

THE SECOND PROGRESS REPORT FOR LAGANSIDE CORPORATION
ON THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE EQUALITY AND GOOD
RELATIONS DUTIES UNDER SECTION 75 OF THE N.I. ACT 1998.



Introduction

Laganside Corporation reaffirms its commitment, as set out in its approved Equality Scheme, to fulfilling its duties arising from Section 75 of the N.I. Act.

This progress report covers the period from 1st April 2001 to the 31st March 2002. It follows the guidelines issued by the Equality Commission for the structure of the progress report which sets out seven sections to encompass important developments in the effective implementation of the Section 75 duties. Laganside's Equality Scheme was approved 8th August 2001.

Section 1 – Preparation of a Draft Equality Scheme

The draft Equality Scheme was initially submitted to the Equality Commission for approval on 3rd July 2000. The Equality Commission acknowledged receipt of the document on 4th July 2000. Additional detail regarding the preparation of the draft Equality Scheme was set out in the first progress report for Laganside Corporation submitted to the Equality Commission on 25th July 2001.

Receipt for consideration, on 18th April 2001, of desk and consultation audits from the Equality Commission was followed by numerous correspondences via letter, e-mail, telephone and face-to-face meetings culminating in the Equality Scheme being submitted, on 27th July 2001, to the Equality Commission for approval. Laganside received formal notification of Equality Scheme approval from the Equality Commission 16th August 2001.

Section 2 – Strategic Implementation of the Section 75 Equality Duties

The Corporate Plan, 2000-2004, enumerates the principles and reflects the commitments and targets set out in the Equality Scheme and commits the Corporation to achieving these. A Steering Group, comprising Senior Management and the Equality Officer, has been set up to monitor and review progress against the commitments made in the Scheme at quarterly meetings chaired by the Chief Executive. Minutes from the Steering Group meetings are circulated to all staff and Board members.

The table below sets out the Equality Targets: 2000/01, 2001/02 as stated in the Corporate Plan, together with status, as at 31st March 2002, against each target

Target	Progress
The Corporation will perform at least two Equality Impact Assessments each year	Complete
The Corporation will undertake three major consultation exercises each year: these may include, in addition to equality, consultations on planning and development issues relating to the work of the Corporation	Complete
A committee will be set up to monitor and review, on a quarterly basis, the implementation of Section 75 obligations	Complete
The Corporation will endeavour to have no more than two justified equality related complaints each year	Zero complaints received
The Corporation will prepare an annual statement on the operation of the Equality Scheme following approval of the Scheme by the Equality Commission	Complete

Good Relations baseline measures, relating to the obligations set out in the Equality Scheme and within a Corporation context, have been determined through the Laganside Corporation Resident and Business Attitude Survey as follows:

How would you rate the performance of Laganside Corporation on delivering each of these factors?

Factor	Importance (%)		Satisfaction (%)	
	Resident	Business	Resident	Business
Increase area of neutral City Centre	89	95	75	78
Places both communities can mix	78	89	62	72
Bringing communities together	75	89	54	59

The Equality Scheme, through the Finance and Administration Director's report, is an agenda item at the Board meeting. There are 10 Board meetings per annum.

Equality is a standing agenda item at the Monthly Review meeting. This is chaired by the Chief Executive and includes all directors and senior staff. It is the initial forum for identifying new policy and/or changes to current policies.

Laganside has made an effort to maintain contact with the Equality Commission and has, on occasion, sought confirmation/clarification/advice with respect to implementation of guidance from the Commission.

Section 3 – Screening & Equality Impact Assessment (EQIA) Timetable

In addition to the Employment policy and the Procurement policy, Lagside Corporation identified the following 8 policies within the priorities committed to in the Corporate Plan:

The Provision of Physical Infrastructure

Promotion of the use of the River Lagan

The Provision of Grants for Physical Works

The Disposal of Land Owned by the Corporation

Facilitation and Encouragement of Events

Public Art

The Extension of Community Participation

Provision of Managed Workspace in Cathedral Quarter for Arts, Cultural and Community Groups

Lagside Corporation adopted the screening procedure set out in the guidelines issued by the Equality Commission. The provision of grants for physical works policy and the disposal of land owned by the Corporation policy were screened out. Additional detail regarding the implementation of the screening process is set out in the first progress report for Lagside Corporation.

The timetable for EQIAs is set out below:

Year 1	(i)	The Extension of Community Participation
	(ii)	Provision of Managed Workspace in Cathedral Quarter for Arts, Cultural and Community Groups
Year 2	(i)	Public Art
	(ii)	Facilitation and Encouragement of Events
	(iii)	Employment
Year 3	(i)	Promotion of the Use of the River Lagan
	(ii)	Procurement
	(iii)	The Provision of Infrastructure Provision

Year 1 EQIAs are completed and reports were made available 14th January 2002. Formal consultation on Year 2 EQIAs ended 15th March 2002. As at 31st March 2002, the comments received during the consultation period were under consideration by the Steering Group. Consultation documents for Year 3 EQIAs were being developed.

Section 4 – Communication & Training Provision

Minutes from the quarterly Steering Group meetings are circulated to all staff and Board members.

Staff performance relating to statutory duties are monitored and reviewed through performance review arrangements.

Section 7 of the Equality Scheme sets out the Corporation's arrangements to training. Laganside received the DSD training & communication plan on 8th March 2002. The plan was being considered, within a Laganside context, during the timeframe this report covers.

Relevant staff attended a number of training events during the period this progress report covers. Some events were in-house, e.g., Section 75 awareness raising seminar– attended by all staff and new Board members. Induction for new recruits encompassed Section 75 duties, the Equality Scheme and EQIAs. A staff conference, held in October 2001, included an equality workshop which explored a number of Section 75 topics. Feedback from the equality workshop captured what participants liked, disliked, would change or any other comments about the content and delivery of the workshop.

The Equality Officer has attended a number of training/awareness raising events including:

- Equality Impact Assessment Workshop, organised by DSD
- Equality Impact Assessment Training, organised by the Equality Commission
- Equality Schemes and Good Relations seminar, organised by the Community Relations Training and Learning Consortium
- Deaf Awareness Training, organised by the RNID

Public advertising of equality documentation takes place via the public notice column in the three Belfast daily newspapers; Belfast Telegraph, Irish News and Newsletter. In addition documentation is available to view and download from Laganside Corporation's website, www.laganside.com. Laganlines, the news sheet of Laganside Corporation, has carried an equality update in every issue since April 2001. Laganside's approach to regeneration demonstrates its commitment to equality which is inherent in the way Laganside operates, e.g. from the responsibilities and actions set out in the Corporate Plan to the presentations given by senior staff members to audiences worldwide.

Section 5 – Information Provision, Data Collection and Analysis

The Corporation is not a service provider per se, and the development of the equality impact assessment consultation documents to date highlight the difficulties surrounding information provision and data collection. For example, advice has been sought from NISRA, however as Laganside's designated area is relatively small (203 ha) and contains a relatively small number of housing units (~570) it is difficult to obtain relevant and meaningful quantitative or qualitative information and data on the Section 75 categories based solely on residents within Laganside's boundary. Where appropriate Laganside has referred to qualitative information to inform EQIAs.

Nevertheless, in-house information and data collection are inherent in the bi-annual Awareness and Attitude survey undertaken by the Corporation. This provides a sound basis for ongoing monitoring with regards to the impact Laganside makes on the development, business and community aspects of its regeneration work etc, and relevant data from the survey has been used in EQIAs where appropriate.

The Corporation has put systems in place to enable relevant information to be available on request in accessible formats such as Braille, large print, and audiocassette and minority languages for those who have difficulty in understanding English.

The Corporation has a dedicated Community team whose raison d'être is to engage and secure the participation of local communities in the regeneration of the Laganside area. The Laganside Corporation Community Strategy is currently being reviewed and updated.

Section 6 – Complaints

Laganside Corporation has received zero Section 75 complaints and is unaware of any Section 75 complaints referred to the Equality Commission during the timeframe this report covers.

Section 7 – Timetable

The timetable set out in the approved Equality Scheme remains unchanged.

Section 8 – Additional Information

Prior to undertaking refurbishment of the Lagan Lookout visitor centre, a disability access audit was arranged through Disability Action. To augment the audit, Laganside also asked a representative from PHAB to comment on disability access at the centre. A number of comments/suggestions made by both organisations have been incorporated in the refurbishment.

Laganside has contacted Mencap to take forward the commitment made in the approved Equality Scheme regarding how best to communicate information to those people with learning disabilities.