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# NatureScot Equality Report 2023

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## Foreword

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Valuing nature is a key priority of our Corporate Plan, to help towards a more sustainable future and tackle the nature and climate crises. One of the ways we aim to achieve this is through inspiring more people to connect with nature so that there is an increasing appreciation of the benefits it provides to health, well-being and our prosperity.

I am committed to ensuring that equality and inclusion are a central feature of our work in this area. For too long marginalised people and communities have not been sufficiently representative of those who currently connect with and benefit from nature. This report highlights the work we have done to better support and encourage

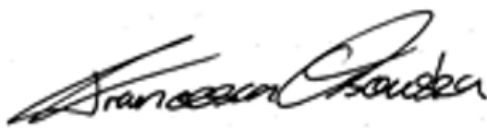
greater diversity in this area. This is not just through our actions to increase participation, but by supporting greater diversity in nature-related jobs and skills, and through enabling greater diversity in those who shape and influence nature-related policies and strategies.

Examples of this work include encouraging greater use of our fantastic National Nature Reserves (NNRs), and supporting Backbone CIC, a Minority Ethnic (ME) outdoor environmental organisation, with the 'Our Natural Heritage' project. This was a project to support more people from ME communities to experience nature, with visits arranged at Tentsmuir, St Cyrus and Cairngorms area NNRs. The project also empowered participants to develop their skills on helping to protect and sustain the natural environment. As part of the new Scottish Biodiversity Strategy (SBS) we worked with Young Scot to target groups who would help influence and shape the strategy to ensure a more inclusive approach to its development.

We have also continued to make good progress in ensuring that NatureScot is seen as an employer of choice, where everyone has the same opportunities. Over the past 4 years we have seen a step change in our approach, including changes to our ways of working, which has allowed greater empowerment on where and when people work. This has enabled greater flexibility and supports a better work/life balance. In particular, this helps those with child or caring responsibilities thus enabling them to have more opportunities within NatureScot. This has helped us to meet our outcome of reducing our gender pay gap to 9%, actually reaching 7.5%. Whilst we have gender parity within our senior leadership team and on our board, we recognise that more can be done to improve gender representation within our senior manager cohort.

We also continued our work to increase diversity within the organisation. With young people disproportionately impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic, we increased the opportunities for placements and apprenticeships within NatureScot, to help develop their skills and support career progression. This included a partnership with CEMVO to develop 'Ethnicity in Nature' placements, where we offered four young ME people the opportunity to come and work for us. We also participated in the John Smith Centre Minority Ethnic Emerging Leaders' Programme, an internship scheme for young people from ME communities to develop a range of workplace skills. More details can be found in the report on what we have done to make NatureScot a more inclusive organisation with equal opportunities for all.

We are proud of what we have achieved, however we know there is more we must do to support greater diversity in nature and contribute to its protection and restoration. This report therefore includes a refreshed set of Equality Outcomes and actions that we aim to deliver over the next four years, so that all of Scotland's people have the opportunity to value and benefit from nature.



**Francesca Osowska** Chief Executive

## Ro-ràdh

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Tha an luach a chuireas sinn ann an nàdar na àrd-phrìomhachas sa phlana chorporra againn airson teachd-shaoghal nas so-sheasmhaiche agus airson aghaidh a thoirt air èiginnean an nàdair is na gnàth-shìde. Am measg nan rudan a nì sinn airson seo a thoirt gu buil, bheir sinn brosnachadh do bharrachd dhaoine a dhol an sàs an nàdair airson 's gun aithnich barrachd is barrachd dhaoine dè na buannachdan slàinte, sunnd is soirbheachais a thig na lùib.

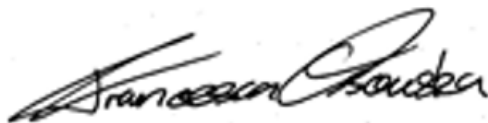
Tha mi an dealas a dhèanamh cinnteach gum bi co-ionannachd agus ion-ghabhaltas aig cridhe ar n-obrach san raon seo. Fad ùine mhòr, cha robh gu leòr de dhaoine 's coimhearsnachdan on oir am measg na feadhainn a gheibh cothrom a dhol an sàs an nàdair is a gheibh cothrom air na buannachdan a thig na chois. Tha an aithisg seo a' cur solas air an obair a rinn sinn airson taic nas fheàrr a thoirt seachad agus airson iomadachd nas motha a bhrosnachadh san raon seo. Chan e dìreach iomairtean a bhrosnaicheas com-pàirteachas a chuireas sinn air dòigh ach a bharrachd air sin, cuiridh sinn barrachd taic ri barrachd iomadachd ann an obraichean is sgilean co-cheangailte ri nàdar agus le bhith a' cruthachadh cothrom airson barrachd iomadachd am measg na feadhainn a dhealbhas poileasaidhean is ro-innleachdan co-cheangailte ri nàdar.

Mar eisimpleir, mar phàirt dhen obair seo, tha sinn a' toirt brosnachadh do bharrachd dhaoine tadhal air na tèarmainn nàdair nàiseanta mìorbhaileach againn agus tha sinn a' cur taic ri Backbone CIC, buidheann a' bhlàir a-muigh do mhion-shluaghan leis a' phròiseact Ar Dualchas Nàdair againn. 'S e pròiseact a tha seo a bheir taic do bharrachd dhaoine o mhion-shluaghan a dhol an sàs an nàdair, le tadhalan a chuirear air dòigh gu tèarmainn nàdair nàiseanta aig Tentsmuir, Eaglais Chiric agus a' Mhonaidh Ruaidh. Thug am pròiseact seo cothrom dha na com-pàirtichean cuideachd piseach a thoirt air na sgilean co-cheangailte ri dìon is taic dhan àrainneachd nàdarra. Mar phàirt dhen Ro-innleachd Bhith-iomadachd Albannach ùr, lorg sinn buidhnean targaide còmhla ri Young Scot airson cothrom a thoirt dhaibh buaidh a thoirt air an ro-innleachd agus a dhealbhadh, a dhèanamh cinnteach gun tèid a leasachadh air dòigh a bhios nas ion-ghabhalaiche.

Rinn sinn deagh adhartas cuideachd ann a bhith a' dèanamh cinnteach gu bheil a' coimhead air NàdarAlba mar rogha nam fastaichean far a bheil na h-aon chothroman aig a h-uile duine. Thairis air na ceithir bliadhna seo chaidh, thàinig ceum-atharrachadh air mar a dhèiligeas sinn ri cùisean, a' gabhail a-staigh an dòigh-obrach againn agus thug sinn barrachd saoirse dhuinn a thaobh càit is cuin a nì daoine obair. Tha cùisean nas sùbailte ri linn, le co-chothrom eadar obair is beatha nas fheàrr. Tha seo gu sònraichte a' cur taic ris an fheadhainn aig a bheil clann no a tha a' gabhail cùram cuideigin, a' toirt barrachd chothroman dhaibh am broinn NàdarAlba. Mar thoradh air sin, choilean sin an t-amas a bh' againn airson beàrn an tuarastail a thaobh gnè a lùghdachadh gu 9% agus fiù 7.5% aig a' cheann thall. Ged a tha co-ionannachd tuarastail againn aig ìre an àrd-sgioba stiùiridh agus a' bhùird, tha fhios gu bheil barrachd leasachadh ri dhèanamh aig ìre nan àrd-mhanaidsearan againn.

Rinn sinn sìor-obair air àrdachadh na iomadachd nar buidheann cuideachd. Leis gun robh buaidh nas motha aig galar mòr-sgaoilte COVID-19 air daoine òga, chruthaich sinn barrachd chothroman airson greisean-gnìomhachais agus preantasachdan ann an NàdarAlba airson piseach a thoirt air na sgilean aca agus mar thaic do dh'adhartas an cuid chùrsaichean-obrach. Ghabh seo a-staigh com-pàirteachas le CEMVO airson greisean-gnìomhachais 'Cinnidheachd ann an Nàdar' a chruthachadh anns an d' fhuair ceathrar òga à mion-shluaghan a thighinn a dh'obair againn. Ghabh sinn pàirt sa phrògram Ceannardan Òga ann am Mion-shluaghan aig Ionad John Smith cuideachd, sgeama inntearnasan do dhaoine òg o mhion-shluaghan airson raon de sgilean obrach a leasachadh. Gheibhear barrachd fiosrachaidh san aithisg againn mu na rinn sinn airson 's gum bi NàdarAlba na bhuidheann nas ion-ghabhalaiche far am faigh gach neach na h-aon chothroman.

Tha sinn pròiseil às an adhartas a rinn sinn ach tha fios againn gu bheil barrachd ri dhèanamh mus bi barrachd iomadachd ann an nàdar agus airson taic a chumail ri dhìon is ath-shlànachadh. Tha an aithisg seo a' gabhail a-staigh seata ur de bhuilean is gnìomhan a thaobh co-ionannachd a tha fa-near dhuinn thairis air na ceithir bliadhna seo romhainn airson 's gum bi cothrom aig a h-uile duine ann an Alba an luach a tha san nàdar fhaicinn agus cothrom fhaighinn air na buannachdan a thig na chois.



Francesca Osowska, Àrd-oifigear NatureScot

## Executive Summary

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This is NatureScot's sixth Equality Report and demonstrates our ongoing commitment to ensuring that equality, diversity and inclusion are at the heart of what we do.

### Progress against equality outcomes 2021-23

1. Across the range of our activities, more people from Minority Ethnic (ME) communities, people with disabilities and disadvantaged families, individuals and communities enjoy and benefit from nature. **Progress** – On track
2. Through changes to recruitment and attraction procedures more people from ME communities and people with disabilities apply for opportunities with NatureScot. **Progress** – On track

3. We have an age-inclusive culture that supports and values everyone. **Progress** – On track
4. We have reduced the gender pay gap to 9%. **Progress** – achieved

Following the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on society, there has been a focus on a Green Recovery. As part of our response, our focus has been on helping young people who were disproportionately affected. Much of our youth engagement work has therefore taken an intersectional approach, with the aim of increasing the overall diversity of NatureScot and the environmental sector.

Through our Programme for Youth Employment we have diversified our current reach beyond just the traditional graduate and student placements. We have also undertaken work on nature-based jobs and skills for those from ME backgrounds, to help diversify the sector.

We had previously achieved our target of reducing our gender pay gap to 9% in our last report in 2021. Our current average (mean) gender pay gap is now 7.5%. More can be done to maintain a downward trend, and we remain committed to reducing our pay gap further.

Internally, we continue to look at how we can engage and work differently, through increased opportunities for employees to influence and shape what we do, and on developing our understanding of how we can more effectively engage marginalised communities.

We continue to encourage greater disclosure of equality information from our employees and whilst major gaps remain in our data our aspiration is to reduce this to the absolute minimum level.

Our new Corporate Plan for 2022-26 is driving our efforts to tackle the twin nature and climate crises. At the heart of delivering our priorities is ensuring that equality and inclusion are reflected throughout our work, in all our approaches and ways of working.

## About NatureScot

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NatureScot is Scotland's nature agency. We are a public body, working to enhance our natural environment and inspire the people of Scotland to care more about it. NatureScot believes that a nature-rich future, where everyone is involved, will make us happier, healthier, wealthier and more equal.

Our Corporate Plan for 2022-26 has three key priorities:

- **Protecting Nature** by expanding protected areas, regulating species management, and delivering effective planning advice on land and at sea.
- **Restoring Nature** through a new biodiversity strategy, restoring peatlands, aiding nature's recovery and transforming farming.
- **Valuing Nature** so that the many benefits it provides to society can in turn attract public, private and social enterprise financing for both protection and restoration.

NatureScot strongly advocates for fairer and more equal access to nature for all.

We recognise that the ability to access nature can be more limited for some older people and children, disabled people, people from ME backgrounds, and by disadvantaged families, individuals and communities.

The evidence suggests that limited access to natural greenspace is often linked to poorer health outcomes particularly in urban areas suffering socio-economic disadvantage. The picture is complicated by the lived experience of some people with protected characteristics: for example, women and poverty, disability and poverty, health and poverty, etc. This makes access to nature for reasons of time, transport, money or physical access even more difficult.

## About this report

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This report is part of our statutory duties to report on our mainstreaming activity and progress on delivering our Equality Outcomes. The specific duties also require us to take steps to gather employee information annually and, if not reported elsewhere, to report it within our mainstreaming report along with the progress made in using the employee information to better perform the general equality duty. We also publish our gender pay gap, our equal pay statement and occupational segregation information (covering ethnicity, disability and gender).

The reports begins with a description of how we have mainstreamed equality and diversity in the delivery of our functions and provides a summary of progress against our Equality Outcomes.

## Mainstreaming equality

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This section updates on the wide range of activity which is contributing to mainstreaming equality in NatureScot. Mainstreaming requires us to integrate equality into our day-to-day work, and take account of equality while undertaking our functions. A combination of our increased efforts to raise awareness of equality and inclusion is strengthening how we build equality into our business and shape and inform our policies and activities.

In 2021-22 we reviewed our Corporate Plan priorities. To ensure that equality, diversity and inclusion are at the heart of this, our Inclusion Group assessed the proposed new priorities against 2 questions:

- How does this proposal connect a more diverse range of people with nature (from an equality, diversity and inclusion perspective)?
- How does this proposal diversify NatureScot (to make our people – employees, Board, volunteers – more representative of the population of Scotland)?

Once our 2022-2026 Corporate Plan was published, we used the information gathered above to consider how our new Delivery Plans would contribute to equality, diversity and inclusion. An EqIA Lite and Action Plan is now being drafted for each Delivery Plan and these will guide our future focus. This work has also helped us identify our new Equality Outcomes.

We have also undertaken activities such as the promotion of Black History Month and other relevant events; reviewing how we undertake equality training; developing our use of co-design; and, improving the quality of our EqIAs.

## Leadership & Governance

Our Chief Executive has overall strategic responsibility for equality and diversity. Consideration of equality and diversity is built into our planning and decision-making processes. Employees are encouraged to consider equality and diversity needs when developing proposals for projects, when developing or reviewing policy, and when seeking decisions from our senior leadership team. In addition to employee information, we also collate evidence relating to people's enjoyment of the outdoors, and greenspace through our research and monitoring work.

We report quarterly to our Board on our workforce profile and progress on equalities work through our People Report. Our Board, Chief Executive and Senior Leadership Team attend, and are key speakers at, our Women's Network events and other related occasions. We have two equality champions within our Senior Leadership Team, which further ensures equality, diversity and inclusion are at the heart of our work to make nature available for all.

We continue to be committed to the National Advisory Council on Women and Girls (NACWG) which aims to "make gender inequality a historical curiosity in Scotland".

**NatureScot signed the public pledge** in support of the work of NACWG, cementing our commitment to progressing gender equality in Scotland.

## Board Diversity

We are required to report on our progress towards the Gender Representation on Public Boards Scotland Act (2018). We were one of the first public bodies to achieve gender parity in 2015. In 2022 we ran a competitive interview for three board vacancies:

- Applications received: 66
- Gender split: 56% male and 44% female (0% prefer not to say)
- Invites to interview: 33% male and 67% female

We appointed one male and two female board members. Our Board now consists of seven male and five females which will ensure our Board continues to have approximate gender parity.



We recognise the benefits of widening board diversity beyond gender and continue to take a number of positive actions towards this. For example, in Board recruitment where we can raise awareness of opportunities with minority groups and groups representing young people. While selection to the board is on merit, the personal specification for board membership is very wide and seeks to encourage people from under-represented groups to apply. We continue for the time being to have a representative of our Young Employee Panel attend our Board meetings.

## Equality Impact Assessments

A key tool for helping employees to focus on equalities is to carry out Equality Impact Assessments (EqIAs). We have reviewed our approach to EqIA to make it a more dynamic and valuable process. One example of this has been to build our employee networks into the EqIA process and build momentum around mechanisms for consultation with the sector and ME representatives.

In addition, we have also implemented an EqIA e-learning package to better facilitate training on their production, developed an EqIA evidence tracker tool to allow authors to record relevant evidence, and revised the information on our new Intranet to provide advice to employees on what they need to know about the completion of EqIAs.

## Digital Accessibility

In response to the Public Sector Bodies (Website and Mobile Applications) (No 2) Accessibility Regulations 2018, we have focused our efforts on making our external facing website accessible. This has included employee training on how to ensure documents are accessible to those with disabilities, through use of tools such as MS Word's Accessibility Checker. We have also undertaken a check of all our existing on-line content to ensure it remains accessible and we regularly audit our websites.

Digital communications content posted on social media or any other digital channels is produced with digital accessibility in mind, such as adding ALT text to images or graphics and captions on video content.

Internal systems are undergoing accessibility audits and reviews, with accessibility built into the Information Management Programme.

## Inclusive Communications

We have worked with deafscotland on developing some inclusive communication around walking outdoors, using British Sign Language (BSL), subtitles and voice overs on our website. We have also co-designed a number of accessibility videos which have been published on our website for visitors to review before their arrival. An example of one of these **videos** is for our Battleby office near Perth.

## NatureScot's office at Battleby - ac...



### NatureScot's office at Battleby - accessibility series

[Click for a full description](#) ▼

#### Duration

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## Outdoor Access

We continue to promote outdoor access, and work with partners to remove barriers to access wherever possible. We work with route managers and trail users to develop user friendly information to enable people to decide which routes, or sections of them, are accessible to them. **The John Muir Way multi-use access story map** is an example of how a partner organisation – the **Green Action Trust** - has been able to present the survey information in an informative way. Accessible paths are a key part of a number of our Green Infrastructure Strategic Intervention projects, for example **at the Claypits Local Nature Reserve**. We contributed to the update of the Countryside for All Guide, due to be published shortly.

We partnered with Duke of Edinburgh Scotland to pilot two kit libraries in community groups to support people in under-represented communities to be equipped to explore nature outdoors. Our **Learning in Local Greenspace** project directly supported 115 schools, serving or located in disadvantaged communities across Scotland, to access and use their local greenspace. Our work to support

**the Scottish Countryside Rangers' Association to further develop their Junior Ranger scheme**

, and our requirement for ranger services that we fund to promote equality and diversity in their work, both contributed to enhancing outdoor access for everyone.

## Progress towards our outcomes

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**Equality Outcome 1 - Across the range of our activities, more people from Minority Ethnic (ME) communities, people with disabilities and disadvantaged families, individuals and communities enjoy and benefit from nature.**

**Action 1.1 – Develop new engagement mechanisms or develop existing panels to engage with people from ME communities and/or disadvantaged families, individuals and communities on our existing or emerging work**

**Progress – on track**

One of the ways we have sought to engage targeted groups is through our Youth Engagement Action Plan, linked to the development in 2022 of the Scottish Biodiversity Strategy (SBS). More details can be found in the article below.

Alongside the work we have done through the Youth Engagement Action Plan, we regularly provide information to the Ethnic Minority Environmental Network (EMEN). EMEN creates connections between ethnic minority groups, individuals and mainstream organisations to address climate change and climate justice in Scotland. One example of the work we have done with them was the promotion of the first consultation workshops held in 2022 for the SBS.

### **Support with the Scottish Biodiversity Strategy**

As part of our work on the SBS we asked individuals from under-represented communities to write about nature projects they're passionate about. One of these was from Halima Hussein, the founder of Sole Sisters, an outdoor adventure group that allows a space for Scottish Muslim girls and women to get out of their comfort zone and challenge themselves in the outdoors. More details can be found in her **Sole Sisters** **blog**.

We also heard from Zara Mohammed and Anna Canning, about Woodlands Wheels, an innovative project by Scottish Forestry's Engagement Programme that uses cycling to encourage people, particularly women and those from ME communities and disadvantaged groups, to use woodland for health and wellbeing. This work has helped break down barriers and improve the diversity of those enjoying the outdoors. More details about their community cycle rides can be found in this

**Woodland Wheels Community Cycle Rides blog.**



**Sole Sisters enjoying a day out. The group was set up to create a safe space for likeminded girls to get together**

It is important that we continue to engage with targeted groups about our work and we will look for further opportunities to help broaden participation in nature across all communities.

**Action 1.2 – Consider how we can demonstrate the long term impact of our projects involving the people we support with a view to influencing future strategic research programmes.**

**Progress – on track**

Good progress continues to be made in this area with NatureScot and partners undertaking regular research to understand how people in Scotland use, value and enjoy the natural environment. This work helps us identify population groups that are under-represented, enabling us to develop policies and practice to address inequalities in participation so that more people across Scotland can enjoy the benefits of engaging with and participating in nature. For example, the research informs our communication and engagement campaign **Make Space For Nature** and many of the other projects highlighted in this report. We also use the findings in our Equality Impact Assessments. Our research findings can be accessed on our **Measuring Participation** webpage and further details about our research can be found in the article below.

## Research on Outdoor Participation

**Research undertaken by NatureScot during the COVID-19 pandemic shows the importance of outdoor recreation for health and well-being.** However, the COVID-19 crisis deepened long standing inequalities in access and benefits. While some people's interaction with nature increased during the pandemic, others visited nature less or not at all – see **why society needs nature Lessons from research during Covid-19 report.**

While quantitative research studies such as NatureScot's Scotland's People and Nature Survey, Scottish Nature Omnibus Survey (available on our **Measuring Participation webpage**), the Scottish Government's **Scottish Household Survey** and **Scottish Health Survey** enable us to monitor levels of nature engagement across the population, they don't provide a detailed understanding of what influences participation. Nor on the relative importance of different drivers among different population groups. **Qualitative research** published in 2021, commissioned in partnership with the Scottish Government, has provided additional insight on this and allows us to plan future interventions and communications to help achieve longer-term behavioural change.



**A couple enjoying the views from Beinn Eighe NNR**

Further research will allow us to better understand what type of interventions are necessary to help encourage greater participation in the outdoors.

While there has been a significant increase in participation in outdoor recreation in Scotland since 2012, some groups remain under-represented. These include older people, those living in the most deprived areas, members of the ME population, and people with a long-term illness or disability. Our research suggests that some progress has been made in terms of increasing participation among those aged 65 plus and those living in our most deprived areas. However, there is less **evidence to suggest a significant change in participation among the ME population or those with a long-term illness or disability.**

**Action 1.3 – Increase the number of visits to our National Nature Reserves by people from ME communities, people with disabilities and disadvantaged families, individuals and communities.**

**Progress – on track**

Our work to increase visitors to our National Nature Reserves (NNRs) from targeted groups has continued. For example, we upgraded **our facilities at St Cyrus National Nature Reserve to include a changing places toilet**. We also worked with Pony AxeS at St Cyrus NNR to take people with disabilities onto the beach, enabling them to experience the wonderful nature there. **St Cyrus NNR also celebrated Pride month** and hosted a number of **Branching Out** visits, supporting adults who use mental health services in Scotland. We also promoted **Pride month in our LGBTQ+ Representation – Why Does it Matter? blog**. At Hermaness National Nature Reserve we improved the access route to the sea cliff to make it easier to access (see VisitScotland **news story**). An accessible toilet is also now included at the welcome area. More details on the type of activities we've undertaken at our Reserves can be found in the article below.

### **Supporting greater use of our NNRs**

To help increase visitor numbers to our NNRs we have supported Backbone CIC with their 'Our Natural Heritage' project with site visits at Tentsmuir, St Cyrus and Cairngorms area National Nature Reserves.

#### **In Dumfries and Galloway we worked with PAMIS (Promoting a More Inclusive Society) to host an event during the annual Wild Goose Festival 2022.**

At the festival during 2021, we worked with 'Lochside is Families Together', an organisation that works with low income families in Dumfries, to provide guided walks along the River Nith. To provide greater inclusivity this walk was interpreted in British Sign Language. Finally, between 2021/22 and 2022/23 we supported over 2,000 young people with their learning at our NNRs.



**Another way we encourage greater use of our NNR's is to hold open days. Two children examine the flora as part of their visit an open day held on Tentsmuir NNR, helping their understanding and appreciation of nature.**

At present, we don't undertake any detailed monitoring of visitor numbers to our reserves with estimates gathered about their use. As a result, we are unable to confirm if we have had an increase in numbers from those groups targeted in this action. However, the range of activities highlighted above demonstrates the breadth and scale of work we do to encourage greater use of our reserves.

**Action 1.4 – Demonstrate how our external funding, projects and campaigns support greater use of the outdoors by people from ME communities, people with disabilities, and disadvantaged families, individuals and communities.**

**Progress – on track**

Working with partners such as Backbone CIC, Paths for All, TCV Scotland, Volunteering Matters Action Earth and the John Muir Trust we continued to fund a number of projects that involve or target minority or under-represented groups. A number of our current external funds focus on connecting people with nature and aim to prioritise marginalised communities and groups, such as our **Green Infrastructure Strategic Intervention** fund (GISI) and **Natural and Cultural Heritage Fund**. Our work with Backbone CIC extends beyond just encouraging greater use of the outdoors by ME Communities. The article below highlights the work we are doing with them to support their Community Leadership Programme.



Our **Make Space for Nature** campaign provides practical tips for everyone to make space for nature, reverse nature loss and fight climate change. For the campaign we targeted specific audiences across social media, with activity taking place across Facebook, Instagram, Snapchat, TikTok and Twitter. Audiences were identified through NatureScot's lockdown survey results. These highlighted groups of people most likely to visit the outdoors more often in future. This included young people, members of the minority ethnic population and families.

### **Support to Backbone CIC Community Leadership Programme**

One of our long-standing grant participants has been Backbone CIC. Part of their role is to provide opportunities for those from marginalised groups to become environmental role models and leaders. Over the past 10 years we have provided funding for their Community Leadership Project which aims to empower participants to take control of their lives and work with their own communities to educate, protect and sustain our natural environment. Most recently we have provided funding for their Our Natural Heritage project, a three year project joint funded alongside Cairngorms National Park Authority and the Heritage Fund that helps encourage access for everyone, regardless of their background, age or ability. An example of this work has been with our reserve team at the Muir of Dinnet NNR, where over a weekend a group of visitors from Inverurie explored the use of moth traps. More details can be found in an accompanying **Collaboration and Celebrating Diversity through Adventure** blog.

Looking forward, we are in discussion with Backbone CIC about how we can best contribute to their new **training academy** . We are exploring potential outdoor visits (walks or practical tasks) to our NNRs, and talks about volunteering or gaining employment in the natural heritage sector, as part of our nature-based skills and jobs work.



**An earlier community leadership programme event on woodland conservation training. Targeted funding to similar programmes helps make the outdoors a more inclusive place for everyone to enjoy and benefit from nature**

Four pilot **Green Health Partnerships** have been continuing to demonstrate how better cross-sectoral co-ordination can mainstream approaches to increasing physical activity and improving mental health, through engagement with the natural environment. Led by local health boards and local authorities, these partnerships bring together the health, social care, environment, leisure, sport and active travel sectors in order to make more use of local green space as a health-promoting resource. Action plans are shaped around local health priorities, including tackling health inequalities, and connect with current initiatives such as Realistic Medicine, social prescribing and public health reform. Each partnership draws on its sound knowledge of community needs, existing outdoor assets and green health activity, and adds value by identifying co-benefits.

**Action 1.5 – Ensure that all our external funding programmes are promoted effectively to help priority groups to access nature**

**Progress – on track**

Through our website, social media and the targeting of priority groups, we actively promote our funding programmes. We have also developed one specific fund – the **Future Routes Fund** - which aims to help young people improve their local environment, provide opportunities for them to connect with nature, and empower them to take positive action to help the biodiversity and climate crisis. Part of the award criteria is to ensure that inclusion is a key element. We were helped in shaping this through the support of an Intern who joined NatureScot as part of the John Smith Centre Minority Ethnic Emerging Leaders Programme. An example of the type of work being delivered by this fund can be seen in a **news article** published in August 2022. Further work in this area will continue and links closely to the findings highlighted in Action 1.8.



The Future Routes Fund follows on from our support to ReRoute, Scotland's youth biodiversity panel, who helped look at how we could better make our funding more accessible to a wider audience.

**Action 1.6 – Develop new opportunities to support minority businesses, supported businesses, and social enterprises to support our inclusive economic growth objectives**

**Progress – on track**

This work is primarily delivered as part of our procurement process where equalities are incorporated into our standard terms and conditions for awarding contracts to businesses. Those responsible for procuring goods and services are required to consider equalities when drafting their requirements and in their evaluation criteria. This includes consideration of support for small and medium sized enterprises as well as wider equality considerations, such as fair working practices and the real living wage.

During the reporting period, we linked our internal guidance to

**the Equality and Human Rights Commission's procurement guidance for Scottish public authorities**

, to raise the awareness of our project managers regarding the public sector equality duty. We have strengthened our guidance and messaging by linking sections on

**Supported Businesses** to the Ready for Business Third Sector Register. This is a searchable database, hosted by **Partnership for Procurement**, which supports social enterprises and the wider third sector to access contracts through collaboration. Supported Businesses provide sustainable employment, and support the integration of disadvantaged and disabled people into the workforce, providing high quality, competitive goods and services. We will continue to support targeted businesses and enterprises through our approach to procurement

**Action 1.7 – Develop a ME engagement plan for the next corporate plan period**

**Progress – delayed**

During 2022 a number of consultancy support sessions were held by the Race for Human Rights (R4HR) programme. This led to a recommendation on taking a human rights-based approach, using PANEL principles (Participation, Accountability, Non-discrimination and Equality, Empowerment and Legal) to implement all policies effectively. Three associated actions were recommended on: a recruitment policy; supporting an anti-racist culture; and, improving data collection methods and analysis.

Following these recommendations work to develop an ME engagement plan commenced in late 2022. However, due to the loss of some key personnel and gaps in resources there has been an unavoidable delay with its implementation. It is planned to appoint a new equality officer and, alongside assistance from our ME Network, it is intended to implement the engagement plan for Year 2 of the Corporate Plan.

**Action 1.8 – Employ an associate apprenticeship to develop a more inclusive approach to the scoping and implementation of our funding streams**

**Progress – achieved**

Through our work with partner organisations we had previously identified several barriers to accessing nature for under-represented groups and communities with protected characteristics. In association with the **2027 Partnership**, NatureScot employed an associate apprentice, who worked to identify opportunities for us to overcome these barriers and take a more inclusive approach with our funding streams.

Working with colleagues an event was held in early 2022 to explore how to overcome these barriers. These focused on various themes such as cultural, structural and systemic barriers to funding. Following the event a number of recommendations were published in the report 'Breaking Down Funding Barriers'. These included dedicating some funds towards connecting with under-represented groups; working with other funders to co-design new accessible and inclusive funds; and, ensuring that equality, diversity and inclusion forms part of every partnership agreement we have in relation to our funding streams.

The recommendations are now being implemented to make our funding more inclusive, with work planned during 2023 and beyond.

### **Action 1.9 – Develop additional skills and capacity within relevant teams to provide greater focus for engagement and co-design work**

#### **Progress – on track**

One example of where skills were developed to help with our co-design work was the development of the SBS that is highlighted earlier in this report. Working with Young Scot, we targeted groups to help influence and shape the strategy, supporting our work to engage a wider audience in its production. The approach has also been adopted as part of the on-going development of our work around '30 by 30' and 'Nature Networks'. This collaborative process allows stakeholders from across Scotland to work together to design the frameworks that will lead us to reaching 30% of land protected for nature by 2030, and the roll out of nature networks. The core objective of co-design is to move away from consulting with stakeholders to co-creating services and policies with them, thereby ensuring that it is a more inclusive approach. More details about the co-design approach can be found at **the 30 by 30 and Nature Networks Co-design approach page on our website**.

This approach was developed by a project placement through our Programme for Youth Employment. The placement was focused on enhancing behavioural change through adopting a co-design approach. This initially had a focus on engaging coastal communities for a marine biodiversity monitoring project and then subsequently with ethnic minority organisations and disability groups. Support was also provided to NatureScot teams on the use of co-design in their work, as a method of engagement and the benefits it provides to communities. Further details

**about the placement can be found in a podcast, produced as part of a campaign to promote young people in green jobs.**

As part of our on-going approach to developing co-designed solutions to our work we will continue to further develop the necessary skills and capacity amongst our staff.

### **Action 1.10 – Consider opportunities for the better monitoring of equality groups as part of the development of the next cycle of SPANs surveys 2022-23**

#### **Progress – on track**

Minority groups are often under-represented in online survey samples. We have sought to address this through the use of booster samples. For example, for our second and third COVID-19 Recreation Surveys an additional booster sample of minority ethnic participants was included.

For the next ten year cycle of SPANs we will be supplementing the current approach with more targeted surveys or through other qualitative research approaches. Such studies could examine particular groups, activities, or intersectional factors. Possible models for this kind of work are the **Understanding the Drivers** report, which provided detailed qualitative insight into the factors motivating and sustaining outdoor participation, and **the recent survey of young people's views on the future of Scotland's nature and climate**.

## **Equality Outcome 2 - Through changes to recruitment and attraction procedures, more people from ethnic (ME) communities and people with disabilities apply for opportunities with NatureScot.**

### **Action 2.1 – Recruitment and Attraction strategy**

#### **Progress – on track**

We are continuing to make good progress towards this action through our partnership work with CEMVO Scotland, who carried out a review of our recruitment processes and careers site. As part of this review, training has been given on human rights and anti-racist approaches to recruitment. Key actions following the analysis include: implementing positive action measures with ME groups for recruitment; further developing the recruitment system to provide E&D monitoring (see action 2.2); and, development of our careers site to ensure inclusivity, and be clearer on our achievements and being seen as an employer of choice. A clear and concise approach and process to recruitment will help uphold and implement our equality strategy.

The introduction of the new recruitment system and development of a new recruitment approach are steps towards ensuring our recruitment is inclusive. One recent example of putting this into practice was the launch of a pilot scheme to ensure our interviews are inclusive by sharing interview questions with candidates prior to attending their interview. Initial feedback from both candidates and vacancy managers has been positive.

Our partnership working with ME groups is a vital step towards increasing diversity within our sector. We also continue to be committed to the **Young Person's Guarantee** which aims to connect every 16 to 24 year old in Scotland with an opportunity such as a job, training or volunteering. In support of this we continue to provide placements within NatureScot and more details can be found in the article below.

### **Supporting Placements in NatureScot**

We continue to actively promote opportunities for placements within NatureScot. As highlighted earlier in the report, we provided 4 placements hosted by CEMVO as part of their Ethnicity in Nature. In early 2023 we successfully secured a **New to Nature** placement which focuses on supporting young people from ethnic minorities or with disabilities or who are economically disadvantaged. We have also taken part in the **2027 Programme** which aims to train 150 people from working class communities into decision making roles by 2027. We have also supported the John Smith Institute **Minority Ethnic Emerging Leaders Programme** with an internship that is highlighted in Equality Action 1.5.

We will continue to review our processes over the next two years to ensure that we have inclusive recruitment processes and increase the diversity of applications for nature-based jobs and other jobs within NatureScot.

### **Action 2.2 – Monitoring diversity through recruitment cycle**

#### **Progress – delayed**

Whilst we manually monitor diversity as part of the initial stage of recruitment we don't currently monitor it throughout its full cycle via our recruitment system. However, the functionality to support this has now been developed by our system provider Oracle. The implementation of equality and diversity monitoring throughout the whole recruitment cycle and the implementation of blind recruitment will therefore be introduced in 2023-24.

### **Action 2.3 – Unconscious bias training**

#### **Progress – achieved**

This was achieved in the last reporting period and details on delivery can be found in the **2021 Equality Report**.

Since then we have introduced further e-learning packages to reinforce this training although current take up is low at 7.41%. To help increase participation, we are developing an inclusive learning pack and will work with our employee networks to further promote equality and inclusion related training.

## **Equality Outcome 3 - We have an age-inclusive culture that supports and values everyone**

### **Action 3.1 – Recognition for good practice**

#### **Progress – delayed**

We have implemented a number of measures to help support a more age inclusive culture, such as continuing to build multi-age teams, creating more opportunities within our day-to-day business to allow younger employees the opportunity to gain experience e.g. trainee operational officer roles. We also have encouraged an age inclusive approach to recruitment, policy implementation and are also introducing career MOTs for those employees who have changing needs. We aim to continue to build on these and gain recognition for our good practice going forward.

### **Action 3.2 – Equality assessing our Organisational Development and Organisational Change policies and proposals**

#### **Progress – on track**

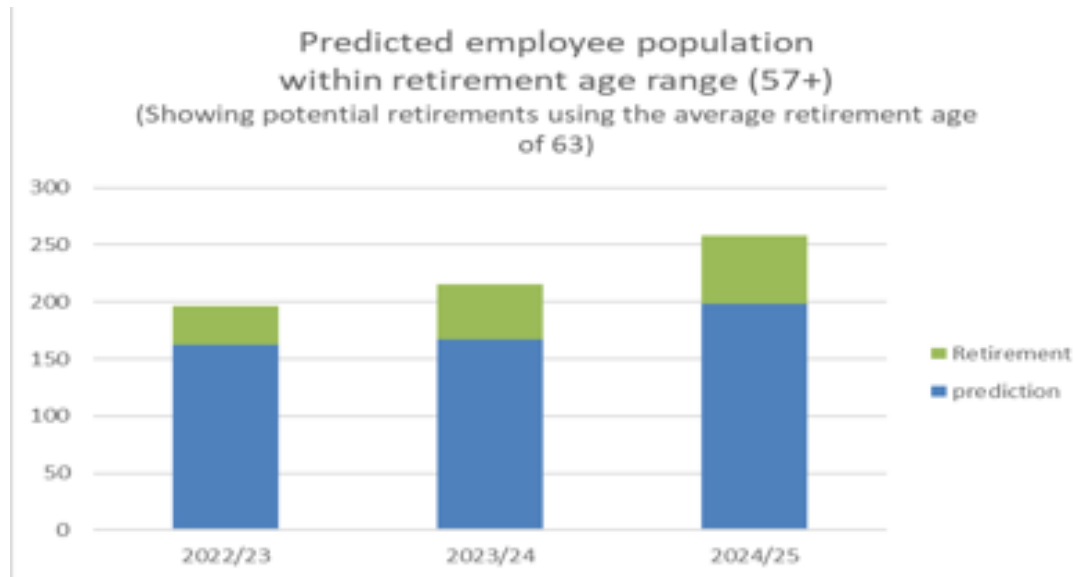
There is on-going activity to equality assess all relevant policies and processes in support of our Organisational Development and organisational change work. In particular, we are working closely with our Inclusion Group, employee networks and colleagues across NatureScot to undertake relevant EqIAs. Work in this area will therefore continue.

### **Action 3.3 – Increase the number of employees considering partial retirement options**

#### **Progress – on track**



Whilst it is not possible to accurately measure the number of employees considering partial retirement, our records suggest that the average age for full retirement over the last 6 years was 63.1 years.



**Our age profile reveals that we have 203 employees who will be above 57 years in 2023/24. As a result, we can predict that during the next 2 years we will have a growing number of people choosing to retire at this age i.e. 63 years**

Over the past year we have actively promoted the pension scheme that is operated in NatureScot (**Civil Service Pensions** ) by running various 1 hour awareness raising sessions. These sessions are aimed at increasing pension knowledge all the way throughout the employee's career, from letting them know their options when they join NatureScot, to advising them on their options when they are considering leaving NatureScot.

We have also promoted Pension Awareness Week and various events run by the pension scheme administrators, MyCSP, to highlight options for boosting pension, and the process and options for people considering full and partial retirement. We have also hosted a Planning for Your Future workshop run by Age Scotland. These efforts will continue in the coming years to remove any barriers and ensure that all employees can plan for their future, including the option for partial retirement.

### **Action 3.4 – Review our approach to Employee Networks**

**Progress – achieved**

We have a number of successful employee networks including the Young Employee Network; the LGBTQ+ Network; the Disability, Ability, Wellbeing & Neurodiversity Network (DAWNN); and, the Multicultural Network. They all continue to play a key role in raising awareness and ensuring inclusion is embedded across the organisation.

The profile of the networks continues to increase, and they have all recently been added to our corporate Yammer group to increase engagement. Representatives from the networks attend our Change Partner Network, playing a key role in supporting organisational change and engagement with teams and network members. They act as a consultative body, and are engaged in initiatives such as office redevelopment and inclusion training. We also have senior champions who actively support the networks.

One example of how we have used our networks has been to raise awareness of neurodiversity. Through this network we promoted the UK-wide Neurodiversity Celebration Week, provided awareness training to staff, and held drop-in sessions for colleagues to meet up and discuss issues around disability and neurodiversity.

Finally, as part of the development of our new Corporate Plan, we embedded Equality, Diversity & Inclusion (EDI) into our approach (Action Learning Sets) and, as indicated earlier in this report, we continue to work on EqIAs for the Corporate Delivery Plans.

### **Action 3.5 – Implement the actions identified by the Dignity at Work group**

#### **Progress – achieved**

This was achieved in the last reporting period and details on delivery can be found in the **2021 Equality Report**.

### **Action 3.6 – Develop a Mental Health at Work Plan**

#### **Progress – achieved**

This was achieved in the last reporting period and details on delivery can be found in the **2021 Equality Report**.

### **Action 3.7 – Disclosure Campaign & Awareness Raising**

#### **Progress – on track**

We continue to encourage greater disclosure of equality information from our employees. In 2022 we held a disclosure-themed virtual tea break for colleagues to learn more about the value and importance of providing this information. We also promoted it on our new Intranet, highlighting the ease of uploading these details to our HR system. Despite this promotion, uptake remains low, with approximately 25% of employees providing details on areas such as ethnicity, religion and sexual orientation. As a result, we will continue to undertake actions to improve current levels of disclosure.

### **Action 3.8 – Building career MOTs into our performance management process to support employees through life transition stages**

#### **Progress – achieved**

Career MOTs provide an opportunity for employees to discuss work aspirations and to consider future work and learning options, as well as managing changing needs through life transition stages. Our performance management process was revised in early 2023 and now includes the requirement for career MOTs to be undertaken. This aims to ensure that conversations happen on an employee's future working options, to highlight where they are in their career, where they want to be, and the pathway to get there.

### **Action 3.9 – Review our mentoring offer to include reverse and reciprocal mentoring**

#### **Progress – on track**

As part of the review of our mentoring offer we have been focusing on developing our coaching service. An example of this has been the offer of coaching to our Programme for Youth Employment placements and their line managers. This helps support the placements in developing their personal leadership skills early in their careers. We also provided coaching to the CEMVO placements (highlighted earlier in this report), both during their time with NatureScot and post placement.

We have also run a number of speed coaching offers for employees who are looking for short sessions. In addition, we also offer a series of up to six sessions with a coach which is open to anyone who feels this would benefit their career progression. NatureScot continues to develop coaching and mentoring options. We will look for opportunities to include reverse and reciprocal mentoring in our offer.

## **Equality Outcome 4 - We have reduced the gender pay gap to 9%**

**Action 4.1 – Explore further opportunities to reduce the gap between the lowest and highest earners**

**Progress – achieved**

This was achieved in the last reporting period and details on delivery can be found in the **2021 Equality Report**.

**Action 4.2 – Review our recruitment policies and processes**

**Progress – on track**

In line with our new ways of working, People & Organisational Development team have carried out a review of NatureScot's policies and processes, working in partnership with our trade union colleagues. As part of the review, the format of our people policies has been redesigned and grouped into suites to ensure that our policies and processes are clearer, transparent and accessible.

Alongside our work with trade union colleagues, we have also consulted with our employee networks to overcome any barriers to the new format. This included feedback from our DAWNN network on the recruitment process to ensure it was inclusive for our neurodiverse colleagues. As mentioned in equality action 2.1, we have recently launched a pilot to ensure our interview process is inclusive.

**Action 4.3 – Develop STEM Ambassadors in areas where there is significantly lower female representation**

**Progress – Delayed**

We have not made as much progress on this as was anticipated. We plan to have a central Science, Technology, Engineering, Mathematics (STEM) strategy. This will actively encourage our employees and also capture who in our workforce are STEM ambassadors, so we can ensure they have opportunities and actively promote STEM in lower representation areas. This will involve collaborative working across our sector and further engagement with education institutions. This will be progressed in conjunction with our young employee network and panel to develop a strategy which is attractive to young people.

## Action 4.4 – Improve workplace flexibility for men and women

### Progress – Achieved

In 2020, during the start of the COVID-19 pandemic, NatureScot made a successful transition to working at home as part of the lockdown restrictions. When offices were able to fully re-open again in 2022 we introduced new workplace arrangements. This enables employees to become office or home workers or a mixture of the two. This was greatly assisted by the introduction of new IT collaboration tools and the provision of home office equipment. Approximately 70% of employees have taken up the opportunity to work at home on a permanent or regular basis, with the remaining 30% also having the flexibility to work occasionally at home when required.

Alongside the introduction of new workplace arrangements, we have also empowered employees to be more flexible in when they work to fit around their domestic and personal circumstances, whilst still meeting business needs. Whilst this arrangement needs to ensure that it does not impact on operational delivery it has greatly assisted employees to have a good work/life balance.

## Action 4.5 – Parental Leave

### Progress – on track

During the period of this report 19 women have taken up maternity leave. Some of these remain on maternity leave but of those that have returned to work, five remain on the same hours they worked before and four have lowered their hours to support their child care arrangements. In the same period 18 men participated in paternity leave. This was increased from four to eight weeks in 2019 and all 18 men took the full period off, utilising the flexibility to take this in different periods rather than all at once, to suit their personal circumstances.

## Review of Equality Outcomes

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NatureScot has reviewed its Equality Outcomes to ensure they reflect our corporate priorities and focus on the most significant inequalities emerging from our evidence and involvement activities.

Our refreshed outcomes reflect the Fairer Scotland Duty that was introduced in 2018 which places a “legal responsibility on particular public bodies in Scotland to actively consider how they can reduce inequalities of outcomes caused by socio-economic disadvantage, when making strategic decisions”. Although NatureScot is not covered by the duty, we nevertheless target our efforts towards addressing inequalities experienced by individuals and communities. We will address the Fairer Scotland Duty principally through Outcomes 1 & 2.

## Revised Equality Outcomes for 2023-2027

The first two outcomes focus on a key priority of our Corporate Plan **a nature-rich future for all**, to inspire everyone to value our natural world.

Those with protected characteristics can face additional barriers in accessing and enjoying nature and the benefits it provides. In response, we will undertake actions to engage with target groups to help them better connect with our natural world through nature-based recreation, volunteering, learning and employment. A new and revised outcome will be implemented:

**Outcome 1** – Through our work to inspire everyone to value the natural world, people who are under-represented as a result of their protected characteristics are better able to access and positively connect with nature.

Contributory Actions:

1.1 Develop a longer-term outreach programme for NNRs to increase visits to these places from target groups using co-production approaches.

1.2 Develop future campaign activity using co-production approaches with key audiences, including target groups.

1.3 Ensure our biodiversity, NNR and Scottish Outdoor Access Code (SOAC) campaigns and communications reach and are relevant to target groups.

1.4 Ensure evaluation of our project, campaign and communication activity includes consideration of protected characteristic groups.

1.5 Undertake bespoke survey work to ensure we have the evidence we need to inform our work.

**Outcome 2** – Greater diversity in those working to protect and restore nature.

Contributory Actions:

- 2.1 Ensure the revised Climate Emergency Skills Action Plan identifies specific actions to increase the number of minority ethnic people in the nature-based sector.
- 2.2 Work with CEMVO and Backbone CIC to promote nature-based jobs and pathways in ways that make careers in the nature sector a more attractive option for minority ethnic people
- 2.3 Include a requirement for projects that are looking to use volunteers to include proposals for an inclusive programme
- 2.4 Develop an approach to measuring and reporting on target groups in our projects
- 2.5 Co-design EDI best practice workshop with CEMVO for the Green Skills Week Conference
- 2.6 Identify and promote nature-based sector role models and their specific pathway to nature-based employment
- 2.7 Recruit two to three young ME people and/or from disadvantaged communities into placements annually
- 2.8 Celebrate our EDI achievements externally

### **Outcomes 3 to 5**

These outcomes focus on transforming how we work, with the evidence coming from our workforce data, employee monitoring processes, surveys and employee networks. This highlights that more needs to be done to increase representation from ME backgrounds, particularly young people from ME backgrounds, in NatureScot's work. As part of this we need to make people from ME communities aware of the career paths available in nature-based roles. The evidence also highlights that more can be done to develop a more inclusive culture in the organisation and increase the number of women applying for senior leadership roles.

In response to the aspiration to be a more inclusive and representative organisation a revised set of new outcomes will be implemented:

**Outcome 3** – Increased participation and representation of young people from ME backgrounds and disadvantaged communities in governance and influence in nature-based decision making.

Contributory Actions:

- 3.1 Develop young person/ME Board shadowing opportunity
- 3.2 Increase representation of target groups in our assessment panels, advisory boards and forums
- 3.3 Review and widen our Stakeholder Engagement Strategy to include target groups and other under-represented groups

### 3.4 Measure participation in decision-making

**Outcome 4** – Enable a more inclusive culture in NatureScot that reflects wider society.

Contributory Actions:

4.1 All employees to set personal EDI objectives as part of their PDC conversations

4.2 Introduce standard question re EDI in all candidate statements/interviews

4.3 We have a co-ordinated employee network engagement plan and access to funds to support their activity

4.4 Enhance our EDI learning framework

4.5 Identify where membership of professional bodies could add value to our EDI work and support delivery of our EDI objectives

**Outcome 5** – Support better gender balance across all grades in NatureScot, particularly women in senior leadership roles

Contributory Actions:

5.1 Development of Women into Leadership Programme

5.2 Positive Action to encourage women to apply for senior roles

5.3 Include opportunities for job sharing in adverts

## Gender Pay Gap & Equal Pay Statement

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As at 31<sup>st</sup> January 2023, our mean Gender Pay Gap has reduced to 7.5%. This has halved from 2017 when it was 15.01%.



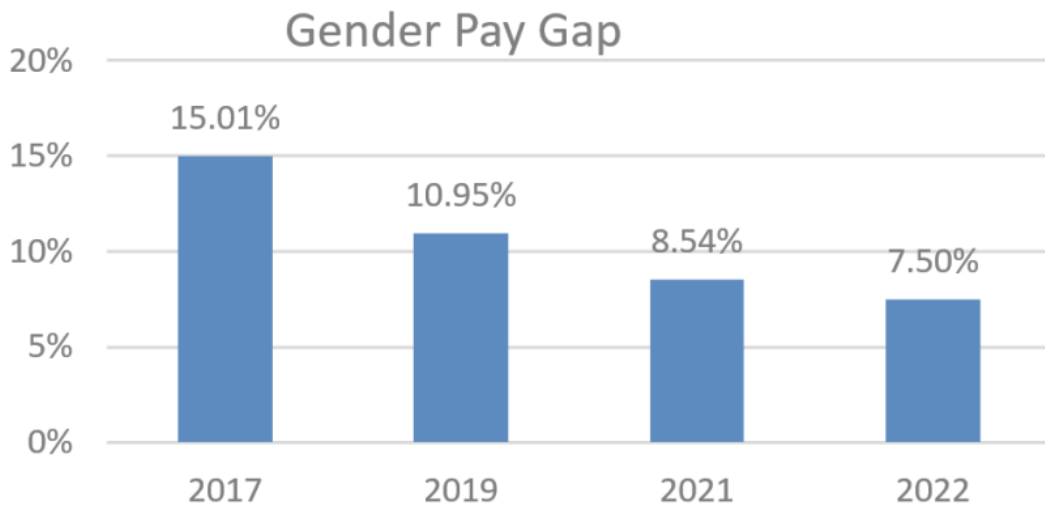


Figure 1 – Gender Pay Gap

[Click for a full description](#) ▼

Grade	2017 Pay Gap	2019 Pay Gap	2021 Pay Gap	2022 Pay Gap	Women earn:
A	0.66%	0.10%	2.07%	0.00%	above 5% more than men
B	0.29%	0.00%	1.49%	0.10%	above 1% more than men
C	0.29%	0.07%	0.83%	0.19%	less than 1% more than men
D	0.70%	1.27%	0.25%	0.33%	
E	0.38%	1.47%	0.72%	0.85%	men and women earn equal
F	2.17%	0.53%	2.64%	0.56%	
G	5.53%	2.58%	5.26%	1.61%	Men earn:
H	100%	5%	5.66%	0.00%	above 5% more than women
CEO	100%	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%	above 1% more than women
					less than 1% more than women

Figure 2 – Pay Gap Movement per year

[Click for a full description](#) ▼

Despite the on-going gender pay gap, staff doing similar work receive the same salary in NatureScot. The table above with its accompanying legend (see right column) presents a breakdown by grade on the gender pay gap. This shows that in 2022 all levels, apart from E grade, women earned equal to or more than men. Whilst this does not appear to align to the overall gender pay gap of 7.5% this reflects the higher proportion of female employees at lower grades in the organisation.

Figure 3: These figures are based on a workforce split 59% female and 41% male

Grade	Females
A	83%

Grade	Females
B	61%
C	67%
D	63%
E	49%
F	31%
G	40%
H	33%
CEO	100%

Mean average hourly pay rates are £19.81 female and £21.40 male. Median average hourly pay rates are £20.33 female and £21.40 male, with an overall Median Average Pay Gap of 5%. Regardless of gender however staff doing similar work receive the same salary.

### Equal Pay Statement ▶

We are committed to promoting and embedding equality of opportunity and diversity within NatureScot. This extends to fair and equitable pay and reward for all of our employees. We aim to ensure transparency and eliminate any bias in our pay and reward systems. This includes equality on the basis of: sex; sexual orientation; gender identity; ethnic origin; disability; religion or belief; age; marital / civil partnership status; pregnancy; and, maternity or any other relevant difference e.g. trade union activity, social background.

We operate a civil service recognised job evaluation scheme (JEGS). The JEGS process evaluates roles within the organisation and not the person employed in that role. NatureScot employees working at the same level within our pay grading structure or undertaking like work, work rated as equivalent, work of equal value are paid the same. This is irrespective of their gender, ethnicity, disability or any other difference.

We have reduced our mean gender pay gap from 15.01% in 2017 to 7.5% as at 31<sup>st</sup> January 2023. In comparison with other NDPB's this reflects a below average pay gap. We are currently conducting an Equal Pay Audit to identify and evaluate any areas of imbalance within our current pay arrangements, and identify opportunities to reduce the Gender Pay Gap further. Within our pay negotiations with Trade Unions and in line with Scottish Public Sector Pay Policy, we have focused more on our lower paid employees which is where the majority of our female workforce are. We are nearing the completion of a pay and benefits benchmarking exercise so we can ensure we are a competitive employer thus attracting a wider range of applicants to our vacancies. We have also engaged with external agencies to help us review our recruitment practices with a view to increasing the balance in under-represented groups.

More females are being promoted to senior roles and we have achieved gender balance in our Senior Leadership Team. In 2017 we met the ambition set out in the Scottish Government's Programme for Government for a 50:50 gender balance on public Boards. Following the most recent Board recruitment we now have 7 males and 5 females. In terms of pay, we have achieved a complete reduction in our mean gender pay gap in our lowest paid Grade (A), and in our Director level pay (Grade H), with minimal differences at all other levels.

Our Women's Network has been instrumental in highlighting barriers to progression and career development within NatureScot. We are committed to further reducing our gender pay gap and imbalances and will continue to seek to achieve this during 2023 - 2027. To support this, we will:

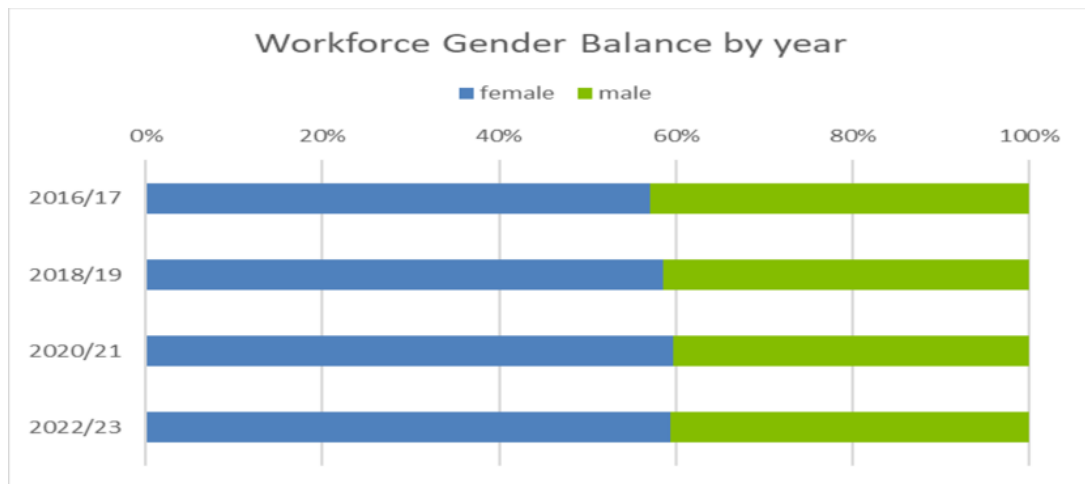
- Work in partnership with Trade Unions and the Scottish Government to consider ways to reduce the gender pay gap within our pay remit
- Review our recruitment processes to ensure opportunities are open for all and that bias is removed from decision making
- Promote and facilitate workplace flexibility for men and women
- Retain our Living Wage accreditation and gain Working Families accreditation
- Work with the NACWG to support their aim to "make gender inequality a historical curiosity in Scotland". NatureScot has signed the public pledge in support of the work of NACWG.

This Equal Pay statement is owned by the NatureScot Chief Executive, Francesca Osowska, and reviewed by the People & Organisational Development Team. It will be reviewed by April 2025.

## Occupational Segregation by Gender

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The gender balance in NatureScot has remained steady in the past six years, as shown in figure 3. Our overall workforce is split 58.9% women and 41.1% men.

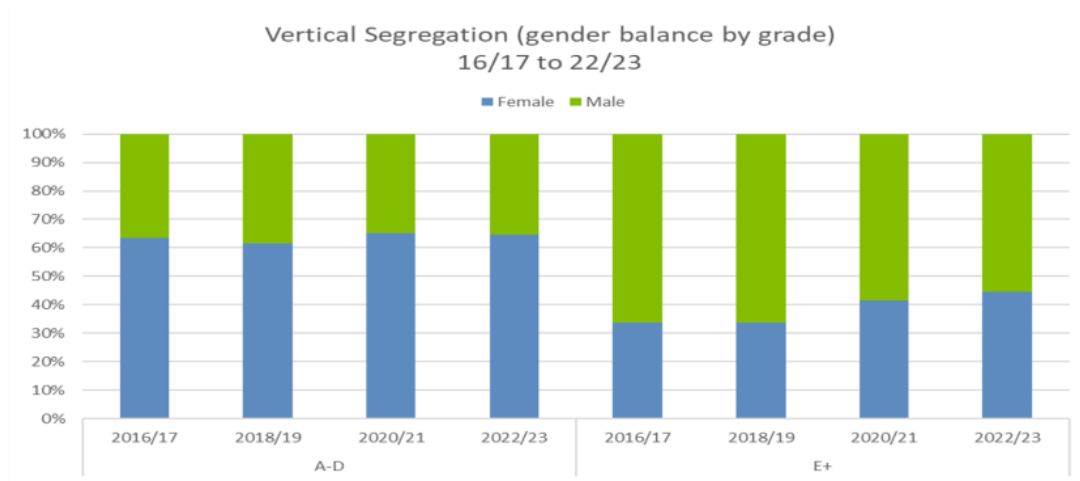


**Figure 4 – Gender balance by year, 2016/17 to 2022/23**

[Click for a full description](#) ✓

Occupational Segregation is one of the main causes of the gender pay gap: research shows that this to be a historical issue within society and how employers and societal norms have defined the world of women in work. Vertical segregation clusters women and men in different levels of jobs or grades and horizontal segregation occurs when men and women are clustered in certain types of jobs. Our occupational segregation analysis looks at both vertical (Figure 4) and horizontal occupational segregation (see page 31).

Figure 4 (vertical occupational segregation) shows there has been little change in the gender balance of A-D grade employees, and also an increase in the number of female employees at grade E or above:



**Figure 5 (vertical occupational segregation) shows there has been little change in the gender balance of A-D grade employees, and also an increase in the number of female employees at grade E or above**

[Click for a full description](#) ✓

- We have 32 F grade roles (10 females and 22 males), however we are gender balanced in our senior leadership team (G, H, and CEO).
- There are more women than men in grades A to D

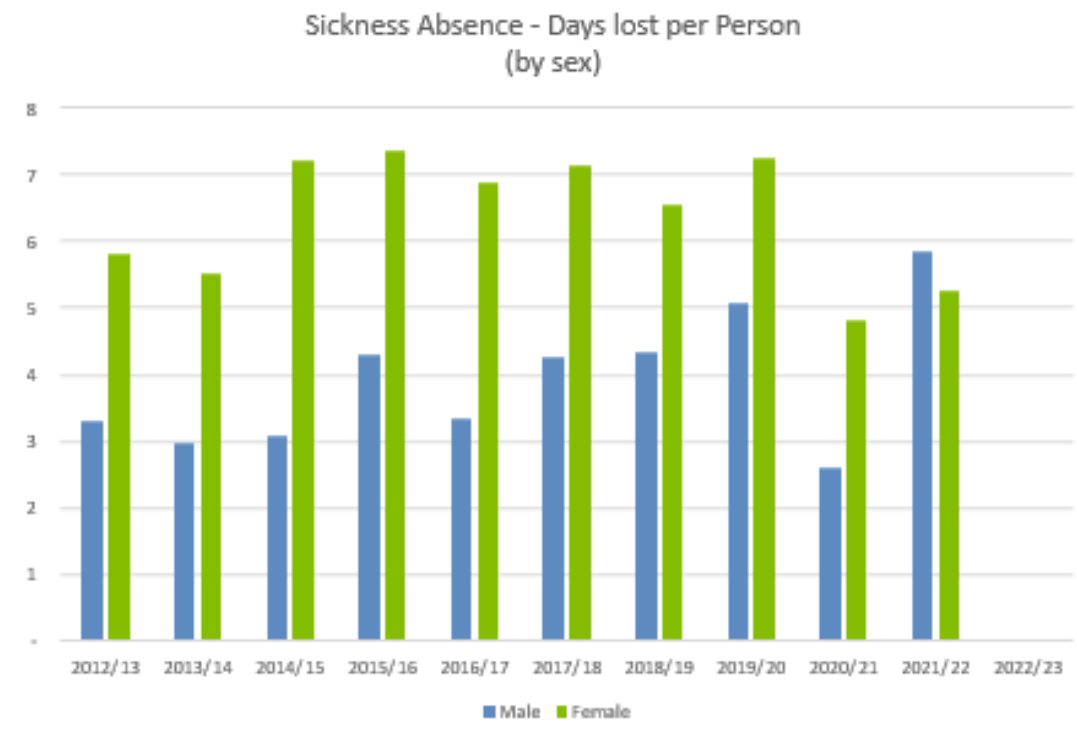
## Implications

Although there is a minimal Gender Pay Gap across each grade, with more women than men in the majority of our teams, the greater concentration of men in our higher paid roles is contributing to the overall mean Gender Pay Gap. This supports our action to review our recruitment practices and family friendly policy measures to ensure that women feel supported and have the ability to achieve higher paid roles.

There is also an over-representation of women in traditionally female teams such as Workplace & Facilities Management and People & Organisational Development. We will encourage applications from under-represented groups in these areas which will have a positive impact on the Gender Pay Gap.

This table provides a **gender breakdown by NatureScot Team** in csv format.

# Sickness Absence Levels



**Figure 6 – Sick absence rates**

[Click for a full description](#) ▼

Sickness absence rates have fluctuated since the start of the COVID-19 Pandemic in 2020/21 when overall absence rates fell. This was likely as a result of staff working at home where minor ailments allowed them greater ability to work than in previous situations. The rates for 2021/22 have shown an increase although there is no discerning reason why this has occurred. However, available **data from the ONS** highlights that sickness absence rates in the UK rose by 2.2% so our own increase is likely a reflection of wider society. Information for 2022/23 will be included once the full year's data is available.

Work Profile Appendices



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