



DISABILITY ACTION PLAN 2015 – 2017

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Foreword from the Chief Executive

The Waterways Ireland's Disability Action Plan 2015-2017 (hereafter referred to as 'the Plan') is a statement of our commitment to fulfilling the statutory obligations in compliance with Section 49A of the Disability Discrimination Act 1995 (as amended by the Disability Discrimination (NI) Order 2006). This Act places duties on public authorities, when carrying out their functions, to have due regard to the need to:-

- promote positive attitudes towards people with disabilities; and
- encourage participation by people with disabilities in public life.

Disability issues are important to Waterways Ireland for reasons beyond compliance with statutory obligations. Access to our services and facilities is central to our aim of creating the right conditions to support inclusion, equality of opportunity, and also increased public participation and appreciation of the waterways environment. Consequently, the Plan is aligned with the strategic commitments to disability issues in our Corporate Plan 2014-2016 and annual Business Plans during these years.

The Plan provides a strategic framework which place disability issues at the heart of policy and decision-making within our organisation, and outlines positive action measures which will be mainstreamed and prioritized across all of our work programmes.



DAWN LIVINGSTONE
Chief Executive

1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 Under Section 49A of the Disability Discrimination Act 1995 (DDA 1995), as amended by Article 5 of the Disability Discrimination (Northern Ireland) Order 2006, Waterways Ireland is required, when carrying out its functions, to have due regard to the need to:-
- promote positive attitudes towards disabled people; and
 - encourage participation by disabled people in public life
- 1.2 Under Section 49B of the DDA 1995, Waterways Ireland is also required to submit to the Equality Commission a Disability Action Plan showing how it proposes to fulfill these duties in relation to its functions.

2.0 Purpose of the Disability Action Plan

- 2.1 Waterways Ireland is committed to the fulfillment of its disability duties in relation to its business functions, and in making these duties central to our aim of creating the right conditions to support inclusion, equality of opportunity and increasing public participation and appreciation of the waterways environment.

This Plan outlines the positive action measures Waterways Ireland will deliver during 2015-2017. It builds upon the achievements of the 2011-2013 Plan, whilst also identifying new opportunities to make disability issues an integral part of Waterways Ireland's work programmes.

3.0 Waterways Ireland's Role, Functions and Strategic Business Objectives

- 3.1 Waterways Ireland is the largest of the six North / South Implementation Bodies established under the British Irish Agreement of 10th April 1998. This agreement was given domestic effect by means of the North / South Co-operation (Implementation Bodies) (Northern Ireland) Order 1999, and the British-Irish Agreement Act, 1999 respectively.

As a Cross Border Body we are responsible to our sponsor Departments, the Department of Culture, Arts and Leisure (DCAL) in Northern Ireland and the Department of Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (DAHG) in Ireland.

The Body operates under the policy direction of the North South Ministerial Council and the two Governments, and is accountable to the Northern Ireland Assembly and the Houses of the Oireachtas.

The statutory function of Waterways Ireland is to manage, maintain, develop and restore specified inland navigable waterways, principally for recreational purposes. In delivering this function, Waterways Ireland has responsibility for approximately 1,000 km of navigable waterways, comprising:

- the Barrow Navigation
- the Grand Canal
- the Royal Canal
- the Lower Bann Navigation
- the Erne System
- the Shannon-Erne Waterway
- the Shannon Navigation

Waterways Ireland's remit was extended by the North South Ministerial Council in July 2007 to include responsibility for the reconstruction of the Ulster Canal from Upper Lough Erne to Clones, and following restoration, for its management, maintenance and development principally for recreational purposes.

- 3.2 Waterways Ireland's Corporate Plan 2014-2016 outlines a new emphasis on increasing the public use of the inland waterways and in doing so, to further extend the benefits these important outdoor recreation assets can deliver to a wider community base. We believe that the creation of opportunities for people with disabilities to participate in waterway activities and associated events is integral to realizing our strategic aspirations.

Our Mission Statement

To provide recreational opportunities along the inland waterways that sustains people, communities, heritage and nature.

Our Strategic Business Objectives

- To manage and maintain the 1,000 km of navigation in our care to provide, safe, open and accessible public recreational space.
- To inspire more people to discover and enjoy recreational activities on the inland waterways, and to explore these rich environment and heritage attractions.
- To focus future development on unlocking opportunities to achieve recreational growth, and economic and social development.
- To re-organize and optimize the use of our resources to deliver a high quality public service, and achieve budget efficiencies.
- To explore and develop opportunities to earn income to fund future investment in the inland waterways.
- To continue to develop Waterways Ireland as the respected and valued custodian of the inland waterways.

The development and implementation of this Disability Action Plan hinges on the effective engagement of disability representatives and aligning our resources with appropriate recreational providers to create new access opportunities. We believe that the benefits to people with disabilities and their families who share in these experiences will be positively life changing.

4.0 Implementation of the Plan

- 4.1 Waterways Ireland is committed to the effective implementation of this Plan throughout the organization.
- 4.2 Overall responsibility for determining policy on how this Plan will be achieved lies with the Chief Executive. Day to day responsibility for carrying out the policy determined by the Chief Executive lies with the Director of Finance & Personnel, who will be responsible for the implementation of administrative arrangements to ensure that Waterways Ireland complies with disability duties when carrying out its functions.
- 4.3 Necessary resources, in terms of people, time and budget, will be allocated in order to effectively implement this Plan and also deliver associated objectives and targets relating to disability duties in our corporate and business plans. Waterways Ireland is committed to ensuring that this Plan is communicated to all staff and will provide the necessary training and guidance on disability duties on the implementation of this plan.
- 4.4 Waterways Ireland will also ensure appropriate internal arrangements are in place to monitor and report on compliance with the disability duties, and implementation of this Action Plan. A three year review of the Plan will be carried out in consultation with the Equality Commission for Northern Ireland.

5.0 Annual Report

- 5.1 Waterways Ireland confirms its commitment to submitting an annual report to the Equality Commission based on the implementation of this Plan. A copy of the annual report will be made available on our website and can be provided in alternative formats on request.
- 5.2 Details of progress on meeting objectives in relation to Disability Duties will also be included in Waterways Ireland's corporate Annual Report.

6.0 Effective Engagement

- 6.1 We are committed to engaging effectively with people who have disabilities and their representative groups on the development, implementation and review of this plan.

7.0 Consultation

- 7.1 Waterways Ireland is committed to carrying out meaningful consultation in the development of its disability duties. We believe it is important to give people with disabilities an opportunity to provide feedback in a constructive manner, as to how we are implementing our employment duties. Consultation with people who have disabilities is also integral to the effective development, implementation, monitoring and review of the Plan. It is intended that this

reflective and forward looking engagement of consultees will ensure that the actions Waterways Ireland put in place bring about sustainable change for people with disabilities.

- 7.2 Specifically, we seek the views of consultees listed at Appendix A of this plan in relation to the Action Measures set out in Section 10. We welcome comments, enquiries and feedback in relation to these actions and also suggested additional actions.
- 7.3 The involvement of consultees is designed to assist Waterways Ireland by:
 - 7.3.1 Identifying barriers faced by people with disabilities in participating in public life in general and specifically any barriers they have encountered when dealing with us;
 - 7.3.2 Identifying circumstances in the past in which we have not promoted positive attitudes towards people with disabilities and by identifying future opportunities to promote such attitudes;
 - 7.3.3 Setting priorities and identifying solutions to take remedial action; and
 - 7.3.4 Monitoring and reviewing the effectiveness of measures taken.
- 7.4 The consultations process will consist of:
 - 7.4.1 Written requests for responses to stakeholders and target groups on the draft Plan;
 - 7.4.2 Placement of the draft 2015 - 2017 Plan on Waterways Ireland's website;
 - 7.4.3 Face to face meetings with advisory groups and use of other methodologies identified as best practice; and
 - 7.4.4 Removal of barriers to participation by offering to make consultation documents available in alternative formats such as Braille, audio formats and large print.
- 7.5 Consultation responses will be accepted in a variety of formats including:
 - 7.5.1 In any written form, for example, letters, papers, fax, etc.
 - 7.5.2 By e-mail to consultation@waterwaysireland.org
 - 7.5.3 By requesting a one-to-one meeting; and
 - 7.5.4 Any other method which could be reasonably accommodated.
- 7.6 On completion of the consultation process, Waterways Ireland will review the feedback received on Appendix B, and update the Disability Action Plan as necessary. All consultees will receive a copy of our response to the consultation comments received.
- 7.7 The Equality Unit will have responsibility for implementing, reviewing and evaluating this Plan.

8.0 Public Life Positions over which Waterways Ireland has Responsibility

Waterways Ireland does not have direct control over public life positions, however, we will continue to clearly communicate our commitment to encouraging the participation of people with disabilities in public life through recruitment and our Sponsorship Programme.

Opportunities are also provided for involvement of our staff in policy and decision-making groups through the following channels;

- Waterways Ireland Partnership Forum
- Joint Industrial Relations Forum
- Trade Union National Negotiating Committees
- Newsletter Editorial Team

9.0. Previous Measures

The following measures are indicative of the many positive actions we have taken in delivering previous Disability Actions Plans, with a number of these actions established as part of our continuing commitment to promoting good equality practices.

- 9.1 Accessibility Audits have been carried out at 3 of our premises, including the Headquarters building in Enniskillen, in order to improve access for people with disabilities.
- 9.2 A Text phone is installed in our Headquarters building to improve accessibility for customers with hearing difficulties.
- 9.3 All capital and maintenance projects are designed in accordance with best practice standards in line with our Access for Disabled Persons policy and procedures. This policy is integral to promoting disabled access to goods, services and information across the organization.
- 9.4 Improved signage and interpretive panels are provided along the waterway corridors.
- 9.5 Events are sponsored each year to widen the appeal of the waterways for everyone, including people with disabilities.
- 9.6 Positive images of people with disabilities enjoying our waterways are included in our corporate publications, and articles are published in our internal newsletters.
- 9.7 All staff received training on equality and disability issues. Specialist training was provided to those who deal specifically with disability and equality of opportunity matters.
- 9.8 New employees are informed of our commitment to Equal Opportunities through an Induction process and provided with a copy of

the Equal Opportunities Policy and Access for Disabled Persons Policy.

- 9.9 All policies are available to staff with disabilities in an appropriate format as requested, including large type.
- 9.10 All policies being developed or reviewed are subject to the provisions of the Equality Scheme and the ethos of the Equal Opportunities Policy.
- 9.11 New policies are screened during development to seek to identify, address and mitigate, where possible, any adverse effect on people with disabilities.
- 9.12 Existing policies are reviewed to ensure best practice and compliance with new legislation relating to people with disabilities.
- 9.13 Waterways Ireland's website is fully dynamic and interactive and conforms to level Double-A of the W3C Web Content Accessibility Guidelines.
- 9.14 Marketing and Communications staff have received training on making information accessible as part of Disability Awareness within the Access for All programme.
- 9.15 All job vacancies recruited externally are posted on the website, potentially opening up career opportunities to a much wider audience and promoting equality of opportunity. It is Waterways Ireland's policy to provide employment equality to all existing and potential employees, irrespective of disability.
- 9.16 All selection processes address the special needs of applicants on an individual basis.
- 9.17 All selection panel members have received specialist training to ensure equality of opportunity is taken account of throughout the recruitment process.
- 9.18 Waterways Ireland has worked in conjunction with Disability Advice Services and Ulster Supported Employment Limited, and currently employs 2 staff through an employment support programme.
- 9.19 Employees, who have requested assistance to carry out their duties, have been provided with additional support. Additionally, we invite employees to notify us if they wish to have a personal evacuation plan developed to accommodate their needs, in the event of an evacuation from our office buildings.
- 9.20 Where public meetings are planned, consideration is given to ensuring that the venue and required services is accessible to all attendees.

Section 10 of this Plan details the action measures and associated performance indicators and outputs Waterways Ireland commits to delivering between 2015 - 2017.

10.0 Action Measures

	Public Life Action Measure	Performance Indicator	Impact / Outcome	Timescale	Responsibility
10.1	Ensure the needs of people with disabilities are incorporated into Waterways Ireland Corporate Plan and Business Plans.	Number and nature of disability related actions delivered in the Corporate Plan and associated Business Plans.	Disability issues are mainstreamed and therefore staff are obligated to consider at all levels and at all stages of the decision making process throughout the organisation.	Lifetime of Plan	All sections

	Training Action Measure	Performance Indicator	Impact / Outcome	Timescale	Responsibility
10.2	Provide disability equality training to all new staff members.	Number of additional staff that have received disability equality training.	Ensures new staff are made aware of disability equality issues and Waterways Ireland's commitment to addressing concerns.	Ongoing	Human Resources
10.3	Provide specialist training as required e.g. to members of the Equality Unit, members of Recruitment and Selection Panels.	Number and type of training interventions provided to key staff members.	Improves staff knowledge of disability issues, and provides them with an up-to-date understanding of legislation and potential access opportunities.	Ongoing	Equality Unit Human Resources
10.4	Refresher disability equality training targeted for Senior Management.	Number and type of training interventions provided to members of the Senior Management team.	Keeps Senior Management informed of disability issues and influences them to affect positive change opportunities.	December 2015	Human Resources

	Training Action Measure	Performance Indicator	Impact / Outcome	Timescale	Responsibility
10.5	Review Personal Emergency Evacuation Plan (PEEP) procedures for staff and regular visitors.	Number of Personal Emergency Evacuation Plans (PEEP) developed and or reviewed.	Ensures that all staff and regular visitors have safe egress from buildings in the event of an emergency.	December of each year	Equality Unit

	Communications Action Measure	Performance Indicator	Impact / Outcome	Timescale	Responsibility
10.6	Highlight disability issues in internal staff communications.	At least four articles per year on disability related issues to be included in internal staff e-zine or published on the website.	Increased staff knowledge and awareness of specific disability issues and their shared obligations to implement the disability agenda.	December of each year	Equality Unit Marketing & Communications
10.7	Promote positive images of people with disabilities enjoying the waterways environment.	Number of photographs / images of people with disabilities in corporate publications, on social media and on the website.	Encourages people with disabilities to experience the waterways, and in doing so, improve their health and social wellbeing. Such imagery also removes pre-conceived perceptions of the capabilities of people with disabilities.	December of each year	Equality Unit Marketing & Communications

	Communications Action Measure	Performance Indicator	Impact / Outcome	Timescale	Responsibility
10.9	Raise awareness of Disability Action Plan 2015-2017 amongst all staff.	Notify all staff by email and insert a message in their periodic Pay Slips.	Create awareness of Waterways Ireland's shared disability obligations, and additionally provide staff with a confidential opportunity to advise if they have any related requirements.	Within 3 month of the Plan being approved.	Equality Unit Finance HR
		Make 'Progress on Delivery of the Action Plan 2015-2017' an Agenda item at Senior Management Meetings.	Drive cross-divisional responsibility and delivery of the Action Plan 2015-2017.	June 2015	All sections
10.10	Provide appropriate information and advice service to people with disabilities.	Maintenance of website, telephone and email service in accordance with disability guidelines. Number and nature of alternative accessible format public requests responded to.	Promotes equality of opportunity and accessibility to Waterways Ireland's facilities and services.	Ongoing	Equality Unit Marketing & Communications HR

	Encourage Others Action Measure	Performance Indicator	Impact / Outcome	Timescale	Responsibility
10.11	Work with recreational providers to create opportunities for people with disabilities to participate in waterway activities.	Provide water based recreational programmes for 20 disabled people on the Erne System, Shannon-Erne Waterway and Lower Bann.	Increase the participation of people with disabilities in waterway activities, and in doing so, build their confidence, skills enhance their social well, and positively change their lives.	September of each year	Strategy & Policy Operations
10.12	Sponsor events for people with disabilities, through the Waterways Ireland Sponsorship Programme.	Sponsor at least 3 events each year under the Sponsorship Programme which are specifically for people with disabilities.	<p>People with disabilities are encouraged to visit and enjoy our waterways.</p> <p>Raise awareness of disability issues for event attendees.</p> <p>Promote Access for All to our facilities.</p>	December of each year	Marketing & Communications
10.13	Review and update Waterways Ireland's Recruitment & Selection procedures, in order to increase the number of job applicants with disabilities.	Benchmark Waterways Ireland's Recruitment & Selection procedures against Best Practice guidelines.	Recognition that Waterways Ireland's procedures and processes provide equality of opportunity for disabled people.	December 2015	Equality Unit Human Resources

11.0 Publication of the Plan

- 11.1 Following submission to the Equality Commission for Northern Ireland, this Disability Action Plan will be made available at:

www.waterwaysireland.org

Waterways Ireland will, through its ongoing work with people with disabilities, seek out further opportunities to communicate the Plan and develop collaborative disability programmes. Additionally, the Plan will be highlighted through advertisements, mail shots and meetings directly with disability organizations and representative groups, where requested. A copy of the Plan will also be made available to all employees.

- 11.2 The Plan will be made available in alternative formats on request, including large print, Braille, audio cassette, audio CD, computer disc, Irish and Ulster Scots. It may also be provided in other minority languages, subject to demand.

For further information on the content of this Plan or to discuss your specific format / translation requirements, please contact:

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Appendix A

List of Consultees

Action for Dysphasia Adults - Speakability
Action MS
Action on Hearing Loss
Advice NI
Age Concern
Age NI
Age Sector Platform
Alliance Party of Northern Ireland
An Munia Tober
Ar Ais Aris
Ards Borough Council
Armagh City & District Council
Armagh Travellers Support Group
Arthritis Care NI
Arts Council of NI
Association for Spina Bifida & Hydrocephalus (ASBAH)
Autism NI (PAPA)
Baha'i Council (NI)
Ballymena Borough Council
Ballymoney Borough Council
Banbridge District Council
Barnardos
Belfast City Council
Belfast Islamic Centre
Belfast Regeneration Office
Belfast Unemployed Resource Centre
Biodiversity Officer
British Deaf Association
British Epilepsy Association
Carafriend
Carers Northern Ireland National Association
Castlereagh Borough Council
Centre for Voluntary Action Studies
Child Poverty Action Group
Childline NI
Children's Law Centre
Chrysalis Women's Centre
CO3 Chief Officers 3rd Sector
Coalition on Sexual Orientation

Coiste Na n-larchmont
Coleraine Borough Council
Committee on the Administration of Justice
Community Care Forum
Community Development & Health Network
Community Development and Health Network
Community Relations Council (CRC)
Community Relations Training/Learning Consortium
Confederation of Community Groups
Cookstown & Western Shores Area Network
Cookstown and Western Shores Area Network
Cookstown District Council
Co-Operation Ireland
Corrymeela Community
Council For Catholic Maintained Schools
Craigavon Asian Women & Children Association
Craigavon Borough Council
Craigavon Travellers Support Committee
Craigavon Vietnamese Group
CRUSE Bereavement NI Regional Office
Cystic Fibrosis Trust
Democratic Unionist Party
Department for Employment and Learning
Department for Regional Development
Department of Agriculture and Learning
Department of Education
Department of Enterprise, Trade and Investment
Department of Finance and Personnel
Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety
Department of the Environment
Derry City Council
Derry Well Woman
Diabetes UK (NI)
Disability Action
Disability Sport England
Down District Council
Down's Syndrome Association
Dungannon & South Tyrone Borough

Council
East Down Rural Community Network
Eastern Health & Social Services Board
Emerald Star
Equality Commission for NI
Equality Forum NI
Equality Unit
Erne Charter Boat Association
Extern Organisation
Family Planning Association (NI)
Fermanagh District Council
Fermanagh Rural Community Network
Fermanagh Shadow Youth Council
Fisheries Sectoral Development Programme
Focus on Family
Gay and Lesbian Youth NI
Gingerbread NI
Girl Guiding Ulster
GMB
Guru Nanak Gurdwara
Heritage Lottery Fund
Huntington Disease Association
I.C.B.A.N.
Iar-Chimi Fhear Manach
Indian Community Centre
Industrial Therapy Organisation (Ulster) Ltd
Inland Waterways Association of Ireland (NI Branch)
Intertrade Ireland
Japanese Society of NI
La Societa Italiana Irlanda del Nord
Larne Borough Council
Lesbian Line
Letterbreen Development Association
Limavady District Council
Lisburn City Council
Londonderry Port and Harbour Commissioners
Loughs Agency
LUPUS Group
Lurgan Council for Voluntary Action
Magherafelt District Council
Making Women Seen & Heard
Mandarin Speaking Association

Mid-Ulster Women's Network
Moyle District Council
Bryson Intercultural (formerly The Multicultural Resource Centre)
Multiple Sclerosis Society (NI)
National Trust
Newry & Mourne District Council
Newry & Mourne Ethnic Minority Support Centre
Newtownabbey Borough Council
NIACRO
NICEM (Northern Ireland Council for Ethnic Minorities)
North Down Borough Council
North Eastern Education & Library Board
North West Ethnic Communities Association
North West Forum of People With Disabilities
Northern Health & Social Services Board
Northern Ireland African Cultural Centre
Northern Ireland Association of Mental Health
Northern Ireland Committee - Irish Congress of Trade Unions
Northern Ireland Council for Ethnic Minorities
Northern Ireland Council for the Homeless
Northern Ireland Council for Voluntary Action
Northern Ireland Dyslexia Association
Northern Ireland Environmental Link
Northern Ireland Filipino Association
Northern Ireland Filipino Community in Action
Northern Ireland Gay Rights Association
Northern Ireland Housing Executive
Northern Ireland Human Rights Commission (NIHRC)
Northern Ireland Inter-Faith Forum
Northern Ireland Partnership Board
Northern Ireland Pre-School Playgroup Association
Northern Ireland Statistics & Research Agency
Northern Ireland Statistics and Research

Agency
Northern Ireland Women's Aid Federation
Northern Ireland Women's European Platform
Northern Ireland Youth Forum
NSPCC Northern Ireland Division
NUS USI
Office of the First Minister & Deputy First Minister
Omagh District Council
Omagh Women's Area Network
Organisation for the Unemployed
Playboard NI Ltd
Pobal
Praxis Care
Progressive Unionist Party
Proteus
Queer Space
Regeneration of South Armagh (RoSA)
Rivers Agency
Royal National Institute for the Blind (RNIB)
Rural Development Council
Save the Children
Scout Association NI
SDLP
Sense Northern Ireland
Share Centre
Sinn Fein
South Eastern Education & Library Board
South Education & Library Board
Special EU Programmes Body
Sperrin Lakeland Senior Citizens` Consortium
Sports Council For Northern Ireland
Staff Commission for Education & Library Boards
Strabane Community Network
Strabane Community Network
Strabane District Council
STEP (South Tyrone Empowerment Programme)
Sustainable Northern Ireland Programme
Tar Abhaile
The African and Caribbean Association of

Foyle
The Cedar Foundation
The Department of Culture Arts and Leisure
The Guide Dogs for the Blind Association
The HIV Support Centre
The Local Government Staff Commission for NI
The Multi-Cultural Group
The Northern Ireland Office
The Northern Ireland Filipino Community in Action
The Rainbow Project
The Rural Centre
The Special Olympics Ulster
The Women's Centre
Tourist Development International
Ulster Unionist Party
Ulster Waterways Group
Ulster Wildlife Trust
Ulster-Scots Heritage Council
UNISON
Unite
University of the 3rd Age
University of Ulster School of Environmental Studies
UUJ Department of Public Policy
Victim Support (NI) Central Office
Voluntary And Community Unit-
Volunteer Now
Western Education and Library Board
Western Health & Social Services Board
Youth Council for Northern Ireland
Youthnet