**DAERA Minutes/Notes of Equality & Diversity Steering Group (EDSG)**

**Date & time: 03 March 2022 @2.00pm**

**Location: WebEx**

**In attendance:**

Tracey Teague EMFG Deputy Secretary

Norman Fulton Deputy Secretary, Food & Farming Group (FFG)

Fiona McCandless Deputy Secretary, Rural Affairs, Forest Service & Estates Management Group (RAFSETG)

Paul Donnelly Deputy Secretary, Environment, Marine and Fisheries

Martin McKendry Director of CAFRE

John Joe O’Boyle Chief Executive Forest Service (FS)

Colm Morgan NI Public Service Alliance (NIPSA)

Lynda Lowe Director of Staff Engagement, Equality & Diversity Division (SEED)

Colin Campbell Head of Staff Engagement, Equality & Diversity Branch (SEED)

Russell McCurry Staff Engagement, Equality & Diversity Branch (SEED)

**Apologies:**

Anthony Harbinson Permanent Secretary, DAERA

Brian Doherty Deputy Secretary, Central Services & Contingency Planning (CSCPG)

Robert Huey Chief Veterinary Officer, Veterinary Service & Animal Health Group (VSAHG)

**Minutes:**

Russell McCurry Staff Engagement, Equality & Diversity Branch (SEED)

**Summary of Meeting:**

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| **Item** | **Description** | **Action Owner (where appropriate)** |
| **1.0** | **Welcome and apologies** |  |
|  | Tracey Teague, was Chair for today and she welcomed all members to the meeting and noted the apologies from Anthony Harbinson, Brian Doherty and Robert Huey. |  |
| **2.0** | **Review of previous minutes** |  |
|  | She confirmed that the members had already agreed the minutes, shortly after the previous meeting, which was held on 06 October 2021. |  |
| **3.0** | **Action Points from EDSG meeting held on 06 October 2021** |  |
|  | All actions points have been completed and no further questions were raised by the members. |  |
| **4.0** | **Equality and Diversity Report/Update** |  |
|  | Colin Campbell’s report formed part of the papers for today’s meeting and had been shared with the group.  He specifically drew attention to the training provided by the ECNI and the anticipation of the podcast. He also drew attention to the Audit of Inequalities consultation and the possibility that a handful of submissions from various Section 75 groups may be submitted. He also noted that the first diversity update session was held on 2 March.  Tracey raised the point of providing more awareness and training for new and recently promoted staff who have arrived within the Department and the need to assist in getting them skilled in equality issues. |  |
| **5.0** | **Champions Updates** |  |
|  | * **Diversity & Inclusion Champion**   Colin provided a brief update about the recent staff moves, with Lynda Lowe now taking on the role of Diversity and Inclusion Champion. He mentioned that the various groups had been meeting for the first time and that he was a member of the Race group. By the next EDSG meeting there should have been at least two meetings held for each group. A fuller update will be provided at the next EDSG meeting.   * **Children’s Champion**   Martin gave an update about the Children and Young People’s Strategy and that the Children’s Champion Sub-Group has met to discuss this.  He mentioned the restructuring of Cafre and the arrival of a DP Student Support Officer. It was noted that the new SEED & Student Support Officers Group has been set up and have held their first meeting.  He drew attention to Cafre having 1,900 students and 13% of them have special educational needs.  Other topics covered included, the NICCY meeting, TRPSI project, Covid support for students in conjunction with DfE, among other work updates.  The Departmental Group are to review the roles, issues and delivery plan and this will be shared with the EDSG members.  Other issues were discussed and EDSG noted the wide variety of good work that was being taken forward across the Department. Tracey highlighted that there were two young Ambassadors who represented NI very well at COP26. | **AP1. Martin to forward related papers for distribution to EDSG members.** |
| **6.0** | Proposed method of ensuring Permanent Secretary & Minister are informed of all Equality Screening decision rationales |  |
|  | Colin updated the group on the proposed method of ensuring that the Permanent Secretary and the Minister are informed of all equality Screening decision rationales. This is to ensure that all equality requirements, as set out within the DAERA Equality Scheme, are fully implemented and in accordance with the training provided by the ECNI for the G3s.  Fiona suggested that a section should be included within the template to record any difference of opinions or disagreements. | **AP2. Equality Unit to include this section within the screening template for approval.** |
| **7.0** | **AOB** |  |
|  | Two items were raised at AOB.   * AERA Committee Report – Women in Agriculture   This report is to be released soon and Cafre are currently doing the work on this. It was noted that the report is much wider than agriculture and there is a need for Senior management (TMT) to decide who should co-ordinate this work.  Some members had not seen the report yet and Tracey queried where the bulk of the recommendations sat as this may determine who co-ordinates it on behalf of the Department.  Martin is to send the report to the EDSG secretariat for dissemination to the EDSG members.   * Women and part-time moves and opportunities   Colm Morgan raised the issue about the length of waiting time and the unavailability of part-time posts for women within the NICS and DAERA. There is a need for some business areas to be more flexible here.  Tracey mentioned the positions that exist for job sharing as good examples and Norman suggested that this could be a good opportunity to get people off lists from other departments given that DAERA need positions filled.  Fiona volunteered to take this issue away and look at it, as to how we can promote this across DAERA. The EDSG members agreed to this approach and that NICS HR should be contacted as well. | **(This should be a matter for TMT to determine.)**  **AP3. Martin to forward report to EDSG secretariat for onward dissemination to the EDSG members.**  **AP4. Fiona to consider this issue and contact NICS HR.** |
| **8.0** | **Date of next meeting** |  |
|  | TBC October 2022 |  |