



Equality Outcomes

Agenda Item 7

National Park Authority Board Meeting

10 March 2025

Paper for decision

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1. Purpose

1.1. This paper presents the National Park Authority's Mainstreaming and Equality Outcomes report, which provides a final update on the progress towards mainstreaming equalities and our Equality Outcomes for 2021 – 2025, and shares our proposed Equality Outcomes for 2025 – 2029.

2. Recommendation(s)

2.1. Members are asked to **review** and **approve** the draft Equality Outcome report as attached appendix 1.

2.2. Members are asked to **agree** to delegate final minor editorial adjustments and addition of relevant appendices prior to statutory publishing of the report by 30th April 2025.

3. Contribution to National Park Partnership Plan and Our Corporate Plan

3.1. Our Equality Outcomes are designed to contribute to both strategic documents. In our National Park Partnership Plan, objective 2.1.2 outlines our commitment to supporting diversity and inclusion across the

National Park. The second Outcome in particular aligns to the Park-wide work.

3.2. In our recently approved Corporate Plan, objective 2.2.3 explains our plans to champion equity, diversity and inclusion in our work. Outcome 1 in particular aligns to this internal, organisation focussed work.

4. Background

4.1. The publication of our Mainstreaming and Equality Outcomes report is a statutory duty under the Public Sector Equality Duty, which helps us to fulfil our obligations within the Equality Act (2010).

4.2. The Equality Act (2010) provides a legal framework to protect the rights of individuals against discrimination in the workplace and wider society, and to advance equality of opportunity for all. It outlines the protected characteristics (or equality groups) and types of discrimination under the law.

4.3. The Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED or 'general duty') came into force in 2011. It means that public authorities, in the exercise of their functions, must have 'due regard' to the need to eliminate unlawful discrimination, advance equality of opportunity and foster good relations with equality groups.

4.4. We have Scottish Specific Duties under the PSED. One of these is the requirement to set and publish Equality Outcomes on a 4-year cycle, with an interim report midway. These Equality Outcomes outline specific areas that we want to work towards.

4.5. We are also required to report on progress on mainstreaming equalities every two years. Put simply, mainstreaming means 'integrating equality into day-to-day working' and taking equality into account in everything we do. The reporting process should allow us to reflect, demonstrate how we're promoting equality and seek continuous improvement.

4.6. While we have these statutory obligations to fulfil, we also see enhancing equity, diversity and inclusion as simply the right thing to do.

4.7. We are coming to the end of our current set of Equality Outcomes for 2021 – 2025. As we published our interim report on these in April 2023, the report attached as appendix 1 is our final update against these Outcomes, covering the last 2 years. It also covers the mainstreaming actions we have delivered in this period.

4.8. As well as providing this progress report, the attachment also outlines the new Equality Outcomes proposed for 2025 – 2029.

- 4.9. In general, we have seen a recent increase in visibility of equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI) work at a strategic and partnership level. The National Parks UK family now have an EDI working group, seeking to coordinate actions to improve all our National Parks, in part as an ongoing response to the Glover review. As lead NPA for this group, Northumberland NPA recently held the NPUK Conference entitled '75 years of Landscapes for Everyone', which Heather Reid, Claire Chapman, Gordon Watson, Stuart Mearns and Nik Turner attended to share progress and discuss ways forward to increase access to National Parks and protected landscapes. We contributed to the shared consultancy-led project that was preliminarily shared at that conference, which explored principles of 'belonging' in National Parks. Final outcomes and next steps from this project will be discussed in a forthcoming NPUK EDI working group meeting.
- 4.10. Looking closer to home, our two main strategies also show increased focus on EDI. Our NPPP has an objective to support diversity and inclusion across the National Park, and our recently approved Corporate Plan also shares an objective to embed EDI into everything we do as an organisation. These strategic connections, and how a golden thread has been woven between them and our new Equality Outcomes through shared indicators of success, is explained in more detail within the report.
- 4.11. The process of setting our new Outcomes has been a period of reflection and engagement, both internally and externally, reflecting on the progress we have made on the 2021 - 2025 Outcomes, our strategic objectives captured within the NPPP and Corporate Plan and wider best practice on EDI.
- 4.12. Reflecting on the progress against the 2021 – 2025 is part of the process of setting the new Outcomes. Whilst we have made good progress, which is shared within the report, we know that there is a lot more to do. EDI issues are societal, deep-rooted and take longer than a 4-year cycle to see long term change. That's why we have proposed retaining the focus of the first 2 Outcomes, with adjustments to wording, to allow us to continue to build our positive impact and momentum. The third Outcome reflects our intention to further integrate diverse insights across our work.
- 4.13. We have carried out a series of engagement activities to discuss the proposed Outcomes as well as gather insights to inform actions underneath these. This commenced with the Park for All group, our cross-organisational group of staff who support EDI, who carried out the preliminary review, before opening out to relevant Operational Managers

and Executive to draft the Outcomes. All-staff updates were provided through the 10:02 and a recorded 'lunch and learn' allowing staff to understand the detail of the work. A feedback survey was provided for staff to suggest actions to contribute to the Outcomes.

- 4.14. In addition, we hosted a focused workshop with our volunteers, understanding their views. We have already begun to consider how we can integrate some of their ideas into the delivery of our volunteer programme and wider inclusion work.
- 4.15. At the point of writing this paper, a session is planned with the Youth Committee (Saturday 22nd February) to have a similar discussion.
- 4.16. We have also reached out to external audiences who also promote equality, support individuals / groups with protected characteristics, and / or who might otherwise be experiencing intersectional barriers to accessing the National Park. This resulted in a focused workshop with staff from these organisations, reflecting on the themes of the Outcomes and gathering insights from them on how we could work to achieve these for the people they support.
- 4.17. We have provided a feedback survey to our workshop participants as well as other organisations who we have worked with in the past who were unable to attend the workshop, offering that ongoing opportunity to provide us with feedback. At the time of writing this paper, this survey is still open but any responses will be incorporated if required into the final published report. From the discussions so far, we anticipate that the insights will be predominantly focused on actions, and as such will be incorporated into our annual working plans and not the Outcome report.
- 4.18. Setting these new Outcomes reflects our renewed commitment to tackling inequality and increasing accessibility of opportunity across our organisation, in the Park as a place, and in how we engage with diverse groups to understand and embed their needs in all we do. The delivery of work to achieve these Outcomes will continue to be embedded in work plans across many teams, as the updates in the report show. We have planned improvements to how we monitor and maintain progress, for example, through our commitment to shared within the Corporate Plan to increasing from reporting two-yearly to annually. 2025-26 will be the year we lay these foundations.

5. Risks

- 5.1. If not approved by the Board, there is a risk of non-compliance with the Public Sector Equality Duty, which requires the attached report to be published by end April 2025.

6. Next steps

- 6.1. Any required edits following Board discussion and any final feedback from external audiences will be completed by staff.
- 6.2. The required appendices will also be produced by HR and incorporated into the report.
- 6.3. These will be checked by the Head of People and Assets before publication on our website.

7. Appendices

Appendix 1 – Equality Outcomes

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