



Chilterns National Landscape

Chilterns National Landscape – Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Ambition

National Landscapes were created for the benefit of the nation and have always been for everyone to enjoy. The Chilterns National Landscape (CNL) is committed to ensuring that the natural beauty, culture, and health benefits of the Chilterns are available and accessible to everyone, as set out in the Chilterns National Landscape Vision and Values.

“We ensure that all voices are heard and respected, promoting equal access and opportunities for everyone to enjoy, participate in and contribute to the conservation, enhancement, understanding and enjoyment of the Chilterns.”

(Chilterns National Landscape Vision and Values 2025)

Equity, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) are core to our values, our day-to-day work, and our strategic goals. This ambition statement outlines our commitment to embedding EDI throughout our operations, partnerships, and project delivery.

EDI must be integrated throughout our strategic framework, from the overarching Chilterns National Landscape Management Plan to our Vision and as a core work area and cross-cutting theme in our Delivery Plan.

Chilterns National Landscape Vision: The Chilterns for Everyone

At the heart of our EDI Ambition is our Chilterns National Landscape organisational vision: *A Chilterns National Landscape cared for forever and for everyone. A place where people are inspired by its distinctive natural beauty, space and tranquillity, to enjoy and care for the landscape. A place where natural beauty and cultural heritage is celebrated and enhanced. A place which gives space for nature to flourish, and which provides us with the ingredients for healthy living, such as clean water, healthy soils and thriving wildlife. A place where communities live, work and breathe. A haven for people and wildlife.*

We know that making this vision a reality takes ongoing effort, partnership, and openness to change. We have an EDI Advisory Group made up of staff and Board members which has helped develop and refine this statement in collaboration with the wider Chilterns National Landscape team and our partners.

This EDI Ambition is both a commitment and a call to action - for our staff team, Board members, partners, and communities - to work together to ensure that the Chilterns truly is a landscape for everyone.

Why Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Matters in the Chilterns

- 1) National Landscapes should be equally accessible to everyone yet we know this is not the case with many facing barriers to enjoying green spaces. A study by the University of Bedfordshire on how diverse communities engage with greenspaces and the countryside found that only 33% of participants in the Luton/Dunstable area visited greenspaces weekly, with older individuals, those facing various challenges, and people from minority ethnic backgrounds being the least frequent users.

- 2) As the organisation responsible for producing the Chilterns National Landscape Management Plan, we have a pivotal leadership role to play in influencing, galvanising and supporting the sector to deliver the EDI ambitions in the Management Plan and through our strategic partnerships. We need to lead and influence by example.
- 3) The conservation sector is the least diverse of any sector. To tackle the huge challenges we face— biodiversity crisis, growing disconnect with nature – we need to encourage a diverse range of voices and perspectives. The more relevant and inclusive our work, the more likely people are to experience, value and care for their local greenspaces and wider Chilterns countryside.

What we mean by Equity, Diversity and Inclusion

Equity is about fairness, not uniformity. We are committed to recognising people’s different needs and experiences and removing obstacles that prevent fully enjoying and benefiting from the Chilterns. This means treating everyone fairly regardless of their race, religion, socio-economic background, age, ability, sex, gender identity, sexuality, marital status or other [protected characteristic](#).

Diversity is about recognising, respecting and celebrating each other’s differences. A diverse environment is one that embraces and embeds people from a wide variety of backgrounds and mindsets and welcomes diverse voices.

Inclusion is about cultivating a sense of belonging, where every individual feels respected, heard, and valued.

Engaging communities: Priority Audiences

We are prioritising communities where we can have the greatest impact. In 2025-2027 we are focusing on the groups shown below. Priorities and resources may change over time enabling us to address other groups in the future. Many people will fit more than one of the categories and the benefits of our engagement activity will reach across different audiences.

1. **Culturally and ethnically diverse communities**, especially in economically and socially disadvantaged urban areas surrounding the Chilterns including Luton/Dunstable, High Wycombe, Reading and Aylesbury. The proximity of the Chilterns countryside to highly populated and super-diverse communities is different to many other National Landscapes. We are also the only National Landscape served by the London Tube network.
2. **Young people (under 25)**, particularly those who may thrive in outdoor learning environments, including neurodivergent individuals.
3. **Disabled people**, including those with mobility, sensory and mental health challenges, learning disabilities and hidden disabilities. A quarter of the population are disabled, with higher rates amongst culturally diverse communities and economically and socially challenged backgrounds. The Chilterns is home to national centres of excellence such as the Stoke Mandeville Paralympic Centre and the Centre for Outdoor Accessibility Training. This also sets us apart from other National Landscapes and has helped to drive our vision.

We recognise that barriers exist which prevent other groups engaging, and we will continue to take advantage of opportunities to broaden participation. Individual Chilterns National Landscape projects may define their own audience priorities based on context and need.

In addition to the CNL's own work programme, the Chilterns National Landscape Management Plan 2025-29 has EDI embedded throughout and it is for all stakeholders and partners to deliver, with everyone playing their part.

Our Approach to EDI

Our work seeks to remove structural and systemic barriers - whether in our recruitment practices, HR policies, volunteering opportunities or public-facing initiatives. As an organisation, we are committed to ensuring that inclusion is a lived value across everything we do. We are delivering on our EDI ambition by:

- **Developing strategic partnerships across the Chilterns** to deliver the EDI ambitions in our CNL Management Plan. We have a pivotal leadership role to play in producing and championing the CNL Management Plan. This means galvanising and supporting others to deliver. Developing, leading or supporting partnerships to help deliver our EDI ambitions is key to what we do and we work closely with many different partners.
- **Improving representation** across our staff team and volunteers through open, transparent recruitment and inclusive workplace practices. The environment sector is one of the least diverse in terms of staff and leaders within the sector. We are taking active steps to diversify our recruitment.
- **EDI leadership.** We are not directly involved in the recruitment of Board members due to the way Board members are appointed, as set out in our Establishment Order. However, we actively encourage appointing authorities to consider EDI in their decision-making and encourage applicants from diverse backgrounds to put themselves forward. We have a Board member nominated as an EDI lead and Board members on our EDI Advisory Group, ensuring it is embedded at the highest level. EDI is also a standing item at Board meetings.
- **Embedding EDI in training and development**—ensuring our values translate into practice. We provided general EDI training on diversity and disability for the whole staff team and Board members in 2024 with additional bespoke training and support for on an on-going basis. EDI is a standing item at every other team meeting.
- **Reducing barriers** to participation through targeted outreach, inclusive project design, and collaboration with community organisations. We are increasingly developing co-created approaches, see examples below.
- **Commissioning research and piloting activity** to share learning, best practice and understanding of underserved audiences and promote opportunities for more inclusive engagement. See examples below which includes research into diversifying volunteering, youth engagement and barriers and enablers to accessing greenspaces. We play an important role in disseminating this research as widely as possible, with partners and others in the sector and nationally, including bringing stakeholders together through workshops and conferences.
- **Involving those with lived experience** in helping to shape our EDI approach and co-created projects. We have developed close links with experts in accessibility and inclusion such as [PHAB](#), and value being able to draw on their knowledge and lived experience for guidance, training and advice. We share this expertise with partners and stakeholders to encourage and support their EDI work.
- **Seek funding and resources** to help us deliver our EDI ambitions.

Examples of Our EDI Work: Progress on EDI 2024-2025

See below examples of our EDI work over the last couple of years. Much of our EDI work is planned and delivered in partnership with others.

Developing strategic partnership and projects in Luton and North Chilterns: A major investment of staff time and resources including:

- Appointing a North Chilterns Engagement & Partnerships Officer. This 12-month post based in Luton, commenced in Nov 2024 to develop EDI projects and partnerships in the North Chilterns. We are now exploring funding opportunities to continue this work.
- Delivering [Nature Calling](#) in Luton, part of a £2m national arts programme designed to inspire new communities to connect with their local National Landscape. Working with communities in Luton, a Luton Henge community monument was co-created and built, providing a lasting legacy.
- We contributed to, and are a strategic partner, in the Luton Council-led Nature Towns & Cities bid "[Roots to Healthy Places](#)". This is a £1 million partnership project funded by the National Lottery Heritage Fund. The project aims to improve access and connections to nature across our communities with a particular focus on those who have the greatest barriers to accessing our green spaces. It includes the recommendations from the Chalkscapes Access to Greenspace research, commissioned by the CNL, for delivering a Collaborative Targeted Outreach Programme.
- We have funded countryside access improvements in and around Luton and led stakeholder events to share learning and expertise on countryside access.

Access for All: Allocated over £300,000 of DEFRA Access Funding for inclusion-focused projects that improve countryside access and facilities. This included purchasing mobility vehicles, replacing stiles with accessible gates, improving path surfaces, producing countryside guides and digital information on accessible visiting. See [here](#) for examples of projects that the CNL has funded through the programme. Other CNL projects are contributing to our accessibility ambitions in many different ways, eg [Mend the Gap](#) is carrying out an access audit to review and improve local routes.

Inclusive communications and greater visibility: Enhancing our website and publications to better reflect and support inclusive messaging including [blogs](#) and case studies. This includes videos produced by diverse community groups which we have funded and which are helping to champion inclusive countryside visiting [see here](#).

Commissioning and sharing EDI focused research including:

- [Chalkscapes](#) research on the barriers and enablers to using greenspace by diverse communities.
- Youth engagement [research](#) on undeserved audiences in High Wycombe age 14-18 highlighting how nature and heritage organisations could better engage with young people in the future.
- Research on [diversifying citizen science volunteering](#) and on our flagship youth volunteering programme [New Shoots](#) to capture feedback and help adapt and co-create future programmes.

Engaging young people: we have delivered and supported a wider range of work:

- [Next Gen](#) is a heritage and nature-based partnership group led by CNL focused on encourage more young people to get involved in conservation and heritage

activities. The Next Gen partners have been piloting some innovative approaches to working with young people.

- [Not Bourne Yesterday](#) is a NLHF development stage project, aiming to reconnect communities with their local chalk streams. The focus of NBY is on reaching diverse audiences including young people, with plans for traineeships.
- MtG is supporting schools in the programme area to engage with the local landscape with its [Landscape Literacy Project](#).
- [The Chilterns Chalk Streams Project](#) has been delivering a wide range of sessions for primary and secondary schools throughout the Chilterns, to deepen understanding and engagement with chalk streams.

Updating our HR policies on EDI. This has been a major area of work revising and updating a whole suite of HR policies relating to EDI. This included revisions to the core EDI Policy, as well as related policies on Bullying and Harassment, Anti-Bribery and Corruption, and Recruitment. EDI principles have been embedded throughout to support a fair and inclusive workplace, uphold high standards of conduct and foster a positive organisational culture.

Embedding EDI in the Chilterns NL Management Plan 2025-2029. The ambition and narrative around EDI were strengthened and embedded in the new Management Plan.

LOOKING AHEAD: CNL's strategic EDI Objectives for 2025–27

We have defined the following strategic EDI objectives to focus on through 2025-2027:

Improve EDI knowledge and capability within the Chilterns National Landscape team

1. Make our revised EDI Ambition and updated EDI policies visible. Raise awareness amongst staff and Board and incorporate into our induction and training programmes. Ensure the policies are aligned with and embedded in our work, and that our working practices match the policy aspirations.
2. Review EDI training and development needs for all staff and Board members, from induction onwards. Share learning, resources and facilitate knowledge sharing with staff, Board members and partners.
3. Sign up for Disability Confident Scheme accreditation and aim for Employer (level 2).

EDI Projects and Partnerships

4. Support EDI engagement and partnership development in Luton and the North Chilterns through Nature Towns and Cities, the North Chilterns Partnership and Luton Henge legacy.
5. Allocate the 2025/26 Defra Access Funding (£429,000) to help develop and support EDI initiatives.

Develop our strategic approach and share learning

6. Communicate our approach around EDI and engaging young people. Pilot new approaches, share learnings and identify opportunities. Create new section on the Chilterns National Landscape website on youth volunteering, work experience and traineeships.

7. Develop our organisational approach to volunteering, looking at how we can make it more relevant and accessible to diverse audiences. Pilot new approaches, share learning and identify opportunities.

Raising visibility

8. Create a new Access Hub on the Chilterns National Landscape website landing page which brings together all our access and inclusion information.
9. Make our EDI Ambition, case studies and resources more visible throughout our website and communications.
10. Create digital assets (videos, case studies, infographics) to help communicate our EDI activity.

Note: This EDI Ambition was last updated February 2026