference and value everyone. Each person is an individual with visible and non-visible differences.
- 2.3. Equality and Diversity are not inter-changeable but inter-dependent. There can be no equality of opportunity if difference is not valued and harnessed and taken account of.

3. The Equality Act 2010

- 3.1. The Equality Act 2010 is a consolidating piece of legislation which replaced previous anti-discrimination laws with a single Act. It has simplified the law by removing inconsistencies and is designed to make the law easier to comply with. It also strengthens the law to help tackle discrimination and inequality and all sections of the law are in force. The Act paves the way for the Public Sector Equality Duty and introduces protected characteristics.
- 3.2. The Public Sector Equality Duty came into force in April 2011 and is designed to ensure that all public bodies contribute to making society fairer by tackling discrimination and providing equality of opportunity for all. Public bodies now have a duty to consider the needs of individuals in their day to day work in the following areas:
 - Shaping policy;
 - Delivering services; and
 - In relation to their employees
- 3.3. The Duty encourages public bodies to understand, or try to understand, how different people will be affected by their activities so that their policies and services are accessible to all and meet the needs of different people, or groups, within society. The Equality Duty has three aims; it requires public bodies to consider, and have due regard to, the need to:
 - Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct prohibited by the Act;
 - Advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not; and
 - Foster good relations between those who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.

- 3.4. Previous legislation had been drafted specifically to focus on the ‘protected characteristics’ of race, disability and gender. The Equality Act introduces the following ‘protected characteristics’ which are covered by the Equality Duty:
- Age;
 - Disability, both mental and physical (this can include life threatening conditions such as cancer);
 - Sex;
 - Gender reassignment;
 - Race, to include ethnicity or nationality (this includes Gypsies and Travellers);
 - Religion or belief, including a lack of belief;
 - Sexual Orientation;
 - Marriage and Civil partnership; and
 - Pregnancy and Maternity
- 3.5. The Authority has also chosen to include socio-economic factors to our list of protected characteristics, given the nature of our business, our overarching purposes and duty and the importance which we place on developing employment and social capacity opportunities.
- 3.6 Equality Impact Assessments (EIAs) have been introduced as a mechanism to allow public bodies to test the potential impact that their policies and services, as well as policy development, can have on people who are covered by the protected characteristics. To be meaningful, EIAs will be carried out throughout the development of new policies and services. The EIA template is included in Appendix I.

4. Policy statement

- 4.1 The Authority is committed to:
- Promoting access to the national park for all users;
 - Encouraging people from different ethnic communities to visit the park and access its complete range of services;
 - Considering the needs of people suffering from social exclusion either through employment or economic disadvantage;
 - Promoting equality and valuing diversity within the workforce; and
 - Ensuring that all who work for, or represent the Authority, have received training which is sufficiently adequate to enable them to confidently challenge discrimination or inappropriate behaviour.

- 4.2 The Equality and Diversity Policy provides a clear framework for translating our policy into action. It outlines the responsibilities of Members, the Senior Management Team (SMT), managers and individuals to comply with the Equality Act 2010.
- 4.3 The Authority will not tolerate processes, attitudes and behaviour that amount to direct discrimination, associative discrimination, discrimination by perception, indirect discrimination including harassment (harassment by a third party), victimisation and bullying through prejudice, ignorance, thoughtlessness and stereotyping. Further information about discrimination can be found in Appendix 2.
- 4.4 The Authority recognises the importance of monitoring, reviewing and reporting on its Equality and Diversity policy and practice and to measure progress in meeting our policy statement.

5. Review and monitoring

- 5.1 The Authority will undertake monitoring in order to ensure that its Equality and Diversity and other associated policies are complied with and that corrective action is initiated in the event that they are not. Monitoring of the Authority's workforce is to be undertaken using existing information, and deals with areas such as race, disability, gender and age. Similar monitoring information on applicants for available posts will be used to inform future recruitment campaigns where applicable.
- 5.2 Staff surveys are conducted on a regular basis in order to canvass staff views and this information can also be used to assess progress against the aims of the policy.
- 5.3 Outcomes from all surveys and monitoring activities will be made available to all who work for or with the Authority. An annual report will be made available to the Joint Consultative Committee and the Resources & Performance Committee.

6. Training

- 6.1 The Authority is committed to ensuring that Members, staff and volunteers are trained in equality and diversity and aims to ensure that adequate training is provided so that managers are able to operate this policy. Examples include specific training on race, gender, gender identity, disability, sexuality, age and religion or belief, in accordance with the requirements of the law and good practice.
- 6.2 The organisation will provide additional training to managers to enable them to deal more effectively with complaints of bullying and harassment in line with the Bullying and Harassment Policy. All managers will also be given recruitment training to ensure equality of opportunity for all job applicants and prospective employees.
- 6.3 Employees and board members joining the organisation will be made aware of this policy and all HR policies listed above as part of their induction process.

7. Responsibility

7.1 All those who represent the Authority have a responsibility to guard against any form of discrimination and avoid any action which goes against the spirit of this policy. Throughout the organisation, therefore, the Authority's representatives must ensure that there is no discrimination in any of their decisions or behaviour. This includes the provision that everyone must:

- report any suspected discriminatory acts or practices;
- co-operate with any measures introduced to ensure equality of opportunity;
- not victimise anyone as a result of them having complained about, reported or provided evidence of discrimination; and
- not harass, abuse or intimidate others.

7.2 However, while all staff have a collective responsibility to ensure this policy is successfully implemented, there are also specific responsibilities within this.

Members and the Senior Management Team are responsible for:

- Providing leadership on the equality and diversity strategy and policy, acting as overall champions to ensure the policy is implemented; and
- Communicating the strategy and policy, internally and externally.

Managers at all levels are responsible for:

- Implementing the policy as part of their day-to day management of staff and in applying employment policies and practices in a fair and equitable way;
- Ensuring equality and diversity issues are addressed in performance monitoring;
- Ensuring all staff act in accordance with the Equality and Diversity Policy, providing necessary support and direction; and
- Ensuring all policy or service decisions that will change provisions, practices or policies and affect the workforce are Equality Impact Assessed as required.

Each employee is responsible for:

- Implementing the policy in their day-to-day work and their dealings with colleagues, partners and visitors;
- Ensuring their behaviour is appropriate to the policy and that they treat people with respect and dignity; and
- Not discriminating against other employees or service users.

7.3 The Authority will act swiftly to address any behaviour from anyone working for, or representing, the Authority which breaches our Equality and Diversity Policy. If an employee breaches this Policy, then they may be subject to disciplinary action, in

accordance with the disciplinary procedure. If a Member breaches this Policy, then the matter will be dealt with in accordance with the Members Code of Conduct.

- 7.4 If a member of the public has a complaint, they should be directed to the SDNPA Complaints Procedure.

POLICY ADOPTED: April 2013