



Public Authority Statutory Equality and Good Relations Duties Annual Progress Report

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Documents published relating to our Equality Scheme can be found at:

<https://www.waterwaysireland.org/>

Signature:

This report has been prepared using a template circulated by the Equality Commission.

It presents our progress in fulfilling our statutory equality and good relations duties, and implementing Equality Scheme commitments and Disability Action Plans.

This report reflects progress made between April 2020 and March 2021

PART A – Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998 and Equality Scheme

Section 1: Equality and good relations outcomes, impacts and good practice

- 1 In 2020-21, please provide **examples** of key policy/service delivery developments made by the public authority in this reporting period to better promote equality of opportunity and good relations; and the outcomes and improvements achieved.

Please relate these to the implementation of your statutory equality and good relations duties and Equality Scheme where appropriate.

Training / Awareness

Central to delivering our equality of opportunity and good relations obligations is training interventions, both for new and existing staff. All new employees, permanent or temporary, are made aware of Waterways Ireland's Equal Opportunities Policy and their responsibilities as part of induction into the Body.

During 2020/2021 PTA staff, North and South, undertook eLearning on Diversity & Inclusion in the Workplace which provided compliance training ensuring they are aware of their roles and responsibilities in promoting a diverse and inclusive workplace for everyone. Workshop-based training with operational staff was not possible due to Covid-19 restrictions and lockdowns.

Waterways Ireland employees celebrated International Women's Day by attending a virtual event hosted by The Executive Institute which featured a live interview with Katie Piper, who survived a life-threatening acid attack in 2008 and has since endured 12 years of rehabilitation to get her life back on track.

Waterways Ireland Education Programme

The Education Programme aims to integrate the inland waterways with the learning environment and provide learning experiences which are meaningful, accessible, engaging and stimulating for all.

The Learning Zone is a platform which is used by the education programme to upload fun and interactive resources for teachers and parents to use with their students/children. The Learning Zone resources and workshops have been developed with the intention of providing access to all. This includes supporting children with learning difficulties by providing the opportunity to access a broader educational base which previously may not have been possible. Examples of resources accompanied by easy to follow instructions include:

- Videos of virtual visits to the waterways
- Interactive presentations
- Visual aids free to download from the Learning Zone such as:
 - Waterway Eco Dial
 - Colours of the Waterways activity
 - Crazy Canal Cycle story book and challenges – Nature Navvies Programme

○ Waterway Wildlife Fact File

The onset of COVID-19 brought many challenges to all sectors of society. Like many others, the roll out of the WI Education Programme had to be adapted to meet the changing demand of our target audience.

During the period April 2020 to March 2021 the following workshops were rolled out virtually:

- Bugs & Beasties – Halloween workshop Oct 2020
- Explore Ireland’s Waterways – Science Week Nov 2020
- Spotlight on the Erne – NI Science Festival Feb 2021
- Who wants to be an Engineer – Engineers Week March 2021

Throughout lockdown and with the commencement of home schooling, the Education team introduced a schedule of social media engagement to highlight the resources and activities available on the Learning Zone. The aim was to provide free accessible resources to parents who found themselves in the position of teacher while also increase awareness of the WI Education Programme.

Improvements to Services and Facilities

Equality considerations are an integral part of all infrastructural programme planning, with upgrades to jetties and walkways incorporating appropriate access, materials and signage. New and/or refurbished buildings are completed under the guidelines for accessibility in the Building Regulations legislation.

During Covid lockdown Blueway and Greenway paths along our towpaths and waterways proved invaluable in providing accessible outdoor facilities for local communities and allowed them to continue to enjoy recreational activities and the enhanced health benefits associated with being close to water, nature and the escapism of this unique environment.

During the reporting period a new 6 meter canoe step with disabled access ramp was installed at Camus Jetty, Coleraine. Waterways Ireland, as Chair of the Lower Bann Strategic Development Group continues to explore opportunities to implement accessible facilities along the Lower Bann network in consultation with Local Councils.

Activity providers and other businesses licenced to operate on our property are asked to follow the guidance in relation to dealing with children and vulnerable adults provided by various state departments in the appropriate jurisdictions.

Disability Action Plan

Progress on delivery of the Waterways Ireland’s Disability Action Plan was hampered during 2021.

With the closure of our waterways, facilities and offices due to Covid-19 Waterways Ireland prioritised its focus on the wellbeing of our staff. In recognising the challenges faced by staff through less social interaction, working from home and ongoing

PART A

restrictions, all staff were encouraged to complete e-learning modules in Managing Stress in the Workplace; Mental Health and Wellbeing and Protecting Yourself while Home Working. These courses provided valuable information on how we can all play a role in taking care of our mental health and wellbeing and that of our colleagues and were designed to assist us and give us tips in doing so.

In early 2021, as part of the Body's commitment to staff wellbeing and the importance of mental health, 14 staff completed a Mental Health First Aider (MHFA) course. This training provided them with the skills, motivation and knowledge to be a point of contact for employees who are experiencing a mental health issue or emotional distress. This interaction could range from having an initial conversation through to supporting or signposting the person to get appropriate help. An IOSH certificate was awarded to all who successfully completed the course and is valid for 3 years.

- 2 Please provide **examples** of outcomes and/or the impact of **equality action plans/** measures in 2020-21 (*or append the plan with progress/examples identified*).

Waterways Ireland continued to promote equality of opportunity and good relations through Training and Development interventions in delivery of the Equality Action Plan. Whilst we are cognisant of the impact of Covid-19 restrictions on delivery of some elements of the Equality Action 2020 plan, the changed environment enhanced our focus on the mental health and wellbeing of our staff.

New staff, both permanent and temporary, are made aware of Waterways Ireland's Equal Opportunities Policy as part of their induction into the organisation.

Promoting good relations internally, particularly given the North / South nature of the Body, is seen as critical to the success of the organisation. The Internal Communications Group continued to issue communications to staff using email and a newly set up organisation-wide WhatsApp group. This has proved particularly useful in the current Covid-19 situation when many staff are working from home and the normal information conduits are not available.

Recruitment exercises for positions in Northern Ireland are undertaken in line with the Body's Affirmative Action Plan which seeks to improve the profile of Waterways Ireland within the Protestant community and aims to address an identified imbalance in the applicant pool for job opportunities. In an effort to ensure that we promote opportunities to apply as widely as possible the Body uses social media platforms such as Facebook and Twitter and lately LinkedIn for advertising, in addition to traditional methods. All job opportunities are also promoted and advertised through the organisation's website, <https://www.waterwaysireland.org/>

PART A

3 Has the **application of the Equality Scheme** commitments resulted in any **changes** to policy, practice, procedures and/or service delivery areas during the 2020-21 reporting period? *(tick one box only)*

Yes No (go to Q.4) Not applicable (go to Q.4)

Please provide any details and examples:

With the closure of our waterways, facilities and offices due to Covid-19 Waterways Ireland prioritised its focus on the wellbeing of our staff. In recognising the challenges faced by staff through less social interaction, working from home and ongoing restrictions, all staff were encouraged to complete e-learning modules in Managing Stress in the Workplace; Mental Health and Wellbeing and Protecting Yourself while Home Working.

In early 2021, as part of the Body's commitment to staff wellbeing and the importance of mental health, 14 staff completed a Mental Health First Aider (MHFA) course.

3a With regard to the change(s) made to policies, practices or procedures and/or service delivery areas, what **difference was made, or will be made, for individuals**, i.e. the impact on those according to Section 75 category?

Please provide any details and examples:

3b What aspect of the Equality Scheme prompted or led to the change(s)? *(tick all that apply)*

As a result of the organisation's screening of a policy *(please give details):*

As a result of what was identified through the EQIA and consultation exercise *(please give details):*

As a result of analysis from monitoring the impact *(please give details):*

As a result of changes to access to information and services *(please specify and give details):*

Covid-19 global pandemic meant all staff were working for home / or available for work. All facilities closed to staff and visitor. Need to new method of communication and focus on staff well being identified through staff surveys.

Other (*please specify and give details*):

Section 2: Progress on Equality Scheme commitments and action plans/measures

Arrangements for assessing compliance (Model Equality Scheme Chapter 2)

4 Were the Section 75 statutory duties integrated within job descriptions during the 2020-21 reporting period? (*tick one box only*)

- Yes, organisation wide
- Yes, some departments/jobs
- No, this is not an Equality Scheme commitment
- No, this is scheduled for later in the Equality Scheme, or has already been done
- Not applicable

Please provide any details and examples:

5 Were the Section 75 statutory duties integrated within performance plans during the 2020-21 reporting period? (*tick one box only*)

- Yes, organisation wide
- Yes, some departments/jobs
- No, this is not an Equality Scheme commitment
- No, this is scheduled for later in the Equality Scheme, or has already been done
- Not applicable

Please provide any details and examples:

6 In the 2020-21 reporting period were **objectives/ targets/ performance measures** relating to the Section 75 statutory duties **integrated** into corporate plans, strategic planning and/or operational business plans? (*tick all that apply*)

PART A

- Yes, through the work to prepare or develop the new corporate plan
- Yes, through organisation wide annual business planning
- Yes, in some departments/jobs
- No, these are already mainstreamed through the organisation's ongoing corporate plan
- No, the organisation's planning cycle does not coincide with this 2020-21 report
- Not applicable

Please provide any details and examples:

Equality action plans/measures

7 Within the 2020-21 reporting period, please indicate the **number** of:

Actions completed:	6	Actions ongoing:	6	Actions to commence:	1
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Please provide any details and examples (*in addition to question 2*):

1. Refresh the Equality Agenda among Waterways Ireland staff.

Staff training

- New employees at induction are made aware of Waterways Ireland's Equal Opportunities Policy.
- Diversity and Inclusion in the Workplace training delivered to staff.

Develop and incorporate equality and good relations targets for all aspects of the divisions' work

- These reflected Waterways Ireland's commitment to mainstreaming Equality and Good Relations into all our work programmes and were incorporated into the yearly Business Plan for each operating division/section.

Monitor and regular report on progress of the Equality Action Plan'

- Reports on delivery of the Equality Action Plan are provided periodically to the Director of Finance & Personnel and thereafter the Senior Management Team.

2. Provide a working environment where employees are treated with fairness, dignity and respect.

A range of workplace, work-life balance policies; practical and emotional support services provided for all staff during Covid lockdown.

3. Attract, recruit and retain a diverse range of employees in a culture which celebrates diversity and inclusion.

Recruitment exercises for positions in Northern Ireland are undertaken in line with the Body's Affirmative Action Plan

4. Deliver services that are accessible, inclusive and responsive to visitors to our waterways.

Inclusion of diverse images in all publications (marketing and corporate), social media, website, etc.

Enhanced educational/heritage programmes provided virtually through the Education portal at no cost.

8 Please give details of changes or amendments made to the equality action plan/measures during the 2020-21 reporting period (*points not identified in an appended plan*):

9 In reviewing progress on the equality action plan/action measures during the 2020-21 reporting period, the following have been identified: (*tick all that apply*)

- Continuing action(s), to progress the next stage addressing the known inequality
- Action(s) to address the known inequality in a different way
- Action(s) to address newly identified inequalities/recently prioritised inequalities
- Measures to address a prioritised inequality have been completed

Arrangements for consulting (Model Equality Scheme Chapter 3)

10 Following the initial notification of consultations, a targeted approach was taken – and consultation with those for whom the issue was of particular relevance: (*tick one box only*)

- All the time Sometimes Never

N/A

11 Please provide any **details and examples of good practice** in consultation during the 2020-21 reporting period, on matters relevant (e.g. the development of a policy that has been screened in) to the need to promote equality of opportunity and/or the desirability of promoting good relations:

12 In the 2020-21 reporting period, given the consultation methods offered, which consultation methods were **most frequently used by consultees**: (*tick all that apply*)

PART A

- Face to face meetings
- Focus groups
- Written documents with the opportunity to comment in writing
- Questionnaires
- Information/notification by email with an opportunity to opt in/out of the consultation
- Internet discussions
- Telephone consultations
- Other (*please specify*):

Please provide any details or examples of the uptake of these methods of consultation in relation to the consultees' membership of particular Section 75 categories:

- 13** Were any awareness-raising activities for consultees undertaken, on the commitments in the Equality Scheme, during the 2020-21 reporting period? (*tick one box only*)

Yes No Not applicable

Please provide any details and examples:

- 14** Was the consultation list reviewed during the 2020-21 reporting period? (*tick one box only*)

Yes No Not applicable – no commitment to review

Arrangements for assessing and consulting on the likely impact of policies (Model Equality Scheme Chapter 4)

[Insert link to any web pages where screening templates and/or other reports associated with Equality Scheme commitments are published]

- 15** Please provide the **number** of policies screened during the year (*as recorded in screening reports*):

0

PART A

Please provide any details:

- 21** In analysing monitoring information gathered, was any action taken to change/review any policies? (*tick one box only*)

Yes No Not applicable

Please provide any details and examples:

- 22** Please provide any details or examples of where the monitoring of policies, during the 2020-21 reporting period, has shown changes to differential/adverse impacts previously assessed:

- 23** Please provide any details or examples of monitoring that has contributed to the availability of equality and good relations information/data for service delivery planning or policy development:

Monthly reporting on our Business Plan and Corporate Plan at the Senior Management Team meetings ensures that equality and good relations issues are raised, addressed and incorporated into service delivery planning and policy development.

Staff Training (Model Equality Scheme Chapter 5)

- 24** Please report on the activities from the training plan/programme (section 5.4 of the Model Equality Scheme) undertaken during 2020-21, and the extent to which they met the training objectives in the Equality Scheme.

All staff informed of the equality obligations set out in the Waterways Ireland Equality Scheme, with relevant Plans and documents available on our staff intranet as well as the corporate website. Section 75 statutory duties form part of induction training for new staff on an ongoing basis-

- 25** Please provide **any examples** of relevant training shown to have worked well, in that participants have achieved the necessary skills and knowledge to achieve the stated objectives:

Waterways Ireland staff undertook an eLearning course on Diversity and Inclusion in the Workplace. Staff had to achieve an 80% pass to complete the online course.

Public Access to Information and Services (Model Equality Scheme Chapter 6)

26 Please list **any examples** of where monitoring during 2020-21, across all functions, has resulted in action and improvement in relation **to access to information and services**:

Enhanced education portal.

Complaints (Model Equality Scheme Chapter 8)

27 How many complaints **in relation to the Equality Scheme** have been received during 2020-21?

Insert number here:

0

Please provide any details of each complaint raised and outcome:

Section 3: Looking Forward

28 Please indicate when the Equality Scheme is due for review:

29 Are there areas of the Equality Scheme arrangements (screening/consultation/training) your organisation anticipates will be focused upon in the next reporting period? *(please provide details)*

30 In relation to the advice and services that the Commission offers, what **equality and good relations priorities** are anticipated over the next reporting period? *(please tick any that apply)*

- Employment
- Goods, facilities and services
- Legislative changes
- Organisational changes/ new functions
- Nothing specific, more of the same
- Other (please state):

PART B - Section 49A of the Disability Discrimination Act 1995 (as amended) and Disability Action Plans

2. Please outline below details on all actions that have been fully achieved in the reporting period.

1. Number of action measures for this reporting period that have been:

4

Fully achieved

2

Partially achieved

3

Not achieved

2. Please outline below details on all actions that have been fully achieved in the reporting period.

2 (a) Please highlight what **public life measures** have been achieved to encourage disabled people to participate in public life at National, Regional and Local levels:

Level	Public Life Action Measures	Outputs ⁱ	Outcomes / Impact ⁱⁱ
National ⁱⁱⁱ	Ensure the needs of people with disabilities are incorporated into Waterways Ireland Corporate Plan and Business Plan	Ensured a mainstreaming approach to disability issues was adopted throughout the organisation.	Disability considerations are incorporated into all infrastructural works at design and development stages, and accommodation is provided for all employees disability requirements as our standard operating practice.
Regional ^{iv}			
Local ^v			

2(b) What **training action measures** were achieved in this reporting period?

PART B

	Training Action Measures	Outputs	Outcome / Impact
1	Provide disability equality training to all new staff members	New staff receive induction training which includes Equality Scheme commitments. E-learning modules delivered to all staff (1) Diversity & Inclusion; (2) Mental Health & Wellbeing; (3) Managing Stress in the Workplace	Ensures that new staff are made aware of disability equality issues and Waterways Ireland's commitment to addressing any concerns raised.

2(c) What Positive attitudes **action measures** in the area of **Communications** were achieved in this reporting period?

	Communications Action Measures	Outputs	Outcome / Impact
1	Raise awareness of Disability Action Plan amongst all staff	Provided periodic updates to senior management on Action Plan commitments and programme delivery.	This created awareness of Waterways Ireland's shared disability obligations and provided the opportunity for managers to direct their staff to achieve programme delivery.
2	Provide appropriate information and advice service to people with disabilities	The website is 'AA Compliant' and is updated on an ongoing basis with information in an accessible format. There were no requests for information in an alternative format during this reporting period.	This promotes equality of opportunity and accessibility to Waterways Ireland's facilities and services.
3	Highlight disability issues in communications	Use of positive images of people with disabilities enjoying our waterways.	This increased staff knowledge and awareness of specific disability issues and their shared obligations to implement the disability agenda. Promotes the importance of engendering understanding and respect for disability considerations both among staff and our customers.

PART B

2 (d) What action measures were achieved to ‘**encourage others**’ to promote the two duties:

	Encourage others Action Measures	Outputs	Outcome / Impact
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2 (e) Please outline **any additional action measures** that were fully achieved other than those listed in the tables above:

	Action Measures fully implemented (other than Training and specific public life measures)	Outputs	Outcomes / Impact
1			
2			

3. Please outline what action measures have been **partly achieved** as follows:

	Action Measures partly achieved	Milestones/ Outputs	Outcomes/Impacts	Reasons not fully achieved
1				
2				

PART B

4. Please outline what action measures **have not been achieved** and the reasons why.

	Action Measures not met	Reasons
1		
2		

5. What **monitoring tools** have been put in place to evaluate the degree to which actions have been effective / develop new opportunities for action?

(a) Qualitative

(b) Quantitative

6. As a result of monitoring progress against actions has your organisation either:

- made any **revisions** to your plan during the reporting period or
- taken any **additional steps** to meet the disability duties which were **not outlined in your original** disability action plan / any other changes?

PART B

Please select

If yes please outline below:

	Revised/Additional Action Measures	Performance Indicator	Timescale
1			
2			
3			
4			
5			

7. Do you intend to make any further **revisions to your plan** in light of your organisation's annual review of the plan? If so, please outline proposed changes?

ⁱ **Outputs** – defined as act of producing, amount of something produced over a period, processes undertaken to implement the action measure e.g. Undertook 10 training sessions with 100 people at customer service level.

ⁱⁱ **Outcome / Impact** – what specifically and tangibly has changed in making progress towards the duties? What impact can directly be attributed to taking this action? Indicate the results of undertaking this action e.g. Evaluation indicating a tangible shift in attitudes before and after training.

ⁱⁱⁱ **National** : Situations where people can influence policy at a high impact level e.g. Public Appointments

^{iv} **Regional**: Situations where people can influence policy decision making at a middle impact level

^v **Local** : Situations where people can influence policy decision making at lower impact level e.g. one off consultations, local fora.