

## **Supporting information to Diversity Impact Assessment – Kent Downs AONB Management Plan**

### **Context**

The primary purpose of the Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) is the conservation and enhancement of natural beauty, in recognition of the Kent Downs' status as a protected landscape of national and international importance.

There is a statutory obligation on local authorities to produce and review a management plan for AONBs. The Kent Downs AONB unit has carried out this work on behalf, and in conjunction with, partner councils.

The management plan is primarily concerned with landscape features, but does recognise social and economic issues aligned to the conservation of the natural beauty of the landscape.

Diversity issues in the AONB have greatest relevance in terms of access to the countryside and engagement in AONB activities. There may be differential experiences and attitudes towards access to the AONB and ability to engage in promotional and celebration activities.

### **Consultation**

The Kent Downs AONB unit has been aware of the need to ensure that the management plan recognises diversity issues. The AONB unit carried out wide consultation and involvement to engage a broad range of people in reviewing the management plan for the AONB. This included people living both in and outside the AONB boundary.

A number of groups were invited to comment on the AONB management plan, to increase understanding of the experiences and views of different sectors of the wider community towards the AONB. Those groups included representatives from faith communities, minority ethnic communities, women's groups, disability groups, older people and youth organisations:

West Kent Deanery  
Adult Services Kent County Council  
Age Concern England  
Kent Soroptomists  
Black Environment Network  
Canterbury Hard of Hearing Club  
Crossroads SE Kent  
Dartford BME  
Disability Information Service  
Gravesham Ethnic Minority  
Hi Kent- Canterbury  
Hi Kent-Maidstone  
Indian Overseas Congress

Kent Refugee Action Network  
Kent Wheelchairs Users Group  
Mencap  
MEYA  
Friends and Families of Travellers  
The National Youth Agency  
Third Age Trust  
West Indian Association  
Women's Institute West Kent Federation  
Women's Institute East Kent Federation

The management plan has stated the aim of making engagement in AONB activities open to all, drawing attention to the need for information and interpretation to be readily available in a range of formats. Policy AEU8 states that 'opportunities for high quality, low impact enjoyment, education, celebration and understanding of the AONB for all people will be supported'.

The plan makes specific reference to the issue of access for people with restricted mobility and socially excluded groups. It recognises the need to be proactively aware when managing access and to extend different forms of accessible provision. It also identifies the need to 'support other excluded groups and non users to ensure that sustainable access to the landscapes of the Kent Downs AONB is available to all'.

### **Conclusion**

In line with the primary purpose of the Kent Downs AONB management plan being the conservation and enhancement of the natural beauty of the landscape, it is considered that the plan does not favour any particular community groups over others. The plan's policies are inclusive, recognising any differential impacts that may arise, particularly from access or engagement in the AONB.