



# Forestry Commission Equality and Diversity Strategy

## Introduction

***The Forestry Commission's mission is to protect and expand Britain's forests and woodlands and increase their value to society and the environment.***

The Forestry Commission is a Great Britain (GB) organisation with offices located throughout England, Scotland and Wales.

The aim of this strategy is to articulate the Commission's approach to equality and diversity, and to demonstrate our commitment to delivering practical outcomes over the next five years.

The Forestry Commission recognises that in order to deliver the many varied benefits that forestry can provide for everyone our staff need to be representative of the communities we serve today. We therefore aim to recruit and employ people with a wide range of appropriate skills, knowledge and behaviours from a diversity of backgrounds, in order to benefit from the fact that diversity in the workforce adds real value to the business by incorporating different experiences, viewpoints, cultures and ideas. Equality and diversity is fundamental not only to our employment practices but also to the way in which we deliver services, develop policy and engage with communities.

We are committed to equality of opportunity in all areas of employment. We will ensure we treat all staff fairly, with dignity and respect, regardless of race, disability, gender, age, sexual orientation and religion and belief.

We are committed to developing an organisation in which fairness and equality of opportunity are central to our business. We will promote the equality and diversity agenda in policy development and deliver services that meet the needs of all social groups. We will undertake research to help us understand the needs of people in different sectors of the population and how these needs can be met. We will work to develop better links with all stakeholders especially people in under-represented groups, to help us develop, monitor and evaluate our policies and services.

The Forestry Commission is committed to embedding and mainstreaming equality and diversity. This is reflected in our People Strategy which has the overarching objective:

***'We want to better reflect the society we serve as a Government department. Diversity is central to good people management and modern organisational development'.***

## FC Values

The focus of our diversity work and the approaches that we adopt reflect our values. These values are:

- **RESPECT** – Respecting people’s ideas, differing views and perspectives
- **TEAMWORK** – Treating everyone equally in a team and identifying their unique contribution
- **COMMUNICATION** - Communicating in different ways to ensure a common understanding
- **PROFESSIONALISM** – Tapping the potential of a diverse group of people in pursuit of organisational goals
- **LEARNING** – how to do things differently, looking to learn from others
- **CREATIVITY** - Considering different ways of doing things and not always assuming that the usual way is the only way or that ‘one size fits all’

## Aims of the Diversity Strategy

This diversity strategy has the following five high-level aims:

- To recruit and employ more people from a diversity of backgrounds in order to make the Forestry Commission representative of the population of the areas where we operate.
- To support our departmental policies, organisational objectives and operational practice by ensuring our equality and diversity policies allow all people irrespective of race, disability, gender, age, sexual orientation and religion and belief to have access to all our services.
- To improve our engagement with people from diverse backgrounds especially people in minority and under-represented groups.
- To articulate to our staff the business, moral and ethical case for equality and diversity in an easily accessible manner and to monitor and evaluate our progress by improving data quality, collection and analysis.
- To go beyond fulfilling the Commission's general and specific duties and our responsibilities as a public body to become known as an exemplar employer and service provider in respect of equality and diversity.

**Aim 1: To recruit and employ more people from a diversity of backgrounds in order to make the Forestry Commission representative of the population of the areas where we operate**

**Why:** The Forestry Commission is committed to this aim in order to make us more adaptable to the changing needs of society, more understanding and representative of the communities we serve, and receptive to new ideas.

**We will achieve this by:**

- Having policies and practices that are flexible and which encourage and support a diverse workforce.
- Regularly reviewing and analysing recruitment and employment data and responding accordingly.
- Ensuring learning and development opportunities are accessible and appropriate for all our staff.
- Seeking opportunities to build capacity amongst the communities we serve to develop skills and abilities leading to employment in the forestry sector.
- Developing an effective programme of social research.

**Aim 2: To support our departmental policies, organisational objectives and operational practice by ensuring our equality and diversity policies allow all people irrespective of race, disability, gender, age, sexual orientation and religion and belief to have access to all our services.**

**Why:** The Forestry Commission is a publicly funded organisation that has a duty and responsibility to ensure that an appropriate range of services and facilities are available to all component parts of society.

**We will achieve this by:**

- Engaging with and listening to under-represented groups; and
- Analysing and adjusting our policies and practices after feedback.

**Aim 3: To improve our engagement with people from diverse backgrounds especially people in minority and under-represented groups.**

**Why:** The forests and woodlands we manage are for everyone to enjoy and as such we want the range of services and facilities that we provide on the forest estate and those we support elsewhere to be available in accordance with the wants and needs of the local population.

**We will achieve this by:**

- Working in partnership with minority and under-represented groups at the national, regional and local level.
- Consulting with our stakeholders specifically targeting under represented groups.
- Ensuring that we are open and responsive to the needs and requirements of under-represented groups.
- Developing an effective programme of social research.

**Aim 4: To articulate to our staff the business, moral and ethical case for equality and diversity in an easily accessible manner and to monitor and evaluate our progress by improving data quality, collection and analysis**

**Why:** This is important so that we can develop policies and practices derived from evidence about people's needs. We need to do this to raise awareness of the equality and diversity agenda amongst all our staff, and to subsequently ensure the success of our Equality and Diversity Strategy.

**We will achieve this by:**

- Giving clear and consistent internal and external messages on equality and diversity at all levels within the FC, and in two-way dialogue with all our stakeholders especially people in under-represented groups.
- Developing an effective programme of research.
- Embedding behaviours consistent with valuing diversity through the core competencies of the Forestry Commission's Competency Framework.
- Developing our existing framework to record, analyse, monitor, evaluate and review robust data and information.
- Ensuring that business partners and contractors apply the same principles of equality and diversity.

**Aim 5:** To go beyond fulfilling the Commission's general and specific duties and our responsibilities as a public body to become known as an exemplar employer and service provider within the rural industry sector in respect of equality and diversity.

**Why:** The Forestry Commission has a legal obligation to eliminate unlawful discrimination and to promote equality of opportunity. In addition, we see this as central to our business and relationship with our stakeholders and want to develop policies and practices that go beyond legal compliance.

**We will achieve this by:**

- Meeting the targets and deadlines in the Diversity Action Plan.
- Continuing to innovate and develop creative solutions to engaging with more diverse audiences in the provision of our facilities and services
- Building capacity and awareness of our staff to engage with under-represented and minority groups
- Sharing and learning from good practice within the trees, woods and forest sector and with other similar organisations.
- Championing good social inclusion practice.

**Equality & Diversity Target Groups:**

The 6 target groups covered by the legislation are:

**Race**

(particularly Ethnic Minority Groups)

**Age**

(0-24 and particularly 65+)

**Disabled People**

(includes sensory impairment physical disability, mental health illness, and learning difficulties as well as cancer and epilepsy)

**Sexual Orientation**

(Lesbian, Gay, Bi-sexual & Trans-sexual)

**Gender**

(women, men & trans-gender)

**Religion and Belief**

(examples include Buddhism, Christianity, Hinduism, Sikhism, etc).

**Table of Responsibilities:**

<b>Role</b>	<b>Responsibility</b>
Everyone	You are liable for your actions, and must recognise and accept individual responsibility for equality & diversity within the FC. You must ensure that your actions and words both within and outside the Forestry Commission actively welcome different cultures and diverse opinions and views. Everyone is required to attend the appropriate level of training in diversity awareness.
Managers	Managers are responsible for ensuring that Equality and Diversity is embedded in the way we plan and deliver our services. They will also ensure staff are briefed appropriately regarding their responsibilities and requirements surrounding involvement and local community engagement. Managers will release staff as necessary to attend diversity training, and will themselves attend all training made available to them.
HR	Human Resources (HR) oversee and drive the delivery of the GB Diversity Action Plan. This sets out our commitment to the delivery of equality and diversity targets for the whole of the Forestry Commission. This Strategy and associated action plan establishes mechanisms to ensure that our statutory employment responsibilities under the Equality legislation are met e.g. monitoring, evaluating, reporting and reviewing the employment duties and actions listed within the Commission's Equality Schemes. HR will deliver this plan on time and within budget whilst also providing advice and support to business areas. In this task HR will include examples of good practice that encourage better understanding and appreciation of diversity issues. HR will also develop policies and processes that promote equality of opportunity to everyone.
HR Business Partners	HR Business Partners support the application of equality & diversity in employment practices, and ensure that they represent the E&D agenda directly to senior managers across the FC via Management Boards etc
Policy Leads & Responsible Officers	Policy officers and Responsible Officers will support the application of equality and diversity in day-to-day business practices including Equality Impact Assessment (EqIA) of existing and new policies, strategies, etc.
Diversity Technical Group	The DTG was formed to ensure that the Forestry Commission meets its legal and moral obligations with regard to equality and diversity. The DTG is concerned with all aspects of diversity in the FC; gender, age, disability, sexual orientation, race and religion. The DTG is



	<p>responsible for improving the performance of the FC on diversity issues and facilitating the development of policies, procedures and practices in respect of dignity, diversity and equality, for both FC employees and service delivery.</p> <p>To this end, the DTG will develop a FC Diversity Strategy and Action Plan to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• ensure compliance with, and monitoring of, our statutory duties;</li> <li>• link closely with the People Strategy and corporate business plans, and;</li> <li>• ensure that the FC achieves best practice through cultural change.</li> </ul>
Social Research Team	<p>The Social Research Team will collaborate with the Diversity Team to develop a programme of research to support the Equality and Diversity agenda and deliver the Diversity Strategy, looking initially into possible barriers to applications for employment.</p>

## Meeting our customers' needs

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**Anyone with comments on this publication is also welcome to contact us at the address below:**

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