

Equality, Diversity & Inclusion Policy



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Commissioned by: Louise Rackham (Engagement Director)

Authored by: Pete Stubbs

Equality, Diversity & Inclusion (EDI) policy

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Policy Summary

This Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) policy recognises the constant diversity and changing nature of our sector and our organisation, and as such Wildlife Trust for Bedfordshire, Cambridgeshire and Northamptonshire (WTBCN), is committed to continually reviewing and improving existing practices. There is a firm commitment to provide equality of opportunity, tackle discrimination, harassment, hate and disadvantage and foster good relations. We are committed to achieving high quality standards of inclusivity, including decision-making and employment practice. We recognise that, as a comparatively small organisation, we do not have the capacity to make these changes overnight; however, EDI will always be a core element of our strategy moving forward.

Introduction

With the belief that discrimination has no place within WTBCN, this Policy provides a clear and strong direction so that our trustees, staff, partners and stakeholders know what to expect from us and recognise the importance of ensuring the principals of EDI inform key decision-making at every level within the organisation.

WTBCN aspires to be an organisation in which all people feel connected with and inspired by our diverse wildlife, habitats and wild spaces. Our employees, volunteers, members, trustees and visitors should therefore reflect the diversity of our communities. Integrating inclusive practices into our actions and policy will enable us to be a continually developing and diversifying organisation, whilst also making progress in our EDI journey achievable.

There are huge benefits to embracing EDI for our people and for nature:

- More people will have access to, and will benefit from, wildlife and the natural environment and people from all parts of society will be supporting nature's recovery.
- An inclusive working environment creates a workplace where everyone has equal opportunity to develop, progress and be recognised at work. It will also enable us to attract and retain diverse talent, strengthening our organisation and enhancing our resources.
- Diverse and inclusive organisations have higher innovation and employee satisfaction, increased creativity, and improved leadership and decision making.
- Our volunteers and supporter base will increase and diversify. By being more inclusive and relevant to diverse communities, we will attract and engage a wider range of people, whilst improving our reputation as an inclusive and accessible Trust.

Scope

This Policy is a public statement of our commitment and approach to EDI.

- **Equality** is about creating a fairer society, where everyone can participate and has the opportunity to fulfil their potential. It's about identifying patterns of experience based on group identity, and challenging processes that limit someone's chance to succeed. Our approach to equality recognises that our social identity, which includes gender, race, disability, age, social class, sexual orientation and religion, will impact on our life experiences.
- We are all different - **diversity** is about recognising the value of difference. It's about understanding each other and truly embracing the diversity of every individual. Diversity is about valuing different identities, knowledge, skills, ideas and experiences, and using these differences to create an effective and innovative workforce and increase our effectiveness as a movement.
- **Inclusion** is about positively striving to meet the needs of different people and communities. It's about taking deliberate action to create environments where everyone feels respected, able to contribute and achieve their full potential. Inclusion creates a sense of belonging, feeling respected and valued. Everyone has a part to play in promoting inclusivity and creating an environment where we can all flourish.

This document has been developed to ensure we meet the requirements of the relevant Equality Law. The relevant piece of legislation is The Equalities Act 2010 which covers England Wales and Scotland. This Policy, however, goes much further and contributes to our commitment to EDI with specific focus on:

- Reinforcing WTBCN's responsibility under both the [Human Rights Act 1998](#) and the [Equality Act 2010](#), and our role as a conservation leader, service provider, employer and purchaser of goods and services.
- Developing an action plan to help us encourage equality of opportunity across all sections of the workforce.
- Promoting EDI across our trustees, staff, volunteers and corporate members
- Working to remove harassment, discrimination and disadvantage in the workplace and between groups.
- Actively fostering good relations in the workplace and between groups
- Educating all trustees and staff at all levels to approach their work with an open mind and offering support and assistance to others without relying on preconceptions.

The Equality Act 2010 and Our Approach

The Equality Act 2010 is the equalities legislation which sets out unlawful ways to treat someone. The law protects people from unfair discrimination on the grounds of nine protected characteristics:

- 1 Age
- 2 Disability
- 3 Sex
- 4 Gender Reassignment
- 5 Marriage and Civil Partnership
- 6 Pregnancy and Maternity
- 7 Race
- 8 Religion or Belief
- 9 Sexual Orientation

Although these characteristics are defined in law, WTBCN understands that our trustees and employees do not have to disclose that they hold a specific characteristic. We also understand that people who share the same characteristic often have very different needs, and as such our training also covers asking open questions and offering support if required, without assuming the type of support that may be needed.

WTBCN will not pigeonhole people into single protected characteristic groups and will always seek to support each protected characteristic equally.

We know that we are at the beginning of our EDI journey as an organisation, so will ensure that our actions are always well-informed by our research and the lived experiences of the people we work with. We will encourage constructive criticism, honest consultation and active collaboration with staff, volunteers and community groups.

We follow the Social Model of Inclusion which takes the focus away from the individual and places it onto external factors. This is with the belief that it is social, systemic and physical barriers that cause a person to become disadvantaged, not a particular characteristic they may hold. WTBCN has the opportunity to remove such barriers by automatically making reasonable adjustments, providing training and incorporating aids and adaptations to promote inclusion. Although this model was specifically designed with disability in mind (the social model of disability), the general principals can be employed to prevent any kind of discrimination.

This policy provides a clear and strong direction so that our trustees, staff, partners, and stakeholders know what to expect from us and recognise the importance of EDI in informing key decision-making at every level within WTBCN.

Our EDI Commitment

We will make WTBCN's culture and policy as inclusive as possible. This will give us the foundations needed to further expand our EDI strategy for the future and progress the Trust's accessibility and inclusion. We will know we have achieved this if:

- Inclusivity is an integrated aspect of all our people-related policies and future actions.
- We welcome a diversity of skills, backgrounds and people to our team and outdoor spaces.
- All of our members, staff, volunteers and partners feel welcomed and supported.
- Our managers and HR department are well-equipped to foster a culture of inclusion and are responsible for consistently supporting staff in their inclusive practices and EDI training.
- We are continually learning from, and consulting with, others.
- We are continually developing our training, policy and strategy.
- We are ultimately helping to make the conservation sector a better and more inclusive place for all to work.

These ambitions, whilst varied, fall under three commitments:

1. **Our organisation is known for connecting, listening and learning.**
2. **From policy to practice, inclusion is embedded in our day-to-day work.**
3. **Everyone across our three counties can enjoy and experience nature.**

Commitment 1: Our organisation is known for connecting, listening and learning

1.1. Training

EDI Training will be completed by all staff, trustees and volunteers as a standardised induction, and training may develop further depending on the employee's role. We will promote EDI as a group conversation and team effort, not as an individual "tick box" exercise. We will use the existing knowledge within our employee-base to assist in informing and training all individuals. This will be achieved through guided discussions at in-house learning sessions, away days, intranet resources and awareness raising.

1.2. Empowerment

We will empower staff to take positive action to embed EDI in their day-to-day work, making it easy for them to seek advice, support and development opportunities to ensure an inclusive work environment in their departments. Leaders and managers in the organisation will be positive role models for EDI and will recognise their responsibility to facilitate the development of staff on their EDI journey, prioritising our inclusive culture.

1.3. Consultation

Alongside our internal training and discussion, we will ensure that we are consulting relevant communities and organisations when developing new projects or revising our policy. We want to listen *to* people and work *with* them, rather than deciding actions *for* them.

Commitment 2: From policy to practice, inclusion is our everyday

2.1. Policy, Strategy and Templates

We will include EDI as an integrated consideration in our new policies and strategies and will update all old policies and proposals to include an EDI consideration when they are reviewed. This will include our funding proposals, our codes of conduct for partners and donors, reserve development, project proposals, communications and interpretation policies and all people policies.

2.2. Communication

We will make continual efforts to maximise the accessibility of our communications, on and off our sites and across all channels. We will actively seek to represent diverse audiences and voices in our communications. We will embed these commitments in our strategy and brand guidelines and ensure that there is a cohesive and standardised approach to inclusive, representative and accessible communication across every aspect of the Trust.

2.3. Monitoring

We will establish an EDI monitoring, feedback and data collection system that is integrated within our existing auditing, appraisal and staff HR Systems in order to enable us to make informed decisions about key areas for development.

Commitment 3: Everyone across our three counties can enjoy and experience nature

3.1 Collaboration

We will go beyond consultation to actively collaborate with other organisations, local groups and other trusts, in order to reach a wider range of people and diversify the inputs into (and outputs from) our projects and communications.

3.2 Outreach

We will integrate community outreach into our engagement plan, taking nature to people as well as encouraging them to visit reserves. We will tailor our outreach to a wide range of different needs. Our outreach will also grow and change in response to the experiences of our participants.

3.3 Creative Solutions

We will try to find creative solutions for the access barriers that limit engagement with the trust, including cost, physical inaccessibility, working schedules, language, perceptions of conservation/the Wildlife Trusts and lack of transport. This will be an ongoing focus of our work, and we will regularly review our progress so that we can overcome these barriers to the best of our ability.

Publishing the results

We recognise the importance of not only communicating our clear commitment to EDI but also the importance of keeping people regularly informed of the progress being made and the outcomes being achieved. This includes opportunities for people to take part in this work and help contribute to the improvements WTBCN is seeking to make.

To help keep people informed we will:

- Share results with selected consultation groups where needed.
- Share results with our trustees and employees via the intranet, an EDI Hub and regular updates.
- Produce a yearly report of our progress against the Action plan commitments. This will be available on the WTBCN website and in other formats on request.
- Publish information on the WTBCN website about our EDI commitments and our ongoing work to make WTBCN more inclusive and accessible for all.