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The Outdoor Recreation Team  
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Defra  
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Attn: John Robbins

4 September 2006

Dear Mr Robbins

#### **Response to 'Outdoors for all?: Draft Diversity Action Plan'**

The British Kite Flying Association (BKFA) welcomes the opportunity to submit its response to the Defra consultation on its draft Diversity Action Plan.

BKFA represents a number of UK kite flying clubs. Formed two years ago in response to a perceived need for a representative organisation covering all kite flying, the Association aims to cover all types of kite related sport and recreation, from traction kiting through single line kite flying to design and manufacture of kites.

For most kite fliers access to the countryside or open spaces is crucial to allow them to enjoy their sport. Whilst there are clear tensions relating to conflicting forms of land use, kite fliers have generally shown themselves to be responsible users keen to find ways that can allow everyone to enjoy their use of the land on an equal basis.

This action plan is particularly important to us, representing as it does a clear attempt by Government to make the outdoors accessible to everyone. We contend that kite flying is one of the very few sports or recreations that is equally accessible to everyone, whatever their means and whatever their personal capabilities. Indeed, it is a pastime that links different cultural traditions and where ethnic minority groups have a tangible opportunity to share their experience with the indigenous British population. BKFA welcomes the opportunity that the action plan brings to build bridges and increase that shared experience.

**Question 1. Is this a vision that BKFA can subscribe to? How can BKFA help Defra to achieve it?**

BKFA supports the vision described. We are committed to bringing the enjoyment of all forms of kite flying to as wide and diverse an audience as possible. We are also committed to broadening the inclusion of groups into kite flying.

We recognise that young people, people with physical and mental impairment, with mental health issues and from less advantaged backgrounds are often poorly represented in kite flying. By contrast, there are many more experienced and older kite fliers active in the sport. There is a real opportunity for bridge building through a shared experience.

Many forms of kites are associated with the Far East, with the Indian Sub-continent, with South America and the West Indies and with countries throughout Europe. Whilst many people migrating to the UK shun their kite flying traditions, regarding them as games often associated with childhood or poverty, best left behind, BKFA takes the view that there is a real opportunity for UK kite fliers to learn from these traditions and to enjoy the shared experience, if migrants to the UK are encouraged to join in the activity.

**Question 2. Are the outcomes identified realistic and are there any missing?**

BKFA particularly welcome the desire to see new 'customers' for outdoor recreation and for raising skills and standards for providers, in our context for club officers and volunteers happy to work with under-represented groups.

We also welcome the desire to see constructive relationships between UK kite flying organisations and organisations representing under-represented groups.

With regard information (and support) we would suggest that this is in part a function of available resource. Most UK kite organisations (including the BKFA) are fairly small and have limited resources. Our ability to provide large volumes of information in any form, let alone tailored to meet the needs of target groups, is limited. UK clubs will do their best to provide such information but Defra may be able to assist with funding and specialist support (such as web authoring with specific reference to the particular needs of target groups) directed specifically at information provision and dissemination.

**Question 3. Are the objectives ones which BKFA can subscribe to and help deliver?**

BKFA supports the broad thrust of the objectives. We would however note that as a small organisation representing entirely voluntary clubs and societies, our resources are limited. We would therefore be seeking support to assist in the delivery of the objectives, in terms of both training and other resources. The current trend towards all services being chargeable (the costs associated with clearance under the Child Protection Act being a good example), tend to militate against small organisations taking up the challenges posed by central government.

**Question 4. Are the targets realistic and ones that BKFA is able to work towards, with others, to achieve?**

At the level at which our members operate, there is general scepticism about targets and the bureaucracy they tend to generate. Whilst it is entirely valid that government should demonstrate to taxpayers that spending is producing the desired results, if the activity required to generate the statistics exceeds an organisations ability to generate them or the effort required is greater than that required to actually deliver the target, their value must be questionable.

We would ask that a fundamental aspect of the action plan is careful management of the target process to ensure they do not become an end in themselves.

**Question 5. Defra do not think a quantified national target for the increase in under-represented groups is appropriate. Do BKFA agree? Should individual service providers set targets?**

BKFA believes that measurement should be through carefully structured survey work directed to target groups, with control groups in the wider population, to demonstrate success through improved perceptions by the target groups. Indeed, we would further suggest that publication of the results will, assuming there is an improvement, act itself to encourage further access by target groups, a positive feedback loop.

To make this a success it is vital that research work carried out so far is reviewed to ensure it forms an appropriate quantified benchmark and that a suitable quantified benchmark sample is taken from the general population to provide a control.

**Question 6. Do BKFA think that the milestones are realistic and the timescales for change appropriate?**

Yes.

**Question 7. What would be the best mechanism for keeping BKFA up to date as the plan is implemented and reviewed?**

BKFA like the approach followed by the Civil Aviation Authority. Their website contains all their published documents and registration on the site allow targeted email alerts to be sent to interested groups when documents are changed or added.

**Observation on 1.7 bullet 2.**

The information campaign mentioned needs substantial central support. However, if local authorities partner with local groups for information dissemination, much can be achieved. We would suggest that a target might be set in this area to encourage local authorities to actively seek those partnerships.

**Question 8. Do BKFA agree with these priorities for guidance and training?**

Broadly yes. BKFA would welcome the opportunity for suitable training but we would make a number of observations:

- Clubs exist for their members – the support they can bring for target groups is an added extra and as such they should not be expected to pay for training on access issues.
- In terms of audiences, we suggest that clubs and organisations who can make opportunities available to target groups should also be regarded as part of the target audience for training.

**Question 9. Do BKFA have a preference for how these are delivered?**

We believe that electronic delivery of training would be most effective for our members, supported possibly by free seminars that allowed people providing services to the target groups to come together and exchange ideas.

We think it is important that the benefits of training are 'sold' to providers: they need to understand that working with target groups can be very rewarding and that the time they invest in training is worthwhile.

**Question 10. Can Defra link this work to existing training or guidance in this area?**

BKFA currently have no suitable programme but we are aware of a number of schools programmes that are being run by kiting organisations: it might be possible to broaden those to include target groups specifically (some will be included by virtue of going to schools active in the programmes).

**Question 11. Are there any further activities that would help embed diversity and equality principles?**

BKFA believes that government needs to send out a clear message that risk is acceptable, provided it is understood and managed. HSE has recently made clear that the Health & Safety at Work Act was not intended to produce a risk free society and that some of the more strange uses of the Act, such as safety glasses for children playing conkers, was not envisaged when the Act was drafted.

In respect of the diversity agenda, the current risk aversion and fear of litigation or prosecution for unintentional lapses, does tend to discourage groups from contributing to the agenda. Consider the situation with vulnerable young people. Whilst Child Protection legislation is clearly essential, the climate of fear it can engender does not encourage groups to support vulnerable young people. The cost of the required clearance process is not affordable to many voluntary groups and the emphasis is more on compliance than on recognition of the contribution groups are making, often unpaid and often in what little spare time they have.

We would also invite government to publicise what opportunities exist for support with adaptation of equipment to make it suitable for use by target groups. Government might consider for example, free loan of temporary walkways to event organisers to facilitate access by wheelchair users.

Training also needs to focus on practical ways people can contribute to the agenda. Host guides can be provided at events for people with sight impairment or those with learning difficulties. Training needs to draw on the real experience of people from the target groups to identify practical ways in which providers can make it easier for them to access their service or activity.

Training should also provide information on the needs and relevant characteristics of people in the target groups. The guidance published by the Countryside Agency cited on page 18 seems to us to be sensible. However it is important that those providing services understand how best to interact with people from target groups. For example, a person suffering from

Tourette's disorder can cause real alarm amongst those not familiar with the condition. This means that people with the disorder may feel excluded.

**Question 12. Is it practical for existing forums to assist and develop the diversity agenda? Which ones do BKFA consider to be potentially the most effective?**

Yes. National and sub-regional level. Within the kiting world, clubs tend to be at sub-regional level. These forums need to actively engage with clubs and the voluntary sector, particularly in respect of recreation providers: BKFA believes that whilst these forums have been good at bringing in those representing target groups they have been less active at the voluntary provider end.

**Question 13. Are new types of forum needed, at what level should they be created and how would they work?**

BKFA does not believe that further forums are the answer. The effort should be focussed through existing groups and if targets are required, it is to show that they are actively seeking to engage with recreation providers across the spectrum rather than relying purely on existing networks. We believe it should also be recognised that members of these forums will move in and out over time: this is helpful in that they will be re-invigorated. But it also means that those facilitating such forums need to continue to draw in potential service providers.

**Question 14. What other types of information might target groups find helpful? Are there other formats in which it could be presented?**

We particularly welcome the observation in paragraph 2.4 "...urgent need for information for service providers in order to raise their confidence in working with under-represented groups.

We support the activities identified in 2.4.1 but would suggest the specific addition of a database to reflect the need for information for service providers.

**Question 15. What assistance or guidance would BKFA need to develop or improve its own marketing information to under-represented groups?**

We would welcome support in identifying suitable channels for communication with target groups. Support with resources such as web authoring and printed media could well be beneficial.

**Question 16. Do BKFA agree that there is a need to improve the baseline data on participation in outdoor recreation?**

In a broad sense, yes, but we are cautious about overburdening clubs with excessive survey work which they may not see as relevant to them or their members. It must be remembered that any services they do provide will often be on a purely voluntary basis. It is therefore essential that they receive recognition for their contribution and that it is made as simple as possible for them to add value to the diversity action plan.

**Question 17. Does BKFA collect data on visitors and/or the awareness of provision by under-represented groups? If so, in what form?**

No.

**Question 18. Should the Action Plan be extended to cover carers for the elderly and children and young people in inner cities?**

Yes. Children in particular would be significant groups for the kiting world.

**Question 19. What should the priorities for any further research be?**

BKFA believes there are two principal areas of research: further study is needed into how to provide adequate transport links into the countryside and a more detailed understanding of the reasons for self-exclusion would be beneficial. The work of the Yorkshire Dales National park cited on page 23 is in our view worth exploring further.

**Question 20. Which existing funding programmes do BKFA consider to be the most relevant for helping deliver the diversity agenda?**

No view on this.

**Question 21. What should the priorities be for spending in this area?**

No view on this.

**Question 22. Does BKFA have specific targets for diversity and do they cover access to outdoor recreation as a service?**

No.

**Question 23. Where would the introduction of new diversity targets make most impact?**

We believe further diversity targets risk having the opposite effect to that intended. By imposing further bureaucratic burdens on service providers there is a real risk that they will be less inclined to work positively with target groups. What is required is a simple method of survey, base lined and normalised against the population at large, that tests whether the target groups feel they have the opportunity, encouragement and resources to participate.

**Question 24. Are champions needed?**

Yes.

**Question 25. Does BKFA have a diversity champion that we could keep in touch with during the delivery of this plan? If not, are there any barriers to identifying such a person for Defra to work with?**

Yes. Jerry Swift, our Treasurer, is committed to developing diversity within the kiting world. Within the constraints of a volunteer with a full time job and a number of other voluntary commitments, he will be pleased to work with Defra to develop the action plan.

Yours

Andrew Beattie  
*Chairman*