

# Project SIARC: Equity, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) action plan (2023-2026)





# The Partnership

## Project SIARC Lead Partners:



## Project SIARC Delivery Partners:



## Project SIARC Collaborative Partners:



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\*denotes lead author ± denotes senior author

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## Foreword: Project SIARC

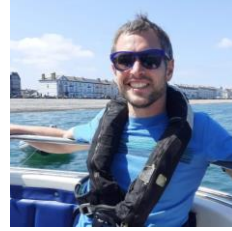
The marine environment in Wales is teeming with life, featuring diverse fish communities including little-studied species of sharks, skates and rays (elasmobranchs) of conservation importance. Following the success of Angel Shark Project: Wales (2018-2022), Project SIARC (Sharks Inspiring Action and Research with Communities) was launched in October 2021 as a multidisciplinary project.

Project SIARC uses flagship elasmobranch species in Wales (angelshark, blue skate, common stingray, flapper skate, spurdog and tope) to bring together local communities, fishers, researchers and government to cultivate a new appreciation and open-up access to the underwater environment in Wales. We are working on six inter-linked work packages, which bring together biological, social and engineering sciences, and through Project SIARC:

- Fishers and scientists work together, to share knowledge and experiences
- Important information is gathered to better understand sharks, skates and rays
- Ways for a wider range of people to access and experience the coast and sea are being identified through work with local partners
- Schoolchildren use new ways of learning to explore the coast and sea
- Citizen science activities and learning experiences are being delivered in partnership with local communities
- Wales' marine life and local culture is being celebrated

Project SIARC 'Phase 1' was delivered October 2021 – March 2023 with the project receiving further funding from the Nature Networks Fund 2 in April 2023 to deliver Project SIARC 'Phase 2' running from April 2023 to March 2026. Project SIARC 'Phase 2' is funded by The National Lottery Heritage Fund, Welsh Government, Nature Networks Fund, On the Edge, The Moondance Foundation and The Fishmongers' Company's Charitable Trust.

## Who is involved in Project SIARC?



**Not pictured: Peter Dorrington, Helen Lewis,  
Dimitris Pletsas**

## Alumni:



## Staff team positionality

The following positionality statement reflects the positionality of ten project staff who work with fishers throughout Wales and with local communities in North Wales. Staff are from the lead partner organisations Zoological Society of London (ZSL) and Natural Resources Wales (NRW), and delivery partners, the North Wales Wildlife Trust (NWWT).

Through our lives and work we have witnessed and experienced some of the ways in which injustice, lack of representation of persistently minoritized groups and uneven power dynamics impacts access to opportunities for people to experience nature. We recognise that our experiences and voices are not fully representative of communities living in Wales and beyond. Our desire is that through collaboration and co-development we can help overcome past injustices and create change for the future of the conservation sector and the lives of people living in Wales. We are dedicated to driving this change in our work supported by a dedicated work focus on equity, diversity and inclusion and a team commitment to increase our understanding of EDI topics. We acknowledge the limitations in our understanding of some of the issues we are working to address as Project SIARC and recognise the importance of working collaboratively for change. Of the ten staff this statement represents, seven of us are women and three of us are men, we are of both Welsh and English ethnicity with individuals with Welsh, Northern Irish, English, Scottish and indigenous American heritage. We have a mean age of 35 (range: 27 - 49). Between us we have grown up in both rural and urban settings in the UK and overseas. Of our team there are members who are part of the LGBTQIA+ community and members who are heterosexual. Of the ten staff represented here, no members of the team have any physical disabilities or impairments. As a team we are neurodiverse, with both neurodivergent and neurotypical team members.

Two of us are fluent Welsh speakers and eight of us are Welsh learners and within the team we also speak five other languages in addition to Welsh and English. On average we have spent 35% of our collective lives living in Wales, and both our experiences of living and working in Wales have significantly shaped our outlooks and approaches to working in the environment sector. For all of us the sea and marine environment have played significant roles throughout our lives, although we haven't all grown up by the sea and the development of that connection ranges from starting in childhood to adulthood. This connection strongly influences the choices that we make today, including our passion for safeguarding and celebrating the Welsh marine environment, and working towards equitable access to blue space for all who we work with.

All of the team have had the privilege of international travel across a collective 6 continents of the world, this has included travel for research, conservation science, leisure and life changes. These opportunities have given us the chance to both experience and learn from cultures which are different to our own and develop different skills throughout the years. Our travels have highlighted lower levels of awareness of the wildlife and habitats that can be found in the marine and freshwater environment in the UK. These experiences have reinforced a shared commitment to advocating for improving access and opportunities to experience nature in Wales, without the need to travel overseas. Within the team we collectively hold eight BScs, one BA, nine MScs, one MA and two PhDs in environmental subjects. Growing up, we have been shaped by our families' backgrounds which include working in the following sectors: agriculture, environment, engineering, seafood, administration & human resources, military defence, tourism, social care, healthcare and wellbeing, mining, biological research, finance, manufacturing, construction, education and media. Collectively we have worked in the hospitality, environmental and wildlife conservation, tourism & leisure, sports, animal care, creative, research, construction, media, healthcare, retail, events, farming, manufacturing, diving and civil-service sectors, and volunteered for organisations focused on the environment and wildlife conservation, animal care, scientific research, support for vulnerable children & adults, and support for refugees, migrants and asylum seekers

We recognise the privilege that our backgrounds have given us, as outlined here-in, and we know as a team we continue to have much to learn.



## The purpose of the Project SIARC EDI action plan

Engaging people from diverse backgrounds improves conservation practices and benefits academic research ([Smith et al. 2017](#); [Resnik et al. 2015](#)). Project SIARC recognises that it must do more to diversify opportunities, by understanding different audiences (identities), values and needs, to appeal to a wider demographic of people and support audiences to engage with marine conservation in Wales.

Between 2023 – 2026 Project SIARC will work to deliver this action plan, specifically focused on supporting the projects approach to working with local community partners (Project SIARC objectives 3 & 5) and fisher partners (Project SIARC objective 1 & 2) in North Wales. As a project we will also actively work to exchange learnings from the delivery of this action plan into other areas of our work. A mid-term progress report on progress towards reaching our targets is proposed for 2025, and a review of this action plan will take place in the lead up to the end of the projects current funded period in March 2026 to inform further strategic thinking for the next phase of the project.

## Our research and development

The production of the *Project SIARC 2023 – 2026 EDI action plan* is underpinned by the *Project SIARC EDI review 2021-2023* which synthesises work and learning from Project SIARC Phase 1, community-based research, project partner experiences within and beyond Project SIARC, and advice from EDI practitioners.

In Project SIARC Phase 1, Project SIARC partners worked with a number of local community groups, fishers and individuals in North Wales to deliver citizen science activities and complete research into barriers to involvement in marine conservation activities. We have actively worked to investigate barriers to involvement in marine conservation faced by individuals from farming communities, youth in college, youth in universities, individuals with physical disabilities or impairments, neurodivergent individuals, individuals who identify as male and female and individuals of both Welsh and English nationalities (see *Project SIARC EDI review 2021-2023*). While Project SIARC has made our best efforts to work with a wider audience, we recognise to date we are yet to work extensively with individuals from persistently minoritized ethnic communities or members of the LGBTQIA community. We also recognise that we have worked with a restricted number of individuals and that their personal experiences are not transferable to all individuals who have similar shared protected characteristics.

Supported by this action plan, Project SIARC aims to create a legacy that will consider the interests and priorities of those audiences who will benefit the most. Through this work Project SIARC fills a critical knowledge gap and sets out an approach that other organisations and projects may wish to improve



or adopt. As a team, we aim to remain agile and adaptive, and gratefully welcome and encourage further reflective discussion and conversations relating to this work.

## Action plan

### Our vision

An inclusive and fair approach to marine conservation through our work in Wales where Project SIARC operates in a supportive, nurturing, and capacity-sharing space with fishers and communities, where a diversity of opportunities are available and accessible.

### Our Goals

Our vision will be achieved through two interlinked goals:

- a. A diversity of identities will be engaged with and served by the marine environment in Wales.
- b. The lack of diversity and inclusion will be tackled within Project SIARC, thereby contributing to wider systemic change.

## Action areas and objectives

### *Governance as a Wales based project*

Welsh language, local culture and heritage is integrated fully into project delivery by 2026

Task	Action	Indicators
To integrate a Welsh context, language, history, culture and place names throughout Project SIARCs programme of work.	Welsh language courses offered for all Wales based staff working for Project SIARC	Courses offered to staff  Uptake of courses by staff  Courses completed by staff  Taster sessions offered for non-Wales based staff
	Bilingual introductions and greetings during Project SIARC meetings, presentations and events	Opening greetings and farewells are given bilingually at all partnership meetings      Opening and closing remarks are given by Project SIARC staff bilingually at all conferences and presentations
	Welsh Language, Local Culture and Heritage learning module for Project SIARC staff	All ZSL & NRW based project team (existing and new starts) complete the Project SIARC tailored

		<p>Welsh language, Local culture and heritage learning module as part of induction process, within 3 months of joining the team</p> <p>Tailored module to be made available as a self study resource for the Project SIARC Partnership</p>
	Bilingual greetings in emails, out of offices, email signatures	<p>Project SIARC Welsh Language Policy developed</p> <p>All emails related to Project SIARC business have bilingual greetings and sign off</p> <p>Statement at the end of all emails specifying we welcome bilingual communications</p> <p>All email signatures for Project SIARC ZSL &amp; NRW based project team are bilingual</p>
To increase employment of Wales-based staff	Include criteria in job adverts around person's location	All adverts include criteria around location
	Require knowledge of Welsh language and/or a desire to learn on job adverts	All adverts specify a requirement of knowledge of Welsh language and/or a desire to learn
	Pilot paid internships or apprenticeship to support career development in the conservation sector in Wales	1 Pilot internship scheme delivered and evaluated



To increase opportunities in the conservation sector in Wales	Have statements referred to equity and diversity in job adverts during recruitment	All new posts include and equity and diversity statement
To increase opportunities in the conservation sector in Wales for individuals from minority backgrounds	<p>Deliver 1 inclusive conservation workshop</p> <p>To explore further actions to increase opportunities available</p>	<p>1 workshop delivered</p> <p>1 workshop evaluated</p> <p>Learnings from workshop integrated into exploring future actions</p>

### *Building learning*

The Project SIARC Partnership will come together to share and further our learning, ability, and confidence to work with underserved audiences and issues related to Equity, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI).

Task	Action	Indicators
To exchange learnings of EDI work with others outside of the Project SIARC partnership	Exchange learnings and experiences with others with connections to the environment sector	Project SIARC network of contacts has increased  Project SIARC EDI reports and learnings are available open access
	Exchange learnings and experiences with EDI practitioners	Project SIARC staff have actively joined, engaged and exchanged knowledge through networking events and 1-1 meetings
To further the learning, ability, and confidence of Project SIARC staff on EDI and surrounding topics	Identify and deliver training related to EDI topics for Project SIARC team and partners e.g. addressing unconscious biases, active listening vs deep listening, recognising and responding to microaggressions, being anti-racist	EDI training delivered through a minimum of 1 dedicated workshop with 25 people across the Project SIARC team and partners  Continuous EDI training and learning opportunities made available to staff based at lead partner organisations
	Staff dedicate time to practice personal learning, engage in mentoring opportunities and reflective practice	All ZSL & NRW based project team have dedicated 1 hour per week to EDI learning

<p>To share learning across the Project SIARC partnership</p>	<p>Exchange learning related to implementing approaches to widening demographic impact across Project SIARC work packages</p>	<p>EDI Review and action plan disseminated throughout the partnership and shared with collaborators</p> <p>After publishing, feedback and critical review has been actively encouraged and recieved on the Projects approach to widening inclusivity in project activities</p> <p>EDI updates integrated into Project SIARC partnership updates, delivery partner and steering group meetings and time made available to discuss implementing EDI learnings into partner work areas</p>
<p>To allow for more time for effective, wide-ranging implementation, allowing for adaptability</p>	<p>Have dedicated time resourced to seek future funding focused on an equitable split between biological and social focuses.</p>	<p>Project managers have time dedicated to scoping out funding from diverse funding streams</p> <p>EDI values and equitable split of biological and social focuses are integrated into all future funding applications</p>

### *An Inclusive communication strategy*

Project SIARC will reach a wide and diverse range of people, keep people updated and stay connected with local audiences

Task	Action	Indicators
To create an inclusive communication strategy to reach a diverse range of people, raise the profile of Project SIARC and the marine environment in Wales	Create and implement an inclusive communications strategy with accessible content for a diverse audience e.g. newsletters, social media posts for a range of ages, short form interactive content and calls to action, blogs, video etc.	1 communication strategy produced and implemented
	Identify and implement best practice for producing accessible resources	Best practice guidelines produced for use by Project SIARC partnership  Best practice guidelines implemented across Project SIARC comms
	Identify and implement best practice for accessible websites and web resources	Best practice guidelines produced for use by Project SIARC partnership  Best practice guidelines implemented for Project SIARC website



*Working in collaboration with local communities*

Project SIARC will work with local communities to co-develop opportunities to increase local participation in elasmobranch conservation

Task	Action	Indicators
To implement a coordinated approach with relevant people to support building authentic partnerships with local communities and underrepresented groups , widening the demographic impact of Project SIARCs work with local communities.	Identify local event hubs and community demographics in those areas	1 report produced on community demographics in focal work areas  Demographics of current/historic Project SIARC activities compared to demographics of focal work areas
	Identify local community groups and networks	Local, relevant, community groups and networks identified in 2 relevant local areas through work with local actors
	Partner and work collaborative with local groups and networks	Relationships developed with local community partners following <a href="#">ZSL FAIRER</a> standards  Opportunities to improve opportunities and resources which appeal to a wider demographic of people and support audiences to engage with marine conservation in Wales identified with relevant local groups and networks

	Co-design approaches to communication and participation aligning with ZSL FAIRER standards and policies	Approaches to communication and participation agreed following ZSL FAIRER standards
Reduce existing barriers to accessing current Project SIARC resources - identified in Project SIARC Phase 1 - through collaboration and working in partnership to allow a wider demographic to engage in citizen science in PLAS	Review existing resources to ensure all resources are available digitally to local audiences	All existing digital resource and new resources are accessible to local audiences
	Work with existing and new community partners to co-design new resources to remove existing barriers e.g. resource format or diversity of resources	All new resources are co-designed  New resources have increased access to opportunities for individuals to engage with marine conservation activities  Overall offering and format of activities on offer is more inclusive
	Pilot and evaluate resources	Resources are piloted in relevant local areas, evaluated and evolved
Reduce existing barriers to participating in events - identified in Project SIARC Phase 1 - to accessing current Project SIARC events through	Further identify the most effective ways to advertise events	Events are advertised in new, diverse formats and on local platforms
	Audit existing approaches to advertising events accordingly	Opportunities to improve event adverts are identified

collaboration and working in partnership	Update event listings to include relevant information on accessibility of events so that participants are able to make informed choices around attendance based on event listings	Opportunities to improve event adverts are enacted and documented
	Actively advertise availability of adjustments for all events e.g. sign language interpreters, beach wheelchairs, changing spaces	All event listings signpost audiences to a route to request accessibility adjustments
	Review existing event offering with current community partners	Opportunities for new events are identified
	Co-design future event offerings with new partners	New event offerings are co-designed and co-delivered with community partners in 2 relevant local areas
	Pilot and evaluate events	Events are piloted in 2 relevant local areas, evaluated and evolved
Elevate the voices of community partners	Produce comms pieces spotlighting community partners & citizen scientists	15 Social media assets produced sharing voices of fishers, citizen scientists and community members or groups , assets collated on Proejct SIARC website.
	Share/highlight learnings with wider partners through publication and dissemination of activities	Case studies of activities delivered are open access  Fishers, citizen scientists and community groups or members have taken part in delivering

		dissemination activities e.g. talks or drafting publications
Further develop project understanding of underrepresented groups	Build on Project SIARC phase 1 EDI research in PLAS working with leaders of underrepresented groups focused on understanding barriers to participation in marine conservation	<p>KII interviews and FGD completed with new partners and contacts</p> <p>Data synthesised and report produced</p> <p>Learnings from further research shared and implemented</p>



### *Fishers and Scientists working together*

Project SIARC will work with fishers to co-develop opportunities to reduce barriers to fishers engaging with Project SIARC activities

<b>Task</b>	<b>Action</b>	<b>Indicators</b>
Identify and reduce existing barriers to engagement faced by gender minorities in Welsh fishing - identified in Project SIARC Phase 1 - to allow a wider demographic to engage in fisher partnerships in PLAS	Identify and connect with relevant associations, networks or groups	New relationship built  Ways of working agreed  Increase in gender diversity of participants involved in Project SIARC co-development activities
	Co-design approaches to communication and participation aligning with ZSL FAIRER standards and policies	Approaches to communication and participation agreed following ZSL FAIRER standards
	Identify barriers to engagement	Barriers to engagement identified and documented
	Identify opportunities to overcome barriers to engagement	Opportunities to overcome barriers identified and documented  Further activities to overcome barriers planned
Identify and reduce existing barriers highlighted by existing	Collect demographic data from fisher partners currently engaged	Demographic data of fisher partners currently engaged collated

fisher partners- identified in Project SIARC Phase 1 - to allow a wider demographic to engage in fisher partnerships with Project SIARC in PLAS		Demographic data collected from all new fisher interviewees
	Identify barriers to engagement working with existing fisher partners (inc. Diversity of demographics or diversity of roles in the sector)	Barriers to engagement identified and documented
	Identify opportunities to overcome barriers to engagement	Opportunities to overcome barriers identified and documented  Further activities to overcome barriers planned
Deliver one Project SIARC internship to train a young fisher	Co-design internship programme with fishers, collaborators and partners	1 internship pilot co-designed by October 2024
	Recruit one young fisher in Spring 2025 to start Summer 2025 for 6 months	1 internship advertised and recruited by March 2025
	Implement internship	1 internship delivered 2025
	Evaluate internship	1 internship evaluated by December 2025
	Share learnings of pilot	Short evaluation report produced and shared with fishers, collaborators and partners
Deliver Meet the Fisher sessions	Working with fishers, Project SIARC will facilitate meet the fisher session in local primary schools	6 Fisher in the classroom sessions completed in local primary schools