

# Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Statement of Intent

Adopted by the Dorset National Landscape Partnership in May 2023

## Introduction

“Our national landscapes can excite or calm us, test us or unite us, regardless of age or background.”

“Our national landscapes should be alive for people, places where everyone is actively welcomed in and there are unrivalled opportunities to enjoy their natural beauty and all it offers: landscapes for all.”

“But we also know that there are large parts of society that have no relationship with them at all. Their overall popularity masks big differences in the types of people who enjoy them. Some remain excluded. We don’t think it is good, either for the countryside or for our society, that there are people cut off from the possibilities it offers.”

*Julian Glover, Landscape Review 2019*

These extracts from the Government commission Landscape Review highlights both the opportunities and issues facing all our national landscapes, across the network of AONBs and National Parks alike. We, the Dorset National Landscape Partnership, acknowledge that not everyone has equal access to nature and landscape. We also recognise that we have an important role to play in making the Dorset National Landscape a more diverse and inclusive place to live, work and visit.

Through the work of the Dorset National Landscape team and partnership, there are some examples of good practice and progress made in developing wider connection to the landscape.

To put Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) at the heart of our work in Dorset, we have identified both strategic and practical priorities to inspire, empower and engage everyone to connect with the landscapes around them in 2023-24 and beyond. These are to:

- Formalise a framework for EDI action and review
- Invite diverse voices into decision making
- Co-create new opportunities to engage with landscapes and nature
- Communicate effectively
- Develop informed and inclusive ways of working

## 1. Formalise a framework for EDI action and review

*Ensuring that Equality, Diversity & Inclusion is central to strategic work of the Dorset AONB Partnership, that impact of our action is evaluated, and achievements reported and shared.*

### Where we are now:

- An Equality Impact Assessment (EqIA) was undertaken in 2019 as part of the process of creating the Dorset National Landscape Management Plan 2019-24. The EqIA identified actions to improve access to the landscape and our ways of working. Many of the actions identified have been enacted but there is no established mechanism, or specific member of staff, to monitor and report on these actions.

### What we will do next:

- Equality Impact Assessment (EqIA): With the support of the Dorset Council Equality Reference Group, we will review, reflect and report on progress at the end of the Management Plan period (2024) and develop a new EqIA, for the new Management Plan (2025-30). A new EDI Steering Group will be created to oversee this piece of work, to include AONB staff and partners.
- Equality, Diversity & Inclusion Action Plan: To ensure that the EDI actions from the EqIA are not lost, they will be captured and published in an EDI Action Plan, to be reviewed twice a year by the EDI Steering Group and reported on annually at the Dorset AONB Partnership Board. This will ensure that EDI achievements across the AONB Partnership, not just the work of the AONB Team, are celebrated and shared and that gaps and opportunities are assessed and addressed.

## 2. Invite diverse voices into decision making

*Recognising the value of diverse voices in our decision making and ensuring relevance and integrity in consultation processes.*

### Where we are now:

- Produced every 5 years, the Dorset National Landscape Management Plan sets out the vision for the designated area and the priorities for its management over a 5-year period. The Management Plan process is overseen by a Steering Group which has in the past invited specialist input into priority areas of focus.
- We recognise the importance and value of including a diversity of stakeholders into the decision making of our projects, at the planning as well as delivery stages. Some of our projects have Steering Groups with stakeholder representation but not all.
- The National Landscape Partnership brings together representatives of 17 different organisations with interests across local government, central government, landowning and farming bodies, conservation organisations, tourism, economy and the community. Dorset Race Equality Council was elected to have a representative on the Board to act as a champion for EDI. A lack of diversity of the environmental sector was highlighted in the Landscapes Review and a governance review proposed. We are expecting this to be undertaken nationally with leadership from Defra.



What we will do next:

- Steering the development and consultation of the next Management Plan: The Dorset National Landscape Partnership Board will invite and support a wider range of people to be involved in steering the development and consultation of the next Management Plan, creating a transparent process for engagement from the outset.
- Stakeholder involvement in project development and delivery: For all major projects where additional funding is being sought, we will invite appropriate stakeholders to join at the outset, building in additional resources to support involvement if required.
- Strategic review of National Landscape governance: The Dorset National Landscape will support the National Landscape Association in actions to establish a system to review National Landscape governance and/or help diversify the environmental sector.

### 3. Co-create new opportunities to engage with landscapes and nature

*Investing in relationships with wider communities, creating new opportunities together to ensure relevance and bring in fresh ideas to our work.*

Where we are now:

- Older people and those living with long term health conditions: The Stepping into Nature project has successfully improved connection to nature for older people and people living with dementia for the past 6 years. Now in its third phase of development, it will continue to focus on older people and those with long term health conditions, rolling out the Nature Buddies scheme across the National Landscape, working with stakeholder organisations to understand and overcome barriers.
- Ethnic minority communities: The FLAVOURS project, supported by the National Lottery Heritage Fund and with Dorset Race Equality Council, Dorset Food & Drink and Activate as partners. Over 18 months, it will invest in developing relationships between ethnic minority communities and the landscape. The National Landscape Partnership is treating it as a pilot to inform a more sustainable programme of action to promote equality of access, and the relationships we hope to build will help us co-create that programme of action.
- Young people: With support from the Farming in Protected Landscape programme, the National Landscape team commissioned a survey by young people to understand perceptions of the countryside of 11–24-year-olds and barriers to access. Building on this survey, a series of co-created events with young people are to be developed in 2023-24. A longer-term vision for young people in the countryside is also be developed with environmental and youth partners across Dorset. A pilot project to develop tree-related activities Reception and KS1 pupils in West Dorset schools is underway, with support from Public Health Dorset.
- Accessible paths: In 2022-23, the Dorset National Landscape team project managed over £77,000 of Defra allocated funding for access improvements, including for people with reduced mobility and/or those who need mobility aids such as wheelchairs or scooters. Paths in and around Bridport have been resurfaced and further work to

improve access for all at Black Down has also been undertaken by Dorset Council's Ranger Service.

- Rural isolation and low income: Working across the network of National Landscapes, the National Landscape Association is submitting a bid to Arts Council England for the Sticks and Stones project. If successful, Dorset National Landscape will be one of 6 'hub' locations to create new opportunities for rural isolated and low-income communities on the northern edge of the National Landscape to creatively connect with the outstanding landscape on their doorstep. If not successful, we will pick up and build contacts made in Weymouth, on the southern edge of the National Landscape.

#### What we will do next:

- Ethnic minority communities: FLAVOURS project will be treated as a pilot to inform a more sustainable programme of action to promote equality of access, and the relationships we hope to build will help us co-create that programme of action.
- Young people: The survey has provided a catalyst for organisations to create a longer-term vision for young people in the countryside is also be developed with environmental and youth partners across Dorset.
- Rural isolation and low income: If the Sticks and Stones project bid is not successful, we will pick up and build contacts made in Weymouth, on the southern edge of the National Landscape.
- Accessible paths: Liaise with stakeholders to identify priorities for phase 2 path improvements funded by Defra.
- Targeting community grants: The Dorset National Landscape Sustainable Development Fund is a small pot of funding available to people who want to conserve, enhance or celebrate the landscape heritage in their local area. We will review beneficiaries of the Fund over the past 7 years and amend the criteria / target specific communities with future Funds to widen reach.

## 4. Communicate effectively

*Ensuring that communication of opportunities for exploring, understanding and getting involved are inclusive.*

#### Where we are now:

- The Dorset National Landscape Partnership is sensitive to the importance of being inclusive in communications and project communications tailored to be appropriate to target audience. However, there has been no formal review of the accessibility of our communication channels.

#### What we will do next:

- New brand guidelines: The proposed National Landscapes rebrand has carefully considered accessibility in design, use of imagery and language. Adopting the rebrand and using the guidelines aims to improve accessibility of the Dorset AONB communications. \*Rebrand undertaken nationally November 2023



- National Landscape website: We will commission an audit and public survey of the Dorset National Landscape website to understand how accessible the content and format is and what improvements can be made to improve it.
- Targeted communication: Through the targeted projects outlined in (3) we will increase our understanding of the best communication channels to reach specific audiences and integrate these into mainstream communications.

## 5. Develop informed and inclusive ways of working

*Listening, learning, reflecting, challenging and sharing will help us on our journey to becoming a more inclusive organisation.*

### Where we are now:

- The Dorset National Landscape Team received EDI training from Dorset Race Equality Council (Dorset REC) in 2022 and many of the team also attended the NAAONB People and Places Conference 2022 which centred around widening engagement. All staff engage in mandatory EDI training devised by our host, Dorset Council. Members of the team also have had varying levels of experience and training in the specific target audiences they are working with.
- Delivery partners in the FLAVOURS project will be required to undergo online EDI training from Dorset REC before hosting activities.
- Census data has been used to inform recent project planning but approach could be rolled out to inform other projects.
- Natural England has recently convened a Wessex AONBs EDI group to share and support good practice and Dorset AONB benefitted from this support.

### What we will do next:

- Training & support: Identify gaps in EDI confidence and understanding within National Landscape team. Meet training needs through formal training, sharing good practice and guided discussion at team meetings. Extend training and support to project partners where needed to ensure inclusive ways of working.
- Knowing our audience: Ensure that up to date data is used to inform project development by providing staff training to collate community census profiles and interpret data.
- Sharing and inspiring good practice: Work with Natural England advisors; other National Landscapes and National Landscapes Association to build supportive 'communities of practice' to share EDI experiences, develop confidence and inspire action.