

**Equality Exchange  
conference report  
June 2014**

**Equality in a Changing Landscape**



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# Ann Beynon - Introduction to the conference report

This year's conference focussed on the changing landscape in Wales. There are elections, discussions about the future of devolution, and other big changes on the horizon. These changes could offer us different and better opportunities to promote equality and human rights so we chose this as the theme for our day together.

The conference gave us the chance to get some fresh ideas and insights from speakers about the current opportunities. We heard from people who have achieved far-reaching changes and we worked together on the best ways to make progress on equality and human rights.

Delegates watched an interview with Lord Chris Holmes and were encouraged to 'Think Big!'. Discussions explored the possibility of achieving goals previously considered impossible. Here is a [link to the film](#) and I would encourage you to watch it - it is time well spent!

Reflecting on the day delegates talked about being motivated and re-energised to tackle the pressing issues. Feedback highlighted the valuable input from speakers and the benefits of the knowledge, experience and support members get from each other. Members told us about feeling inspired to pursue objectives with renewed vigour.

We hope this report, and Chris's film, energises you and inspires you to join with us so that together we can 'Think Big' in the year ahead!

**Ann Beynon**  
**Wales Commissioner**



## Kate Bennett - Setting the scene

Kate set the scene by talking about the current changes to the landscape in Wales. She reminded delegates that we, as members of the network, want to change the landscape too. There is less equality than many people think.

Some pregnant women experience discrimination at work and some disabled and ethnic minority people are harassed in the street. Women are more likely to be living in poverty, when as *Who Runs Wales 2014* shows, men are more likely to be making the decisions.

At last years conference we thought we would be getting a socio-economic duty but that now seems unlikely in the short term. The current opportunities to achieve significant change are presented by both the Future Generations Bill and the Public Sector Equality Duty.

Almost every member of the Equality Exchange network participated in our PSED research or monitoring, providing evidence of how the duty is promoting equality. Clearly Equality Impact Assessments are playing an increasingly important role. We can officially say that the PSED is a catalyst for change!

Kate made the point that many equality issues such as violence against women, hate crime, and the lack of legal advice to access justice, are also human rights issues. We should help to build understanding of this by making the links between the Equality Act 2010 and the Human Rights Act 1998.

Discussions will be held with members during the Autumn about changing the name of the equality exchange network, to the Equality and Human Rights Network. Perhaps this could be an important change to the landscape?



Kate spoke about the changing political landscape ahead from the Scottish referendum, the General Election, National Assembly Election and the local government elections in 2017.

How can we protect what we have achieved and drive forward to achieve more? What will be the implications of increasing pressures on public services - for example to care for older people? How can we as equality and human rights advocates continue to deliver our goals at times of such change?

We don't have the answers yet. We have some helpful ideas and the opportunity at the conference to work together. Times are tough for many of us and this may be exactly the right moment to take on those problems that have previously seemed too big or impossible!



# Jane Davidson - The changing landscape

Jane Davidson is Director of a new sustainability institute, INSPIRE (Institute for Sustainability Practice, Innovation and Resource Effectiveness) at the University of Wales Trinity St David. She is a former Welsh Government Minister and member of the Commission on Devolution.

Jane reminded delegates that Trevor Phillips, former EHRC Chair, had set out two defining questions for everyone:

- How do we live with the planet?
- How do we live with each other?

Jane felt these questions remained relevant and underpinned the values that should guide both individuals and organisations. She focused on the importance of fairness and respect as values and how a tremendous feeling of strength comes from believing that you are doing something profoundly right.

For Jane sustainability and equality are linked together and she explained her view that climate change will make poverty permanent in society unless action is taken. Wales is in a different position to the rest of the UK because of the unique duty on the Welsh Government to have regard to sustainable development. Most people think that sustainable development is about the environment but for Jane it is about the future of people living in poverty across the world.

The only way to deal with the root causes of the problems we are facing, rather than responding to immediate pressures is to be more joined up. This means integrating and balancing the need for a strong economy, culture, society and environment. It means shifting attitudes and behaviours.

The Future Generations Bill is one route to deal with the causes of poverty and inequality in Wales. The focus of this



Bill is the kind of Wales we want for future generations. INSPIRE at Trinity St. David is working to ensure the next generation of students are better informed about these issues. Universities train, educate and inspire leaders of the future. Jane felt that engagement with younger people is the golden thread of the sustainability and equality agenda.

In responding to the changing landscape Jane suggested equality and human rights advocates should build on the opportunities that already exist such as the Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED). This could ensure impressive outcomes for people.

The report from the Commission on Devolution supports the introduction of a socio-economic duty in Wales as a route to tackle entrenched inequalities. This provides an opportunity to secure the duty.

Political party manifestos provide an opportunity to get equality and sustainability priorities onto government agendas.

Education is a route out of poverty and influencing the curriculum could be helpful, but education alone is not enough.

Jane concluded by urging the conference delegates to think about both people and the planet in their work. Social justice and equality can only be achieved by linking the two and everyone working together on the broader agenda.



# Martin Henderson and Abbey Ashman - Creating and sustaining change

Martin Henderson from South Wales Fire and Rescue Service opened the Creating and Sustaining Change keynote address by providing an update on an initiative to prevent grassfires. Martin described the key factors in the project as having a vision, ambition and learning from mistakes.

At a previous conference Martin spoke about the large amount of data held by the fire service on deliberate grass fires and how analysing the data provided valuable insights about prevention. An initial project focused on three specific areas in Bridgend, Caerphilly and Rhondda Cynon Taf.

Martin looked to partner organisations, the police, Forestry Commission, local authorities and tourism for the project to achieve its goals.

Martin spoke at the conference about the challenges of rolling-out and sustaining the project. Progress was slower than anticipated. Despite this the results are still encouraging.

In the initial project areas this year, over an eight week period including Easter, there was an 80% drop in deliberate grass fires! The focus of the project is young people. Understanding their perspective and partnership working was the key to the success of the project, as this enabled more to be delivered with less resources.

Martin introduced the Lift programme by talking about a poverty of ambition. Young people with a family history of unemployment, and no experience of working life, have very little on paper to offer a prospective employer. This leads to a lack of ambition.

The Welsh Government scheme to introduce 5000 training and development places for young people gave Martin the opportunity to tackle this poverty of ambition.



Station 27 in Blaenau Gwent was where the project started and where Abbey Ashman joined as a trainee.

Abbey spoke passionately about the positive experience the Lift programme has had on her life. How she thought 'here we go again' when the Welsh Government announced another project to tackle unemployment.

Martin Henderson heard something different. He saw an opportunity to make a difference, to increase confidence and hope amongst a group of young people. Teaching that group about trust, positive attitudes, working together and self belief. The programme continues to support trainees long after they complete the course. Abbey is continuing to take every opportunity to improve her life, to believe in and challenge herself to do better.

Delegates reported how Martin's passion, willingness to take a risk and his courage of conviction inspired them. The focus of Martin's two projects reminded delegates that equality is all about people not just legislation or policies and procedures.

Abbey's story brought home to delegates how inspiring and refreshing it can be to hear about the personal experience and the positive benefits of an initiative to tackle inequality. Abbey spoke powerfully about how the Lift programme has changed her life.



Delegates were encouraged to think about how their organisation could take opportunities, or take a different approach to tackling inequalities and improving lives.

# Workshops - Opportunities through change



Delegates worked together in cross-sector workshops to identify opportunities within the changing landscape that could help them to achieve their equality and human rights goals.

Network members identified ambitious goals and many were shared across the five workshop groups. These include :

- Putting equality at the heart of public services and eliminating poverty
- Improving the links we make between equality and human rights to deliver new routes for change
- Changing the language from equality and human rights to fairness, dignity and respect
- Broadening out our discussions to new audiences
- Changing hearts and minds by challenging attitudes, behaviours and values
- Building brave leaderships
- Identifying equality champions

Having identified equality and human rights goals delegates went on to identify opportunities to deliver these aims.



### Opportunities included:

- Increasing partnership working
- Ensuring political party manifestos embed equality and human rights and election candidates promote equality
- Making the most of the Public Sector Equality Duty
- Broadening the Equality Impact Assessments approach to include human rights
- Integrating equality and human rights into teacher training
- Engaging new audiences through different social networks
- Utilising the distinctive Wales approach, including the opportunities presented by the EHRC and Welsh Government Concordat
- Achieving the Silk Commission recommendations
- Strengthening the Equality Exchange network



# Lord Chris Holmes - Think Big

Lord Chris Holmes, EHRC Commissioner, Chair of the EHRC Disability Committee, Gold medal winning Paralympian and Director of Paralympic Integration for the 2012 London Games speaks about how opportunities to make equality and human rights gains can be found in times of challenge, change and churn.

He reflects on his goal of transforming attitudes towards disabled people, arguing that if attitudes could be altered, disabled people's lives would improve, reducing harassment and enhancing job prospects.

Chris talks about how change and churn can be discomfoting, but that they are not only inevitable, but provide invaluable opportunities. He describes how the Games presented a unique chance to move his agenda forward.

Chris speaks about the key success factors that helped him to realise his goal of selling all the tickets and delivering a fully integrated Games.

These included: -

- Having a clear vision and a plan
- Building a committed team of people
- Understanding other people's agenda and answering the 'so what?' question
- Having effective partners
- Organising 'magic moments' to shift attitudes
- Staying focused
- Ignoring negativity and criticism
- Maintaining pressure

[Watch the film here](#)



# Discussion session - Achieving better outcomes

A lively discussion session followed the showing of Chris Holmes Think Big interview. Conference delegates watched the interview and Ann Beynon, EHRC Wales Commissioner, Saleem Kidwai, EHRC Wales Committee, and Adele Baumgardt, Sport Wales, were asked to share their response to the film. Adele spoke about Chris's leadership qualities. She described his clear vision and purpose and strong commitment to achieving his goal. This inspired Adele to 'have unreasonable ambitions for equality'.

Ann was particularly struck by Chris's ambition in tackling the big issues. She gave delegates four examples from her life where she had been told the goal was impossible and would never be achieved. These were:

- Devolution and the National Assembly for Wales
- Same sex marriage
- Bilingual road signs
- The Cardiff Bay Barrage.

Saleem felt that Chris's perseverance, commitment and belief that he could succeed was a good recipe for achieving the impossible.

Delegates spoke about Chris's clarity of purpose, determination and resilience. His personal positivity and his 'can do, will do' attitude, resonated with many who felt inspired to adapt it to their own organisation. They particularly liked Chris' views on the importance of seeing the project from other people's perspective and the need to be persuasive.

Delegates discussed increasing awareness of the social model of disability. People talked about the potential of sport to bring different communities

together and to promote inclusion. Some noted that whilst legislation is important, on its own it may not be enough to drive big changes.

Delegates spoke about Chris's story showing that one person can make a difference, particularly when they are able to share their passion and mobilise others around them.



# Next steps for the network

Delegates identified a number of next steps to strengthen and support their work and the network in the year ahead. These included:

- **Thinking about the tasks that were previously considered to be too big or impossible.** Members want to work with each other to identify the steps, resources, network input and partnerships needed to achieve their aims.
- **Being braver and bolder about staying focussed on the positive and ignoring negative criticism.** Building confidence amongst network members in leading the equality and human rights agenda. Supporting each other and not giving up.
- **Making the most of the opportunities the Public Sector Equality Duty offers to achieve positive outcomes for people.** Using Equality Impact Assessments to identify disproportionate impacts and being more effective at involving the third sector.

The next set of Equality Exchange events will take place in the Autumn and will build on the shared learning from the conference.

“As always thanks for a positive and motivational event - it reenergises me every time!”

“This event has re-charged my batteries to continue my work with the energy, enthusiasm and passion it requires”

“Excellent event - inspiring and motivational”

“Thank you for providing the environment for excellent discussions and deeper thinking on equality!”



## Tweets from the conference #EHRCEE2014



**WENWales** @WENWales Jun 4

Public Sector Equality Duty has effected positive change, @EHRcwales Director, Kate Bennett tells #EHRCEE2014



**Adele Baumgardt** @AdeleBaumgardt Jun 4

Climate change won't make poverty history but it will make poverty permanent says Jane Davidson #EHRCEE2014



**Lucy Faulkner** @LucyFaulkner7 Jun 4

How do you ensure young people don't have a poverty of ambition? Love the passion from Martin Henderson #ehrcee2014



**Gemma Woolfe** @GemmaWoolfe Jun 4

That awkward moment when you're in a conference and so moved by a presentation that you're close to tears... #EHRCEE2014



**FAB Excellence** @FabExcellence Jun 4

Abby Ashman you are amazing LIFT project at station 27 excellent example to deal with poverty of ambition #ehrcee2014



**James Parkin** @JamesParkin2010 Jun 4

An inspirational talk by @JaneBryngwyn on the values that help drive social justice and the current challenges facing Wales #EHRCEE2014



**NWP Diversity Unit** @NWP Diversity Jun 4

Fascinating and inspiring input from #LordChrisHolmes at to #ehrcee2014 #paralympics "be clear about the vision"

# About the Commission

The Equality and Human Rights Commission aims to protect, enforce and promote equality and promote and monitor human rights.

## About the network

Our Equality Exchange currently has over 140 members. It is a forum dedicated to the exchange of ideas and advice for employers, service providers, trainers and consultants committed to achieving equality and human rights in the workplace and in service provision.

Regular events and mailings keep members informed about latest developments in equality and human rights issues and provide an opportunity for members to work together.

Events take place three times a year and are regional; we organise the same format for north Wales, south Wales and mid / west Wales. Venues change each time as network members host these. Our annual conference usually takes place in mid Wales and is a chance for the network to meet and hear speakers, participate in workshops and exchange information.

## Contact us

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[Equality Exchange network](#)

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