

**Title: NatureScot Equality and Mainstreaming Report 2025**

**Date: 13 March 2025**

| **Purpose:** | Approval |
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| **Which of the current Business or Corporate Plan priorities does this topic drive forward and in what way?** | This topic supports multiple corporate objectives.  ‘Developing a happy and resilient workforce’ and ‘New ways of working’ focus on building a diverse, productive, skilled and motivated workforce. ‘Promote understanding and awareness of skills and capacity’ and ‘Inspire people to connect with nature’ aim to increase the diversity of those working in nature-based jobs and to deliver an NNR outreach and equalities strategy. |
| **Summary:** | The Equality Act 2010 states that public authorities must comply with the Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED).  This paper introduces the NatureScot Equality and Mainstreaming report for the period 2023-2025.  The specific duties of the PSED require us to publish a biennial report on how we’ve mainstreamed equality, our progress against our equality outcomes, our gender pay gap and equal pay statement, and our employees’ equality data.  Compliance is monitored by the Equality and Human Rights Commission. Our equality outcomes were agreed ahead of the 2023 Equality Report and will be revised for the next report due in 2027. For this reporting period, we have reviewed the current outcomes and actions. We have amended, removed, or merged any that were not relevant, clear, or easily measurable. We have also updated some of the language used to describe protected characteristics. |
| **Recommendations:** | The Board is asked to:   * Approve the report for external publication; * Note the changes to the current equality outcomes and actions. |
| **Report Author(s):** | Michelle Persoglio, Alison Matheson |
| **Sponsor:** | Jane Macdonald |
| **Appendices**: | Annex 1: NatureScot Equality and Mainstreaming Report 2025 |

**Purpose**

1. To provide the Board with the opportunity to read and comment on the Equality and Mainstreaming Report 2025, and to approve the report for external publication.

**Background**

1. The Equality Act 2010 prohibits discrimination against people with protected characteristics. The Act puts additional responsibilities, known as the Public Sector Equality Duty or PSED, onto public authorities and organisations.
2. There are two parts to the PSED; the general duty and the Scottish specific duties. The general duty asks us to consider how we can; remove unlawful discrimination, advance equality of opportunity, and foster good relations. The specific duties help us achieve the general duties. For example, by listing the data we need to include in our equality reporting.
3. To meet the general and specific duties of the PSED, NatureScot publishes an equality report every two years and revises its equality outcomes every four years. The report presented in this paper is our seventh Equality Report and will be published on 30 April 2025.

**About the report**

1. The report was written utilising clear English and short sentences, to ensure it is user friendly for all. This contributes to the specific duty to publish the report in a manner that is accessible. We will fully meet this duty by ensuring the report is easy to find on our website [www.Nature.Scot](http://www.Nature.Scot)
2. There are two key elements to equality reporting; the mainstreaming report and the progress made against our equality outcomes. These are separate reports and although they can be published independently, it is common practice for public authorities and organisations to publish these as one. For this reason, and to give a true representation of its contents, the report presented in this paper is titled ‘NatureScot Equality and Mainstreaming Report 2025’.
3. The mainstreaming element of the report follows a similar format to previous years. It looks at how we’ve integrated the three needs of the general duty into our functions. We have captured some achievements here such as the work of the Accessibility Project, the creation of an Age Positive Employee Network, and the launch of Read&Write accessibility software to all employees.
4. We have been working towards achieving our five Equality Outcomes. The responsibility for this work falls mainly to the People and Organisational Development team and the People and Places team, with some involvement from Communications and External Funding colleagues. This is understandable for outcomes relating to our people, their data, and their development. However, the process of designing and delivering the actions could be improved by more involvement from leaders and teams across the whole organisation.
5. SLT approved the recommendation that our equalities work should be overseen by an overarching steering group. This new group will be responsible for governance, setting direction and supporting the delivery of the actions that contribute to achieving our equality outcomes, as well as the development of any future outcomes.
6. Employee data for gender and age, shown in Annex 1, is extracted from our Human Resources system ‘Oracle Fusion’, and is forward dated to 31 March 2025. The data will be updated before the report is published. We report on all protected characteristics with the exception of Marriage and Civil Partnership which is not a requirement of the PSED.

**Next steps for the Equality and Mainstreaming Report 2025**

After the Board has commented on the report, and any necessary edits have been made, next steps are:

1. The Communications team will support the People and Organisational Development Senior Adviser to deliver a communications plan to ensure the report reaches a wide and varied audience. They will also provide a Gaelic translation for the foreword.
2. If possible, we will update the report where it refers to activities that will take place early in 2025.
3. Employee data shown in Annex 1 will be updated.

1. The Communications team will format the final version of the report into an accessible HTML page with images, for publication on [www.Nature.Scot](http://www.Nature.Scot)

**Recommendations**

1. The Board is asked to approve the report for external publication on 30 April 2025.
2. The Board is asked to note the following amendments to the equality outcomes and actions. These changes will help us to improve the accuracy of progress reports and will ensure we are using the correct language when referring to groups with protected characteristics.

a. Merge 1.3 and 1.4 and rename “*Campaigns and communications relating to Outcome 1 are reaching the relevant target groups, and are being evaluated by their impact.*” The activities described under 1.3 and 1.4 will be duplicated if we do not merge them.

b. Rename 2.7 to “*Recruit four young people from ethnic minority groups, or young people from disadvantaged communities, every two years*.” Increasing the timescale will provide greater flexibility, and defining the number of people will give us a specific target to achieve. We have removed ‘placements’ as there are other options to explore such as apprenticeship routes, and positive action recruitment for our vacancies in the absence of paybill funds for placements.

c. Update 2.8 to “*Promote four EDI-focused achievements or activities every year that generate audience engagement comparable to other general campaigns*.” Updating this action will make our progress easier to measure. We have used ‘general campaigns’ as a comparable which will include industry averages to ensure we’re comparing like-for-like.

d. Amend Outcome 3 to “*More young people from ethnic minority groups, and disadvantaged communities, have a greater role in nature-based governance and decision-making*.” This swaps the term ‘ME’ for our preferred term ‘ethnic minority’. Rewording the outcome also improves its readability.

e. Action 3.4 is vague and therefore difficult to measure. We would like to amend this by taking it back a step to “*Agree measures to show the target groups’ participation and contribution to decision-making*”.

f. Remove actions 4.1 and 4.2 following SLT feedback on the interim report. These actions relate to EDI objectives in PDCs and EDI questions in candidates’ supporting statements and interviews. It was thought that the actions risked appearing tokenistic and a more integrated, mainstreamed approach would be better.

g. Close 5.1 Development of Women into Leadership Programme. We will support women to develop their careers through the activities mentioned in the report under action 5.2.