

Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy (HR_P5)

1. POLICY STATEMENT

1.1

Hertfordshire & Middlesex Wildlife Trust (“the Trust”) is committed to actively creating a welcoming, inclusive and equitable organisation where everyone feels valued, respected and able to participate fully. We aspire to be a Trust where all people feel connected to, represented by, and inspired by our diverse wildlife, habitats and wild spaces, and where everyone can experience a genuine sense of belonging.

Our commitment to equality, diversity and inclusion extends to trustees, employees, volunteers, members, beneficiaries, participants, partners and visitors, and will help inform how we make decisions, shape our culture and deliver our work.

We are committed to continually reviewing and improving our practices, recognising that becoming truly inclusive is an ongoing journey. This includes ensuring equality of opportunity, addressing discrimination, harassment, hate and disadvantage, and fostering positive relationships across all communities we work with. We aim to uphold high standards of inclusivity in all aspects of our organisation, from decision-making and governance to employment and volunteer practice.

This Policy sets a clear expectation that all trustees, staff, volunteers, partners and stakeholders share responsibility for creating and sustaining an environment where equality, diversity and inclusion guide our actions at every level of the Trust.

1.2

This policy supports the Trust to fulfil its responsibilities under the **Equality Act 2010**, and to take proactive steps to ensure equitable treatment and meaningful participation for all. It acknowledges that inequalities can be structural, and therefore require continuous learning and improvement.

1.3

We are committed to fostering an environment and culture where everyone is treated with dignity and respect. Harassment, discrimination, bullying and victimisation have no place within our organisation. The Trust maintains separate policies, addressing these issues in more detail.

1.4

We will not discriminate directly or indirectly based on any protected characteristic, as defined by the Equality Act 2010.

1.5

Discrimination towards an individual after their involvement with the Trust (e.g., post-employment references or volunteer recommendations) is also unlawful.

1.6

We are committed to ensuring that the services, opportunities and environments we provide are accessible. We will make reasonable adjustments and proactively identify and remove barriers to participation for disabled people and groups who may face structural disadvantage.

1.7

Appendix A provides further details of relevant legislation.

1.8

Appendix B summarises forms of unlawful discrimination.

1.9

The Trust aims to avoid unlawful discrimination in all aspects of involvement, including recruitment, volunteering, trusteeship, participation in activities, training, development, access to nature and employment.

1.10

We will consider the equality impacts of our practices, such as working hours, activity times, accessibility, and formats, refusing variations only where there are justified reasons unrelated to protected characteristics.

1.11

We will meet statutory obligations regarding flexible working and will consider reasonable adjustments for all employees, volunteers, trustees or participants.

1.12

The Trust will monitor the diversity and representation of employees, volunteers, trustees and participants, and take appropriate steps where disparities or barriers are identified.

1.13

We may lawfully use positive discrimination to address under-representation where appropriate, ensuring that opportunities are fair, transparent and open.

1.14

We recognise that becoming a fully inclusive organisation is an ongoing journey. We are committed to continuous improvement, engaging with communities, learning from lived experiences and adapting our practices as new insights emerge.

2. DIGNITY AND BELONGING

2.1

The Trust is committed to building a culture where everyone; staff, trustees, volunteers and participants, feels included, respected and able to contribute. Separate policies set out how concerns relating to bullying, harassment or discrimination will be addressed.

3. PEOPLE, COMMUNITIES AND PARTNERS

3.1

The Trust will not unlawfully discriminate against any individual or group engaging with our services, activities, reserves, events or facilities.

3.2

All representatives of the Trust should report any incidents of bullying, harassment or discriminatory conduct from customers, visitors, external partners, contractors or others. The Trust will take appropriate action.

3.3

We recognise that some communities have historically been excluded from, or under-represented in, nature spaces and conservation roles. We will actively work to improve access and relevance for these communities.

4. TRAINING AND CAPACITY BUILDING

4.1

Training on EDI principles and responsibilities will be provided for anyone involved in decision-making, recruitment, volunteer management, governance or community engagement.

4.2

All representatives of the Trust (employees, volunteers and trustees) will receive guidance to help build inclusive behaviours, challenge discrimination, and support a culture free from bullying and harassment.

4.3

Training content will be periodically reviewed to reflect evolving best practice and organisational learning.

5. RESPONSIBILITIES

5.1

Everyone connected with the Trust shares responsibility for upholding this policy and contributing to an inclusive culture.

5.2

Individuals may be personally liable for acts of unlawful discrimination or harassment.

5.3

Any acts of discrimination, harassment, bullying or victimisation against employees, volunteers, trustees, beneficiaries or customers will be treated as serious misconduct.

6. RAISING CONCERNS

6.1

Anyone who believes they have experienced discrimination, harassment or inequitable treatment may raise concerns through the relevant Trust procedure (e.g., grievance, complaints or safeguarding procedures depending on role and context).

6.2

Concerns will be taken seriously, handled sensitively and without detriment to the person raising them unless a complaint is knowingly false.

6.3

This does not limit legal rights under employment or equalities legislation.

7. MONITORING AND REVIEW

7.1

The Trust will periodically review this policy to ensure it remains effective and reflects evolving best practice.

7.2

Monitoring data from employees, volunteers, trustees and participants will be used only for EDI and organisational development purposes, and handled in line with the Trust's Data Protection Policy.

7.3

We commit to transparent reporting, continuous learning and ongoing improvement.

APPENDIX A

Law relating to this document

Leading statutory authority

Equality Act 2010

The Equality Act 2010 came into force on 1 October 2010. The purpose of the Equality Act 2010 is to simplify discrimination legislation and create a more consistent and effective framework, while at the same time extending discrimination protection.

The Act defines direct discrimination as less favourable treatment because of a protected characteristic. The protected characteristics under the Equality Act 2010 are:

- age;
- disability;
- gender reassignment;
- marriage and civil partnership;
- pregnancy and maternity;
- race;

- religion or belief;
- sex; and
- sexual orientation.

Indirect discrimination against individuals because they have a relevant protected characteristic is also covered, although pregnancy and maternity does not come under the indirect discrimination provisions in the Equality Act 2010.

Employers will be liable for acts of unlawful discrimination committed by their employees against other employees or customers in the course of their employment unless they can show that they took such steps as were reasonably practicable to prevent those acts. There is no limit on compensation for unlawful discrimination, which includes compensation for injury to feelings and personal injury.

Employers may take positive action in the form of proportionate measures to encourage or train people from an under-represented group to apply for jobs, overcome a perceived disadvantage or meet specific needs based on a protected characteristic. For example, an employer could facilitate women having access to childcare facilities, or provide certain religious groups with time off for religious observance.

The Equality Act 2010 makes it unlawful to discriminate directly or indirectly, or harass customers or clients because of the protected characteristics of disability, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex, and sexual orientation in the provision goods and services.

APPENDIX B

Types of unlawful discrimination

Direct discrimination is where a person is treated less favourably than another because of a protected characteristic. An example of direct discrimination would be refusing to employ a woman because she is pregnant.

In limited circumstances, employers can directly discriminate against an individual for a reason related to any of the protected characteristics where there is an occupational requirement. The occupational requirement must be crucial to the post and a proportionate means of achieving a legitimate aim.

Indirect discrimination is where a provision, criterion or practice is applied that is discriminatory in relation to individuals who have a relevant protected characteristic (although it does not explicitly include pregnancy and maternity, which is covered by indirect sex discrimination) such that it would be to the detriment of people who share that protected characteristic compared with people who do not, and it cannot be shown to be a proportionate means of achieving a legitimate aim. An example of indirect discrimination would be requiring an individual to have ten years of experience in a role to qualify for a promotion, as this would disadvantage younger employees or those who took a career break for parental leave.

Harassment is where there is unwanted conduct, related to one of the protected characteristics (other than marriage and civil partnership, and pregnancy and maternity) that has the purpose or effect of violating a person's dignity; or creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment. It does not matter whether or not this effect was intended by the person responsible for the conduct.

Associative discrimination is where an individual is directly discriminated against or harassed for association with another individual who has a protected characteristic (although it does not cover harassment because of marriage and civil partnership, and pregnancy and maternity).

Perceptive discrimination is where an individual is directly discriminated against or harassed based on a perception that he/she has a particular protected characteristic when he/she does not, in fact, have that protected characteristic (other than marriage and civil partnership, and pregnancy and maternity).

Third-party harassment occurs where an employee is harassed and the harassment is related to a protected characteristic (other than marriage and civil partnership, and pregnancy and maternity), by third parties such as clients or customers. For an employer to be liable:

- the harassment must have occurred on at least two previous occasions (although not necessarily by the same harasser or suffering the same type of harassment);
- it must be aware that the previous harassment has taken place; and
- it must have failed to take reasonable steps to prevent harassment from happening again.

Victimisation occurs where an employee is subjected to a detriment, such as being denied a training opportunity or a promotion because he/she made or supported a complaint or raised a grievance under the Equality Act 2010, or because he or she is suspected of doing so. However, an employee is not protected from victimisation if he or she acted maliciously or made or supported an untrue complaint. There is no longer a need for a complainant to compare his or her treatment with someone who has not made or supported a complaint under the Equality Act 2010. For example, if a blind employee raises a grievance that the employer is not complying with its duty to make reasonable

adjustments, and is then systematically excluded from all meetings, such behaviour could amount to victimisation.

Failure to make reasonable adjustments is where a physical feature or a provision, criterion or practice puts a disabled person at a substantial disadvantage compared with someone who does not have that protected characteristic and the employer has failed to make reasonable adjustments.