

## **AITO STATEMENT ON DIVERSITY, EQUITY & INCLUSION**

**At last week's AITO General Meeting, held both in person and virtually for all AITO members, Charlie Hopkinson (AITO Council member and owner of Dragoman), who chairs the newly-formed DEI (Diversity, Equity & Inclusion) Committee, addressed AITO members and updated them on the formation of the group and its work to date.**

**The DEI Committee was established only in March 2021 and has held four meetings via zoom to date.** As an association, AITO recognises that, in this changing world, it needs to listen, educate itself and continually improve and evolve in all areas of DEI, in order to progress as an association. It is also important to implement those measures necessary for AITO to follow in terms of best practice and to enable AITO to advise its members. Not only will members' future clients be looking to engage with businesses which consider all areas of DEI essential, but it will also be hugely important in helping members to attract - and retain - exceptional talent.

**The DEI Committee consists of 17 individuals (from all areas of membership & AITO staff and directors), all of whom have committed their time and energy because they understand the importance of DEI in their own businesses and want to help AITO and its members to engage and learn.**

Members of the committee, personally, cover all nine protected characteristics as identified in the Equality Act 2010, namely, but not limited to, the following:

- 53% female members, 47% male, plus gender-fluid members.
- 4 LGBTQ+ members
- 4 Ethnic Minority members and 2 members with Ethnic Minority partners and children
- A broad age range, from 30 to 73
- A number of different nationalities and religions
- A number of the female members are also full-time working mothers

In the short amount of time since the formation of the committee, much has been achieved, including the definition and understanding of Diversity, Equity and Inclusion, along with AITO's statement of intent. These can be found on AITO's website and are currently being integrated into formal internal documentation, which also includes AITO's Equal Opportunities, Diversity and Dignity at Work Policy.

The committee currently has a shared working resource area which it is using to compile and collate useful and pertinent information. Once fully established, these resources will be shared with the membership, so that they too can learn and evaluate their own businesses, adopting the necessary policies and principles. Within this shared resource area will also be a host of training modules that members can utilise, in a number of ways, for on-going development.

AITO's DEI Committee already has a roadmap in place, with a draft timeline of what it wishes to achieve. Working within the association first, followed by the membership, the ultimate aim is to work with all AITO members' suppliers, at the very least to establish their values and beliefs, but with the ultimate aim of educating and aligning shared values.

The committee is very much at the beginning of the journey and will be looking for input from anyone within the membership who wishes to get involved, as well as from outside parties and associations with whose values and beliefs AITO aligns.

**Ends/26 July, 2021**

**Issued by Travel PR on behalf of AITO ([www.aito.com](http://www.aito.com))**, The Specialist Travel Association, an alliance of a diverse range of people from a huge amount of destinations worldwide – specialist tour operators, specialist travel agents and tourist boards, plus business partners linked with and working in the travel industry.

**To interview an AITO Director or a member of the AITO DEI Committee**, please contact Sue Ockwell or Jackie Franklin at Travel PR ([s.ockwell@travelpr.co.uk](mailto:s.ockwell@travelpr.co.uk); 07831 126 356, or [j.franklin@travelpr.co.uk](mailto:j.franklin@travelpr.co.uk); 07779 336 158).