

New guidance on equality in heritage rail published by HRA

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The first parts of comprehensive guidance to help heritage railway and tramway managers, directors and trustees ensure that everyone is treated fairly and equally at their organisation have been released.

The publication follows months of hard work by the Heritage Railway Association's Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Committee. The committee is made up of experienced people from across the sector who have volunteered their time to drive forward the equality agenda in the sector.

The first release covers no less than 20 documents, ranging from handy checklists and templates to case studies and lengthy guidance notes. The guidance notes cover weighty topics such as inclusivity in recruitment, bullying and harassment and working with the Equality Act, alongside specific advice on ensuring your organisation is welcoming to people with autism and visible or non-visible disabilities both as visitors and volunteers.

The documents have all been made available on the members section of the Heritage Railway Association website and further details have been emailed directly to all member organisations. They have been designed to be practical and offer helpful ways for senior people in heritage rail to put best practice into action.

Heritage Railway Association Chief Executive, Steve Oates, said: “We’ve come a long way in a short time, but we are definitely still on a journey to improve equality, and to better understand the benefits of increased diversity among our own people while also ensuring we are welcoming to a fully diverse and inclusive range of visitors.

“In many cases this is happening organically and there are great examples of how railways and tramways have excelled at their work in this area. But any sector is only as strong as its weakest link, so we have to acknowledge that there is a way to go yet as there are occasions when heritage rail as a whole could be more welcoming and accommodating. We want to see great standards across the sector, and that’s why this new guidance is so important.”

The Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Committee, chaired by former Bluebell Railway General Manager, Julie Doel-Jones, is already working on further guidance for HRA members.

Julie said: “The team have put a huge amount of effort into this first suite of documents, but we know there’s a lot more work ahead. We meet regularly so we’re hopeful that there’ll be further guidance later this year.

“In essence this is about people and treating everyone fairly and equitably. Our aim is to ensure that everyone sat around the board room table on heritage railways up and down the country has the knowledge, tools and confidence to make the right decisions and to ensure equality, diversity and inclusion sits equally alongside issues such as safety and finance on the board agenda. We know it’s a fast evolving topic at the moment, and staying ahead of the curve can seem like a daunting challenge – but we’re doing everything we can to make that achievable in heritage rail.”

Photo credit: HRA