






**AXE BRUE, PARRETT & NORTH SOMERSET LEVELS  
INTERNAL DRAINAGE BOARDS**

**GOVERNANCE  
EQUALITY, DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION POLICY**

Version 2.0

Approved by the Boards:		
Axe Brue IDB		Chairman 26/02/2026
Parrett IDB		Chairman 26/02/2026
North Somerset Levels IDB		Chairman 26/02/2026

Date of Policy: February 2026

Review on or before: February 2031



## **1.0. Introduction**

1.1. The Somerset Drainage Boards Consortium; encompassing the Axe Brue, Parrett and North Somerset Levels Internal Drainage Boards welcomes our responsibilities under the Equality Act 2010 and is committed to meeting them.

1.2 Everyone who lives and works within the Boards' districts is covered by the Equality Act. This policy supports the ongoing work carried out by the Boards to ensure that everyone has an equal chance to live, work, and feel part of the drainage Boards' districts; free from prejudice, discrimination and harassment.

1.3 We recognise that to achieve this we need to deliver services in ways that are appropriate to everyone and, whenever possible, to remove barriers that limit access to services and employment opportunities. We celebrate the diversity of the local area and are striving to promote and reflect that diversity within our organisation.

1.4 The aim is for our workforce to be truly representative of all sections of society, and for each employee to feel respected and able to give their best.

1.5 In the course of providing services, The Boards and the Consortium are also committed to preventing unlawful discrimination of rate payers/land owners or the public.

## **2.0. Policy**

2.1. The Policy's purpose is to:

- a. Provide equality, fairness and respect for all, be they in our employment (whether temporary, part-time, full-time or contractors), businesses or individuals within each of the Boards' districts.
- b. Ensure the Boards do not unlawfully discriminate based on the Equality Act 2010 'protected characteristics'
  - Age
  - Disability
  - Gender reassignment
  - Marriage and civil partnership
  - Pregnancy and maternity
  - Race
  - Religion or belief
  - Sex
  - Sexual orientation
- c. Oppose and avoid all forms of unlawful discrimination. This includes in pay and benefits, terms and conditions of employment, dealing with grievances or complaints, discipline, dismissal, redundancy, leave for parents, requests for flexible working, and selection for employment, promotion, training or other developmental opportunities.

## **2.2. The Boards' commitment:**

- a. Under Section 149 of the Equality Act 2010, the Boards will have due regard to the need to:
  1. Eliminate discrimination, harassment and victimisation
  2. Advance equality of opportunity between people who share and do not share protected characteristics
  3. Foster good relations between people who share and do not share protected characteristics

These three statutory aims must guide our decision-making, policy development and service delivery.

- b. This commitment includes training managers and all other employees about their rights and responsibilities under the equality policy. Responsibilities include staff conducting themselves to help the Board provide equal opportunities in employment, and prevent bullying, harassment, victimisation and unlawful discrimination.
- c. To ensure that staff understand they, as well as their employer, can be held liable for acts of bullying, harassment, victimisation and unlawful discrimination, in the course of their employment, against fellow employees, rate payers, members of the public and suppliers.
- d. To take seriously complaints of bullying, harassment, victimisation and unlawful discrimination by employees, rate payers, members of the public, suppliers and any others in the course of the Board's work activities. Such acts will be dealt with as misconduct under the Board's grievance and/or disciplinary procedures, and any appropriate action will be taken. Particularly serious complaints could amount to gross misconduct and lead to dismissal without notice. Further, sexual harassment may amount to both an employment rights matter and a criminal matter, such as in sexual assault allegations. In addition, harassment under the Protection from Harassment Act 1997 – which is not limited to circumstances where harassment relates to a protected characteristic – is a criminal offence.

## **2.3. The Boards will:**

- a. Ensure members endorse and fully support this policy.
- b. Make opportunities for training, development and progress available to all staff, who will be helped and encouraged to develop their full potential, so their talents and resources can be fully utilised to maximise the efficiency of the Boards.
- c. Stipulate that all contractors or suppliers performing work on the Boards' behalf are aware of this policy and commit to following its principles.
- d. Make decisions concerning staff being based on merit (apart from in any necessary and limited exemptions and exceptions allowed under the Equality Act).
- e. Review employment practices and procedures when necessary to ensure fairness, and also update them and the policy to take account of changes in the law.
- f. Monitor the make-up of the workforce regarding information such as age, gender, ethnic background, sexual orientation, religion or belief, and disability in encouraging equality and diversity, and in meeting the aims and commitments set out in the equality policy.

2.4. Monitoring will also include assessing how the equality policy, and any supporting action plan, are working in practice, reviewing them regularly, and considering and taking action to address any issues.

2.5 The Boards will publish relevant and proportionate equality information annually, demonstrating compliance with the Public Sector Equality Duty. This information will include:

- Workforce demographic data (in line with data protection laws)
- Information about service impacts related to protected characteristics

2.6 The Boards will set and publish measurable equality objectives at least every four years. These objectives will:

- Address priority equality issues
- Be evidence-based
- Be measurable and proportionate

2.7 Details of the Board's grievance and disciplinary policies and procedures can be found in the Staff Handbook, this includes with whom an employee should raise a grievance (usually their Line Manager in the first instance).

2.8 Use of the Board's grievance and/or disciplinary procedures does not affect an employee's right to make a claim to an employment tribunal within three months of the alleged discrimination.

2.9 For individuals outside the organisation, instructions on how to lodge a complaint can be found on the SDBC website.

