



For information

Title: Public Sector Equality Duty Report

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Purpose

The Cairngorms National Park Authority is a listed public authority that is required to meet the Public Sector Equality Duty. There are a number of obligations under this duty, including a requirement to report on mainstreaming the equality duty, and to publish progress on delivery of a variety of responsibilities under that duty, including developing a set of equality outcomes every four years, and reporting on them every two years. The overarching report demonstrating what we have been doing to meet the Public Sector Equality Duty is now due to be published in April 2025.

Recommendations

The Board is asked to:

- a) Note the report and Annex 1.
- b) Note the achievements in our work on equalities.

Strategic context

1. The Equality Act 2010 (the Act) became law in October 2010 and brought together all the previous pieces of equalities legislation under the one Act. The Act sets out the public sector equality duty, which makes it unlawful to discriminate against someone because of a 'protected characteristic'. The purpose of the public sector equality duty is to ensure that public authorities and those carrying out a public function consider how they can positively contribute to a more equal society through advancing equality and good relations in their day-to-day business, to:
 - a) Take effective action on equality
 - b) Make the right decisions, first time around
 - c) Develop better policies and practices, based on evidence
 - d) Be more transparent, accessible and accountable
 - e) Deliver improved outcomes for all.
2. The public sector equality duty requires equality to be considered in all the functions of public authorities, including decision-making, in the design of internal and external policies and in the delivery of services, and for these issues to be kept under review.



3. We refer to the public sector equality duty as set out in the 2010 Equality Act as the “general equality duty”. The general duty requires public authorities, in the exercise of their functions, to have due regard to the need to:
 - a) Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other conduct prohibited by the Act;
 - b) Advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not; and
 - c) Foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.

4. In Scotland the Equality Act was followed by secondary legislation (Equality Act 2010 (Specific Duties) (Scotland) Regulations 2012), the purpose of which is to set out “specific equality duties” to help public authorities in their performance of the general equality duty. So, in terms of the specific duties, we are required to:
 - a) Report on mainstreaming the equality duty and publish progress every two years;
 - b) Publish equality outcomes every four years and report progress every two years;
 - c) Assess and review our policies and practices
 - d) Gather and use employee information;
 - e) Use information on board members gathered by the Scottish Ministers;
 - f) Publish our gender, race and disability pay gap information;
 - g) Publish statements on equal pay;
 - h) Consider award criteria and conditions in relation to public procurement; and
 - i) Publish reports in a manner that is accessible.

5. The subsequent secondary legislation (Equality Act (Specific Duties) (Scotland) Amendment Regulations 2016) furthermore requires us to report the gender make-up of the Board, and the steps we are taking towards ensuring diversity of the Board.

6. The protected Characteristics under the Equality Act 2010 are:
 - a) Race;
 - b) Sex;
 - c) Age;
 - d) Disability;
 - e) Sexual orientation;



- f) Religion and belief;
 - g) Gender re-assignment;
 - h) Marriage and civil partnership; and
 - i) Pregnancy and maternity.
7. The Cairngorm National Park Authority's Public Sector Equality Report (Annex 1) summarises the key activities the Park Authority has engaged in over the last two years to meet its responsibilities under the Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED). It demonstrates what the Park Authority has been doing to mainstream the equality duty into our daily work. It details how we have integrated equality into our natural thinking, planning and delivery cycle. This covers engagement and participation; corporate functions and processes; and service provision. The report also provides an analysis of staff and board equality data as is required by the PSED. There is a detailed update on delivery of the previous set of equality outcome (2021 – 2025). The report then sets out a new set of equality outcomes for delivery over the next four years.

Strategic policy consideration

8. Board members need to be aware of the General Equality Duty and Specific Duties in how they set strategic direction, review performance and ensure good governance of the organisation. Board members' Code of Conduct (which states each board member's personal responsibility) sets out that board members "will advance equality of opportunity and seek to foster good relations between different people"
9. The Park Authority's Framework Agreement sets out at paragraph 30: The Chief Executive, challenged and supported by the Board, has responsibility for the recruitment, retention and motivation of its staff. The board responsibilities toward staff are to ensure that: HR policies, practices and systems comply with employment and equalities legislation, and standards expected of public sector employers.
10. The National Park Partnership Plan (NPPP) 2022 – 2027 has equality at its core, and particularly with regards the People and Place themes. Several outcomes are explicit about equalities – B1 – Working age population; B2 – Wellbeing economy; B8 – Mental and physical health; B10 – Park for all; B11 – Volunteering and outdoor learning; C8 – Accessible path and cycle network; C9 – High quality visitor experience.
11. The Cairngorms 2030 programme has as one of its priority outcomes that "a wider range of people will be involved in heritage". There is a particular focus on



connecting with hard-to-reach groups, identifying barriers that will prevent these people from being able to engage, and finding ways to overcome these barriers.

Strategic risk management

12. No specific strategic risks are impacted. The impact of not delivering this duty is significant as the Park Authority is legally required to meet the PSED. The Equality and Human Rights Commission can serve an improvement notice if they consider any of the provisions have not been adequately delivered. A member of the public may be able to use the PSED to take legal action if they think a decision or policy discriminates against them or disadvantages them because of who they are.

Implications

13. Delivery of this duty and all the provisions set out in it are being achieved within resources available with no additional resource implications.

Success measures

14. The report sets out the equality outcomes and associated targets. Success against equality actions is covered in the detail of the report.

Supporting information

15. We have set out below a few of the key equalities' achievements during the reporting period:
 - a) Proactive Equalities Groups – the external Equality Advisory Panel, with 15 members who proactively advise on all our projects, policies and strategies; the internal Equality Advocacy Group, comprising staff has played a key role in suggesting and implementing innovative projects and policies; and the Lived Experience Panel, created as part of our Cairngorms 2030 Programme, comprising 10 – 15 people from a range of ethnic minority backgrounds, who ensure we better deliver for the often overlooked communities that group members are from.
 - b) Active Cairngorms Youth Action Team, who have run three rounds of Youth Local Action Group funding since 2023, awarding almost £50,000 to 52 youth projects in the National Park.
 - c) An expanding Volunteer Cairngorms programme, with 59 volunteer rangers, supporting a range of activities to support and engage those who may experience exclusion.
 - d) Increased and inclusive community engagement through Cairngorms 2030, that has engaged with audiences that are typically hard to reach.



- e) A number of innovative projects that have received grant funding through the Cairngorms Trust, including the Active Cairngorms E-bike project and the Park for All fund.
 - f) Inclusive corporate communications, in terms of branding and publications content and imagery; increased digital engagement reaching more diverse audiences; and a soon-to-be launched new website that has been designed with accessibility at the core.
 - g) Improved visitor infrastructure, that has taken account of the differing needs of the wide range of existing and potential users, notably those with disabilities or restricted mobility.
 - h) Innovation in our park-wide consultations that have helped reach out to a range of underrepresented audiences that we had not previously engaged with.
 - i) Organisational achievement of LGBTQ+ Charter accreditation at Foundation level.
 - j) Implementation of several bold and innovative policies including support around Gender Diversity, Neurodiversity, Fertility Treatment, Pregnancy Loss, Menstrual Health and Endometriosis, followed by invitations to speak about them at national conferences.
16. The main body of the report covers the detail of the above achievements, as well as many more activities and processes that have taken place in the reporting period. It covers all the key provisions we are required to fulfil under the PSED. But this report is not just about providing evidence of meeting our legal obligations, it provides comprehensive oversight of the great work that the Park Authority is delivering to ensure that we are a truly inclusive organisation, not just for our staff, but also for the National Park as a whole.
17. The report also sets out the equality outcomes for the next four years, including evidence for choosing these outcomes and the activities we will engage in to deliver those outcomes. The outcomes are:
- a) We will have an increasingly diverse workforce with more underrepresented groups working for us, supported by an inclusive culture, where all existing, new and prospective staff are treated equitably, and feel that they belong.
 - b) We will target our infrastructure investment and develop our activities so as to continue reducing barriers to access and facilitating inclusive and affordable access to the nature of the National Park, and to the opportunities offered in the National Park.



- c) A more diverse range of audiences will be actively involved in informing the future direction and management of the Cairngorms National Park, including through direct engagement in Park Authority-led consultations and stakeholder forums / groups.
18. The equality outcomes have been consulted with the Equality Advisory Panel, the majority of whom represent one or more underrepresented groups, and who have played a significant role in developing both the outcomes and their associated action plans. We have consulted also with the staff Equality Advocacy Group, who heavily informed not only the outcomes, but many of the activities that have been delivered to mainstream equalities. All staff have also been consulted on this work, through the Staff Consultative Forum.
19. Whilst the report is long, our consultations have indicated that the information in the report is important and relevant, and to cut it back would not do justice to the work we are doing. We have however endeavoured to ensure that the document is simple to follow and reads well, and our tester groups have indicated that it does meet this objective.
20. The annexes to the report are set out in a separate document. These provide supportive narrative on some of the required provisions of the PSED, as well as the detailed action plans for the equality outcomes. The annexes can be accessed by board members on the board portal.
21. We will be working with our Communications team in the coming months to share some of the highlights of our equalities work, but in a manner that is visual and engaging, and incorporates personal stories and case studies, told through a variety of media. We will update the board when these stories are launched.

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