



Scottish  
Forestry  
Coilltearachd  
na h-Alba

# Scottish Forestry Mainstreaming and Equality Outcomes Report 2023 - 2025



Scottish Forestry is the Scottish Government agency responsible for forestry policy, support and regulation

Is e Coilltearachd na h-Alba a' bhuidheann-ghnìomha aig Riaghaltas na h-Alba a tha an urra ri poileasaidh, taic agus riaghladh do choilltearachd



Scottish Government  
Riaghaltas na h-Alba



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## Accessibility

The accessibility of our published materials is an important feature in making Scottish Forestry transparent and accountable.

If you require this Mainstreaming and Equality Outcomes Report 2023 – 2025 in an alternative format, please contact [staffcomms@forestry.gov.scot](mailto:staffcomms@forestry.gov.scot) by email to discuss how we can take steps to accommodate your needs.

# Foreword

I am delighted to introduce Scottish Forestry's third Mainstreaming and Equality Outcomes Report, covering 2023-2025, my first since taking up post as Chief Executive in July 2023. The report summarises our progress to date, highlights the activities we have undertaken to progress this important area, and sets out our priorities for the future.

Since the last report, which covered 2021-2023, the organisation has faced significant challenges as we emerged from a post pandemic world. Our ways of working have changed, we have faced increasing expectations to do more in relation to delivering greater woodland creation, while also being an effective regulator.

This has happened against the backdrop of significant constraints in public sector funding, which has inhibited progress with the delivery of corporate improvement and recruitment. Nevertheless, in replacing roles and in respect of some new opportunities, we still welcomed 27 new starters in 2024.

At its heart Equality and Diversity embraces the ideal that we are a stronger organisation when we harness the contribution of different views, cultures, perspectives and life experience in how we do our work. By better reflecting the diversity and richness of our nation we become more capable of delivering for the people of Scotland.

This report provides an important snapshot of where we are in our journey to strengthen and embed Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI) approaches within Scottish Forestry. There is good evidence of progress in a number of areas for which we can be proud. But nevertheless, it also contains reflections on the need to go further.

I am proud of the examples of mainstreaming, which are highlighted throughout, and which demonstrate the enthusiasm and individual contributions that make Scottish Forestry a more inclusive and rewarding place to work.

The case study on our new Women's Network recognises our progress to achieve, in a historically male-dominated sector, an almost 50:50 split in the composition of our workforce between male and female colleagues. However, it remains a reality that women are still underrepresented in our more senior grades.

By developing a new network for women to share peer support and advice on personal and professional development, we are helping to grow

and progress women's careers and our leaders of the future. I am looking forward to seeing how the network evolves over time and the positive impacts it can bring.

The report features three case studies that show how, year-on-year, we partner with community groups to ensure that minority and marginalised groups have the opportunity to access forests for exercise, recreation, and wellbeing. We know that woodlands can reduce health inequalities and we want to support this as much as we can.

We also demonstrate how, within Scottish Forestry, we have continued to champion and celebrate EDI by using our internal channels to share information and events which are of significance to different groups across Scottish Forestry.

Alongside these case studies, we share examples of how we are developing the careers of our younger colleagues, supporting our staff with hybrid working, driving a positive culture, and addressing inappropriate behaviour.

As ever, our utmost aim is to ensure that everyone who works for Scottish Forestry feels accepted, included, heard, valued, and respected.

I want to take this opportunity to thank colleagues across Scottish Forestry for all their work to champion EDI and build it into our day-to-day working lives. I also want to thank those involved in the preparation of this report.



**Paul Lowe**  
Chief Executive Officer

## Facal-toisich

Tha e na thoileachas mòr dhomh an treas Aithisg Builean Àbhaisteachaidh agus Co-ionannachd aig Coilltearachd na h-Alba fhoillseachadh, a' buntainn ri 2023-2025, a' chiad aithisg agam bho thòisich mi mar Cheannard san Iuchar 2023. Tha an aithisg a' toirt geàrr-chunntas air ar n-adhartas gu ruige seo, ag innse na choilean sinn san raon chudromach seo, agus a' mìneachadh ar prìomhachasan airson an ama ri teachd.

Bhon aithisg mu dheireadh, a bha a' buntainn ri 2021-2023, tha dùbhlain mhòra air a bhith aig a' bhuidhinn a' tighinn a-mach à saoghal a' ghalair lèir-sgaoilte. Tha na dòighean-obrach againn air atharrachadh, tha barrachd ga iarraidh oirnn a thaobh barrachd choilltean a chruthachadh, agus aig an aon àm a bhith nar riaghlaidhe èifeachdach.

Tha seo air tachairt aig àm chuingeadan mòra ann am maoinachadh san roinn phoblaich, a tha air bacadh a chur air adhartas le leasachadh corporra agus trusadh. Ach a dh'aindeoin sin, a thaobh dhreuchdan ùra agus cuid de chothroman ùra, chuir sinn fàilte air 27 luchd-tòiseachaidh ùr ann an 2024.

Aig a chridhe, tha Co-ionannachd agus Iomadachd na dhòigh air ar buidheann a neartachadh tro bhith a' cleachdadh diofar bheachdan, chultaran, sheallaidhean agus eòlasan-beatha nar n-obair. Le riochdachadh nas fheàrr air iomadachd agus beairteas ar dùthcha bidh sinn nas comasaiche air libhrigeadh airson muinntir na h-Alba.

Tha sealladh cudromach san aithisg seo air far a bheil sinn air an t-slighe gus dòighean-obrach Co-ionannachd, Iomadachd agus In-ghabhail (EDI) a neartachadh agus a dhaingneachadh ann an Coilltearachd na h-Alba. Tha deagh fhianais ann air adhartas ann an grunn raointean a tha na adhbhar pròis dhuinn. Ach, a dh'aindeoin sin, tha meòrachadh ann cuideachd air an fheum air tuilleadh a dhèanamh.

Tha mi moiteil às na h-eisimpleirean de dh'àbhaisteachadh a chithear air feadh na h-aithisge agus a tha a' nochdadh an dealais, agus an tabhartais aig daoine fa leth, a tha a' dèanamh Coilltearachd na h-Alba na àite-obrach

nas in-ghabhalaiche agus buannachdail.

Tha an sgrùdadh cùise air an Lìonra Bhoireannach ùr againn ag aithneachadh ar n-adhartais, ann an roinn far an robh fireannaich a-riamh san fhìor mhòr-chuid, a dh'ionnsaigh sgioba-obrach a tha gu bhith dàrna leth boireann. Ach, tha e fhathast fìor nach eil boireannaich air an riochdachadh gu leòr anns na h-ìrean as àirde againn.

Le bhith a' leasachadh lìonra ùr do bhoireannaich gus taic agus comhairle a cho-roinn mu leasachadh pearsanta is proifeasanta, tha sinn a' cuideachadh le fàs agus adhartachadh dhreuchdan do bhoireannaich agus ar ceannardan san àm ri teachd. Tha mi a' coimhead air adhart ri faicinn mar a bhios an lìonra ag atharrachadh thar ùine agus an deagh bhuaidh a bhios aige.

Tha trì sgrùdaidhean cùise san aithisg a sheallas mar a bhios sinn, bliadhna an dèidh bliadhna, ag obair ann an com-pàirteachas le buidhnean coimhearsnachd gus dèanamh cinnteach gu faigh mion-bhuidhnean agus buidhnean air an iomall cothrom air coilltean airson eacarsaich, cur-seachad agus sunnd. Tha fios gum faod coilltean neo-ionannachd slàinte a lùghdachadh agus tha sinn airson taic a thoirt dha seo uiread 's as urrainn dhuinn.

Tha sinn cuideachd a' sealltainn mar a tha sinn, ann an Coilltearachd na h-Alba, a' sìor bhròsnachadh agus a' comharrachadh EDI le bhith a' cleachdadh nan dòighean conaltraidh a-staigh gus fiosrachadh agus tachartasan a tha cudromach do dhiofar bhuidhnean tarsainn Coilltearachd na h-Alba a sgaoileadh.

A thuilleadh air na sgrùdaidhean cùise seo, bidh sinn a' roinn eisimpleirean air mar a tha sinn a' leasachadh dreuchdan ar co-obrachaidhean òga, a' toirt taic don luchd-obrach againn le obair haidhbrid, a' bròsnachadh cultar adhartach, agus a' dèiligeadh ri giùlan mì-fhreagarrach.

Mar as àbhaist, is e ar prìomh amas dèanamh cinnteach gu bheil luchd-obrach Coilltearachd na h-Alba uile a' faireachdainn nam pàirt dhligeach den bhuidhinn, gu bheil iad a' faighinn èisteachd agus gu bheil luach agus spèis ga thoirt dhaibh.



Tha mi airson an cothrom seo a ghabhail taing a thoirt do cho-obrachachan air feadh Coilltearachd na h-Alba airson an cuid obrach gus EDI a bhrosnachadh agus a stèidheachadh nar beatha obrach làitheil. Tha mi cuideachd airson taing a thoirt dhaibhsan a bha an sàs ann an ullachadh na h-aithisge seo.

**Paul Lowe**  
Ceannard







# Chief Forester

The role of Chief Forester is a Non-Regulated Ministerial appointment as opposed to being an employee of Scottish Forestry. I am therefore in the unique position of being able to provide unbiased professional support and advice to the Chief Executives of Scottish Forestry and of Forestry and Land Scotland. The advice and insight provided is intended to enable the Chief Executives to reach effective and well-informed decisions, including in areas of equality, diversity, and inclusion.

Since the first equality mainstreaming report, which covered 2019-21, Scottish Forestry has faced continuing challenges to deliver increasing woodland creation targets while also delivering a broader range of corporate functions. The progress reported here should be considered within this context.

Overall, 51% of the staff are women but the underrepresentation of women in senior roles is still a particular challenge. Events discussing women into leadership and the introduction of promotion in situ for technical forestry staff (Assistant Woodland Officers and Woodland Officers) should help but progress is likely to be slow because of financial restrictions on overall numbers and the organisation's general preference to develop its own staff. Scottish Forestry is working with organizations including Changing the Chemistry to gain insight into the actions it could take to increase diversity in the pool of applicants for our most senior positions. Scottish Forestry gender checks its recruitment advertisements and continues to use a wide variety of media to share vacancy information. Advertisements signpost the approach to hybrid and flexible working which is helpful in balancing work and home commitments.

Looking at the protected characteristics, the early progress in moving the organisation towards being more representative of Scotland's population - in terms of disability, ethnicity, age and sexual orientation - has slowed slightly in the last two years. There were 27 new appointees in 2024; with such small numbers it is important not to read too much into them, but the indications are that the gender balance and proportion identifying as LGBTI+ are representative of Scotland's population. On the other hand, the proportion of new appointees declaring disabilities seems to be slightly below the average in Scotland. The proportion of young people in Scottish Forestry is much lower than the Scottish average.

The place of apprentices, interns, students and pre-apprentices will be considered in depth in 25/26, which will hopefully improve the number of young people in Scottish Forestry.

The Equality Mainstreaming Report focuses on actions during the recruitment process and after recruitment on our ways of working and career development, but we also need a wider cross section of people applying to join in the first place.

I'm especially proud of the work we're doing in partnership with the wider sector to change perspectives of the forestry sector and encourage them to develop their education and skills.

As always, there is room for improvement. Our new Equality Outcomes will support us to keep reflecting on our progress and striving for better within our EDI agenda.



**Dr Helen McKay OBE**  
Chief Forester

# Introduction

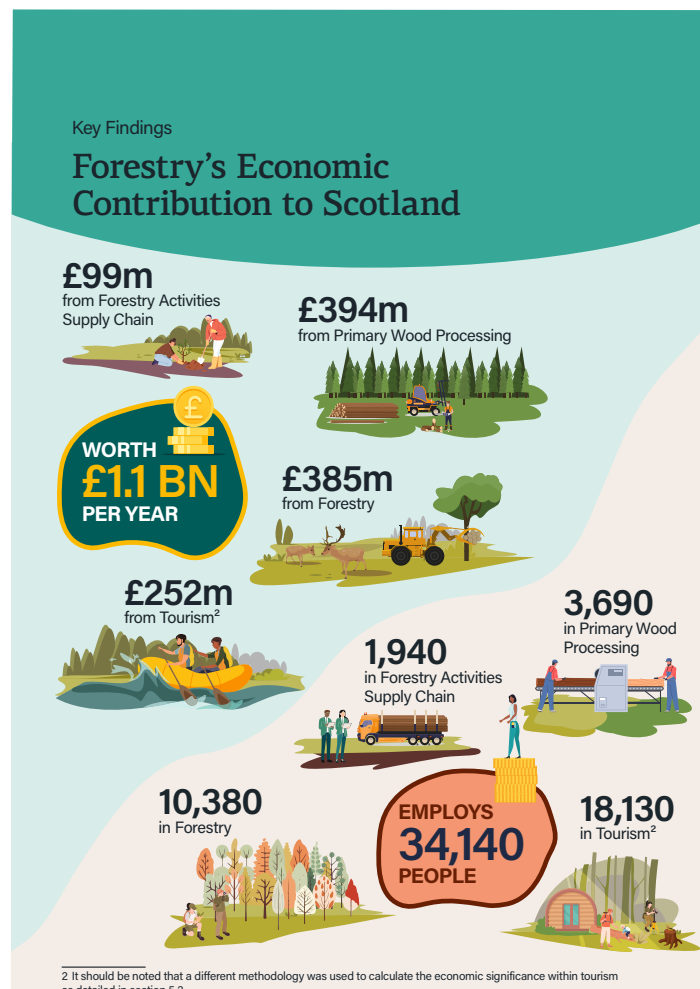
We are the Scottish Government agency responsible for forestry policy, support and regulations. We are a progressive organisation, passionate about the crucial role of trees in tackling climate change and nature loss, supporting the economy and the people of Scotland's wellbeing.

Our purpose is the sustainable management and expansion of forests and woodlands to deliver more for Scotland. We provide expert advice to Ministers on forestry policy, and support and work with landowners, forestry professionals, communities and a wide range of stakeholders interested in forestry across Scotland.

We do this by ensuring that sustainable forest management is an integral part of public policy, by protecting and enforcing standards and forestry regulations and by helping to maximise woodland creation.

There are around 1.45 million hectares of forests in Scotland, covering about 19% of the total land area. These forests are absorbing the equivalent of almost 10% of Scotland's gross greenhouse gas emissions. Scotland's woodlands are a vital national resource and increasing the resilience of Scotland's forests reaps social, economic and environmental benefits.

Scottish Forestry was formed on 1 April 2019 and replaced the work of Forestry Commission Scotland, which was created as part of legislation which fully devolved forestry to Scotland.



## Our Strategic Objectives

We will be publishing our new Corporate Strategy and Plan shortly. We are committed to investing in our people to attract and retain a professional and diverse workforce. One of our priority activities will be to review our Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion Action Plan for 2026 onwards, and set our KPI targets accordingly.

Our Corporate Plan strategic objectives and priorities for 2020-2023 were:

**Strategic Objective One:** Ensure that sustainable forest management is an integral part of public policy, particularly through leading and co-ordinating the delivery of Scotland's Forestry Strategy.

**Strategic Objective Two:** Develop our people and culture to improve performance and resilience, building a dynamic, flexible and modern workforce which serves the forestry sector and wider Scotland well.

**Strategic Objective Three:** Become a more innovative, efficient and accessible organisation by delivering process improvements, and harnessing digital and technological solutions.



# Our Values and Behaviours

Our BRAVE values are the roots that underpin Scottish Forestry. They were developed in collaboration with staff to reflect the type of organisation we are proud to work in.

They encourage us to celebrate diversity and create a culture that is welcoming and inclusive to all. Our values are:

- Be professional
- Respect others
- Act with integrity and honesty
- Value teamwork and collaboration
- Encourage innovation and creativity

Our values and behaviours define who we are and the high standards we expect in our working environment. They enable our staff and customers to feel, valued, included and respected. They are a statement not only about how we treat others, but how we expect to be treated. They provide an inclusive and welcoming culture where people are encouraged to speak up about behaviours that appear to go against our values.

Paired with our values we run a session called Engaging the Bystander for new team members, which helps to embed our values and behaviours. This session empowers people to speak up and reminds them that 'the standard you walk past is the standard you accept'.

Since our last report, we have continued to take steps to embed our BRAVE values and the behaviours that underpin them to promote a culture where our staff and customers feel valued, included and respected. More information is included under the section 'In line with our values'.



# Our People

As of 1 March 2025, we employ 238 employees, an increase of 6.7% since 2023.

Our employees work across five regional conservancies and a head office in Edinburgh. Over half of our workforce (51%) are female and 49% are male, which is in line with the Scottish Working Age Population 2022 (SWAP). 2% of our employees have identified as minority ethnic, this is less than the SWAP which was 8% in 2022. 7% of our employees have shared that they are LGBTI+, which is below the SWAP at 8%. 8% of our employees have declared they have a disability, which is lower than the SWAP at 22%. 29% of our workforce are under the age of 40.

Further details on the demographic data that colleagues have shared with us is presented in the Appendix: Our Workforce Statistics.

## 1. Overall workforce number – split by gender, age, disability and ethnicity

117 male, and 121 female



SF has continued to grow,  
**employing over 27  
new starters in 2024**

SF still employs  
**more female than  
male staff**

71%

of our staff are  
aged 40 or over.

7%

of our staff are  
aged 30 or under.

8%

of our staff,  
who shared  
their status, stated they  
have a disability.

2%

of our staff,  
who shared their  
ethnicity, stated they  
are from a minority  
ethnic group.

5%

did not share  
their ethnicity.



## 2 Contract Type - (full time/part time) - split by gender, age, disability, ethnicity

### Full time

Gender: 92 female 110 male



Age: 61 aged 39 or under 142 aged 40 +



Disability: 169 No 17 Yes 17 Not Known



Ethnicity: 5 BAME 12 Not shared 186 White



### Part time

Gender: 28 female 7 male



Age: 8 aged 39 or under 27 aged 40+



Disability: 32 No \* Yes \* Not Shared



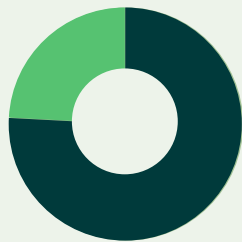
Ethnicity: 34 White 0 BAME \* Not Shared



## 3. Pay Band Data

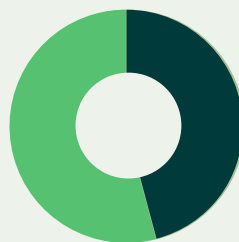
### SSG1-PB3

43 Male | 16 Female



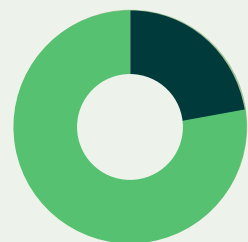
### PB4-PB5

54 Male | 66 Female



### PB6a and 6b

17 Male | 38 Female

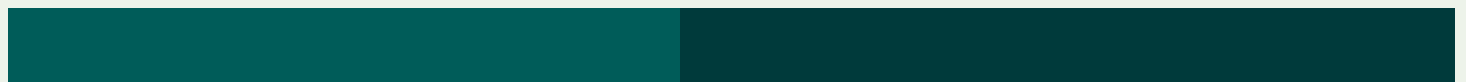


Currently 27% of our senior staff  
(Pay Band 3 and above) are female

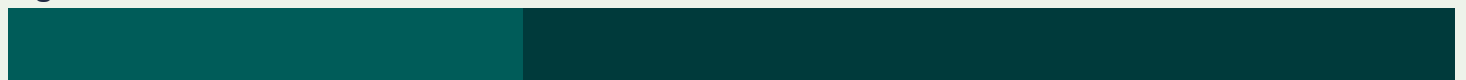
## 4. L&D/Training Course Attendance – by gender, age, disability, ethnicity:

Attendance 5380

Gender: Female 2522, Male 2858



Age: 39 and Under 1891, 40 and Over 3489



Disability: No 4537, Yes 398, Not Shared 445



Ethnicity: BAME 118, White 4894, Not Shared 368



5 New starts and leavers – split by age, gender, disability and ethnicity

01 April 2022 to 01 March 2023



Maternity  
Leave

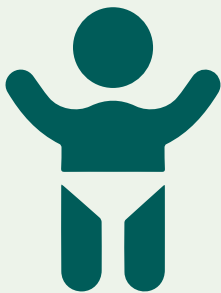
7

staff took a period  
of maternity leave

Parental  
Leave

3

people took a  
period of parental  
leave



Median Gender  
Pay Gap

18.8%

this is a 0.78%  
increase from 2023

Grievance and disciplinary data

1 grievance and 1  
disciplinary cases  
reported



# Why We Mainstream Equality

The purpose of the Public Sector Equality Duty is to ensure that public sector bodies are compliant with equality legislation, to treat everyone with dignity and respect, and to ensure that people have the equal opportunity to succeed.

At Scottish Forestry we believe that mainstreaming equality is the responsibility of everyone and needs to be integrated into day-to-day business. Having a diverse workforce and an inclusive environment means that we are better placed to meet the needs of our colleagues, stakeholders, and communities, and can attract and retain a wide range of skilled and motivated people.

The Equality Act 2010 (Specific Duties) (Scotland) Regulations 2012, as amended (the specific duties regulations), requires Scottish Forestry to publish a report that demonstrates the steps it has taken to mainstream equality across the organisation and what steps it has taken to mainstream the three elements of the general equality duty - the duty to have due regard to the need to:

- Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other conduct that is prohibited by the Equality Act 2010
- Advance equality of opportunity between people who share a relevant protected characteristic and those who do not
- Foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.



# Our Approach to Mainstreaming Equality

**We recognise that mainstreaming equality requires visible leadership and a long-term commitment to make change happen. Scottish Forestry's Executive Board champions equality in a variety of ways, demonstrating the importance of embedding it into everything we do.**

We are a relatively small agency of 238 employees having welcomed 27 new colleagues in 2024. We appreciate that we will not be able to dramatically change the profile of our staff quickly. However, we can make an impact in how we meet the diverse needs of our people, organisation, and the wider forestry sector.

A driver for change is our Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Action Plan. This plan is reviewed regularly, updated, and shared with the Executive Board who support our commitment to achieving targets, and provide valuable feedback on areas to focus on. The plan has key activities around inclusion, recruitment and retention, learning and skills development, and communication reporting.

When shaping our new Corporate Plan and Strategy for 2025-2030, 70% of staff took part in corporate planning workshops. Feedback from these sessions helped shape our strategic objectives.

The Equality Impact Assessment (EqIA) process continues to be a key tool that we use to identify and consider the impact of changes or policy decisions on our staff and, where appropriate, the wider population of Scotland.

Our impact assessments are led by policy area leads and completed before policies are signed off by the Executive Board. Early consideration of the impact of policies and practices enables the policy area leads to take action to mitigate, where possible, potential detriment. We have an area on our intranet dedicated to the completion of EqIAs and have delivered awareness sessions to our corporate and project management teams.

Each year, we take part in the Civil Service People Survey. Everyone is encouraged to take part in the survey to provide their opinions about what is working well and what needs to be improved.

The survey results, which are shared with staff, form the basis of local discussion and planning to reflect on areas where we are doing well and where staff believe more could be done to improve their work experience. For example, the results in 2023 prompted a review in learning requirements and opportunities.

In line with the Public Sector Equality Duty, we collate equality monitoring data on our workforce. This data allows us to audit, review and evaluate progress. It allows us to identify any barriers and make appropriate changes if required, providing a platform for improvement.



# In Line with Our Values

**BRAVE** values are the roots that underpin Scottish Forestry, they define who we are and the high standards that we expect. These values promote a culture where our staff and customers feel welcomed, valued, included and respected. They are embedded in our working lives and where we see behaviours that are not in line with our values, we encourage staff to speak up. Our values are:

## Be professional

We make evidence-based decisions using the Equality Impact Assessment process to determine any impacts, both positive and negative, on our employees and communities. This allows us to make informed decisions that are not based on bias. We are all expected to challenge unacceptable behaviours and stereotypes.

## Respect others

We value and celebrate differences and challenge inappropriate actions or words that could negatively impact others. We can't always put the onus on an individual who is being negatively impacted to challenge – we all have a vital role to play in stopping inappropriate behaviour.

## Act with honesty and integrity

People must take accountability for their actions and words, which includes anything that could be deemed inappropriate under the Equality Act 2010. If we do offend someone, we must take responsibility for this and rectify where appropriate.

## Value teamwork and collaboration

All employees have a role to play in the mainstreaming of equality and championing our values, both to colleagues and our customers. We won't look the other way when we witness negative behaviours or those who are struggling. Appreciating the value of diversity through a collective decision-making approach enables us to make more informed policy and practice.

## Encouraging innovation and creativity

An inclusive and welcoming working culture, where people are encouraged to think differently and bring new ideas to the table, is promoted within Scottish Forestry. By truly listening and giving equity of voice, people feel valued, allowing us to seek out best practice and embrace change.



# Progress on Our Equality Outcomes

In our 2021-2023 Equality Mainstreaming Report we set out five new equality outcomes to be achieved between 2023-2027.

**Outcome One: By 2025 our workforce will better reflect the diversity of Scotland's working age population.**

Attracting young people, aged 25 and under, is proving challenging for Scottish Forestry. In 2024 we funded two student placements to support early career development. It is hoped that this support will encourage young people to consider pursuing a career in forestry. In 2025, we are going to explore the possibility of developing an apprenticeship scheme.

**Outcome Two: We will increase the number of staff sharing their equality data.**

This was a new outcome and will enable more sustained work on equality monitoring, supporting staff to share their equality data with us.

**Outcome Three: Staff from all equality groups will feel increasingly confident to challenge unacceptable behaviours and feel included.**

We are continuing the roll out of our Engaging the Bystander sessions to new staff and offering wellbeing and inclusion workshops to teams across the agency to embed this work.

**Outcome Four: Our policies, processes, and practices continue to have a positive impact on equality and people with protected characteristics.**

This is a general commitment to mainstreaming equality, diversity and inclusion. From our findings, we have observed that completed Equality Impact Assessments are often of high quality. However, we would like to increase the number of assessments made.

**Outcome Five: We will improve engagement with the communities we serve to enable a wider sector of society and under-represented groups to enjoy the benefits and opportunities that our woods and forests provide, particularly those close to where they live.**

This has been drawn from our People and Communities team strategy, where diversity and inclusion form a principal focus.

Since these equality outcomes have been set, there has been substantial change in Scottish Forestry, which has meant that our focus has shifted slightly, and we will be reviewing the above outcomes and setting revised objectives later in this report. There has been substantial work done to deliver on the above objectives which is illustrated in the case studies presented.



## Equality Outcome One: By 2025, our workforce will better reflect the diversity of Scotland's working age population.

The profile of our workforce shows that 7% of those who shared their sexual orientation identified as LGBTI+. This is comparable with the Scottish Working Age Population (SWAP) 2022 figures which show that just under 8% are part of the LGBTI+ community. The SWAP 2022 shows that 22% of working age people live with a disability. This compares with 8% of the Scottish Forestry workforce. We continue to champion women in forestry with 51% of our workforce being female, this is consistent with the SWAP 2022 data at 51%.

With a greater focus on attracting a younger demographic we have changed how we advertise our roles, focusing on sharing details via social media platforms in addition to more traditional web pages. We have started reviewing the language used in our job advertisements and descriptions to ensure that it is inclusive and attractive to a wide range of people.

When advertising the Chief Forester for Scotland role, we worked with Changing the Chemistry, a charity dedicated to increasing diversity on boards, to reach out to a wider audience and offer a more inclusive approach to finding out about the role.

### Gender makeup

Currently 51% of our workforce is female, a positive achievement in a sector that has traditionally been male dominated. We are now working on improving our gender balance in senior roles with a view to addressing our Median Gender Pay Gap which currently sits at almost 19%.

Scottish Forestry's Chief Executive Paul Lowe is championing supporting women into leadership roles. In November 2023, Paul worked with Scottish Forestry Non-Executive Advisor, Eleanor Ryan, and colleagues in our Corporate Communications team to host a Women into Leadership event.

Women who have been successful in their fields shared their experiences of career development and progression. The event was attended by 66 female employees (54% of the female workforce at the time). The discussion was wide ranging and included developing careers, balancing responsibilities, coaching and mentoring and imposter syndrome.

Based on feedback from the group, a Women's Network was founded. This group is still in the early stages of its development, however, the founding principle is that the network is run by women, for women, to offer peer support and mentoring, signpost to information, support career development and the promotion of positive behaviours and culture.



## Young people

At present, over 70% of our staff are aged 40 or over and less than 1% of our staff are aged 25 or under. This is significantly lower than the SWAP 2022, which is sitting at 27% being aged 25 or under.

As noted above, we facilitated the employment of two students who are on one-year placements. The students have reported they are well supported in their conservancies and are expanding their knowledge of the forestry sector. They have joined some of the WOODS (Woodland Officer Operational Development Sessions) programme and have shadowed more experienced staff.

As part of their course, they are expected to write a report about their placement with Scottish Forestry. One of the students has a project on re-stocking (the management, regulatory restrictions and evaluation of the project), which will not only help with the report, but the work is meaningful and valuable to the conservancy team.

We are currently exploring the option of developing an apprenticeship programme as we are very keen to support young people into the forestry sector.

## Retention

During 2024, 15 people left Scottish Forestry. Within that number, five people had over five years' service, and collectively, a total of over 80 years' service with Scottish Forestry. It's vitally important that we are able to attract and retain people within the forestry sector to ensure that great knowledge and skills are passed on.

We are keen to support career development and progression. An annual Assistant Woodland Officer promotion board encourages our early career Assistant Woodland Officers to apply for promotion.

Keen to address concerns regarding retention of experienced Woodland Officers a Technical Officer promotion board was launched in 2024. Success at the promotion boards provides recognition of their knowledge, valuable skills and experience. Of the seven successful applicants presenting for promotion from Woodland Officer to Technical Officer in 2024, 3 are female, providing role models for young women both internally and externally.

We will build on these improvements and continue to review our recruitment practices to encourage under-represented groups to consider a career with Scottish Forestry and the wider sector. We will continue to work in partnership to challenge the stereotypes and misconceptions of forestry as a male-dominated environment.





## Case Study: Engaging Young People in Forestry



We are aware of the importance of ensuring that our workforce is diverse, comprising colleagues from across a wide age range. A review of the age profile of the organisation showed that more than two thirds of our workforce are over 40 years old.

This is not uncommon within the forestry sector; however, we would like to attract young people into the organisation to support the development of our future workforce. An important factor in attracting young people is to offer them the opportunity to build a fulfilling career.



We have therefore invested in developing a programme to support our young people called Woodland Officer Operational Development Sessions (WOODS).

When new Assistant Woodland Officers and Woodland Officers join Scottish Forestry, they are supported with a clear competency framework to guide their learning and development. The WOODS programme is a comprehensive and consistent programme which covers the core skills, knowledge and behaviours that will support them to become confident and competent in their roles. The programme covers areas of expertise, from the application of forestry standards and regulations through to being an ambassador for health, safety and wellbeing.

Two of the new recruits to benefit from the programme in 2024 were Dumfries-based Assistant Woodland Officer Callum McKeown, and Woodland Officer Sam Law. Since joining Scottish Forestry, Callum and Sam have learnt many practical skills, such as tree species identification, how to deal with felling applications, Forestry Grant Scheme inspections, mobile geographical information services, basic mensuration and B6 tariffing, establishment fundamentals, woodland creation, Environmental Impact Assessments, and restock inspections, to name a few.

Callum said: “The WOODS programme has already enabled me to meet the other officers from across Scotland and benefit from their advice and experience. It has allowed me to consolidate my skills and I’m now looking at the potential chance of becoming a woodland officer next year.

“It’s been a brilliant job for me so far. I’ve been able to get stuck in, learning while working. I like the fact I am always learning something new.”

Asked how important he feels it is for Scottish Forestry to have younger employees among the staff mix, Callum added: “I think it’s essential. With the climate change challenge, for example, it is the younger generation who need to make the difference. Our forests and woodlands are a crucial part of the story and to have as many young people involved in their care as possible is of benefit to us all.”

Sam agrees and says he has also loved his time at Scottish Forestry. He said: “I have always been interested in forestry and wanted a job that gets me outdoors, so this has been ideal for me. The WOODS programme has helped me develop my skills, while I am coming up against day-to-day challenges, such as learning about tree species selection for different sites.”

## Case Study: Development of Young People



Scottish Forestry has plans in place to not only employ young people but support and develop them to have a successful career in the organisation and the wider sector.

Mark Adam, System Development Support Officer, joined Scottish Forestry from university and has been employed for more than two years.

Mark's development has been overseen by Christine Leslie, Systems Developer, who is his line manager, and Seye Kalejaiye, Digital Service Manager, who oversees the team.

Seye said: "We didn't set out to take on a young person, we were simply looking for the right candidate. We wanted someone who we could bring in and develop, someone who was willing to learn."

"Mark's journey with Scottish Forestry has been a good one and I think that is testimony to him. There has been a lot of mentoring involved as his role is a technical one, but we also want him to learn about forestry and he is keen to do so. We organise field trips and he gets to go out with woodland officers."

"Having someone like Mark on board has made us more conscious of the benefits there are of having younger staff members as part of our employee mix. He is a clever young man and not only has he been developing into his role, he also brings his own contribution to the things we do."

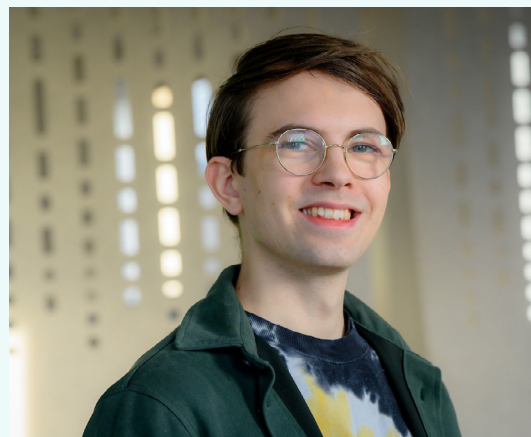
"Like other organisations, we need young people at Scottish Forestry. We are designing forests for the future and young people have their own input."

"Forest planning is very much a long-term enterprise, so young people are crucial to everything we do. They are the future of our agency and it's important we help support and develop them so they can have successful careers with us."

Mark said: "I like the work I'm doing, the team I work with, and the organisation I work for. A lot of what I have learned has been gained from talking to people and benefiting from their knowledge."

"I think we have a diverse workforce, including a wide range of ages among our staff, and the way that is embraced by Scottish Forestry is very important."

"It means you benefit from different perspectives coming from people who have very different backgrounds, and that benefits all of us as employees, but also the organisation as a whole."





## Case Study: Women's Development Network



Scottish Forestry has worked hard to achieve a gender balanced workforce that represents the Scottish population. We have an almost 50/50 split of males and females in the composition of our workforce; however, women are under-represented in senior positions.

Paul Lowe, Chief Executive, who is championing work to support women's career development asked that a session be organised to bring together female colleagues with a view to discussing what Scottish Forestry could do to help support their career development.



Eleanor Ryan, Non-Executive Adviser and former public body chief executive, said: "We wanted to find ways to combat the under-representation of women in senior roles and decided to run an event for women in the organisation, bringing in female leaders from other sectors in Scotland to share their experience and hear feedback from women working in Scottish Forestry."

The speakers included Catherine Dyer, the first woman to be appointed as Crown Agent for Scotland, heading up the Crown Office and Procurator Fiscal Service, and Barbara Allison, Director of Human Resources and Organisational Development at the Scottish Government, who was formerly Director of HR in the Scottish Prison Service – traditionally a male-dominated environment.

The third speaker, Dr Helen McKay, Chief Forester for Scotland, and previously Head of Centre for Sustainable Forestry and Climate Change in Forest Research, the UK Government's research agency, also gave her personal perspectives about developing her career within the forestry sector.

Eleanor explained "So, we had three women speakers who really have led the way in their field and who can really inspire, and Helen's experience in forestry is particularly relevant.

"We all did a five-to-ten-minute chat – I spoke about 'imposter syndrome', which tends to resonate with people. We had 66 people join us online, which was 54 per cent of the female staff at Scottish Forestry."

Feedback received after the event showed that attendees found it useful and inspiring, with one participant describing it as 'incredibly valuable and inspirational'. There were also several calls for a network which is run by women, for women.

Eleanor added: "It was one of the big requests. We decided to try and put in place a network where women can go for support on their own development and be able to speak to others who understand issues that perhaps only other women can help them with."

Since the event, Helen has been instrumental in bringing the network to life with work progressing on its structure, purpose, and how it can engage with similar organisations in Scottish Government.

Meanwhile, some benefits already seen as a result of the Women into Leadership event have not always been the ones expected.

Eleanor said: “One benefit has been being able to spread awareness about family-friendly policies. These policies were already there but we realised not everyone was aware of them. The flow of information is now better and it’s easier to find relevant content.

“We certainly hope we’re heading in the right direction, but it is important we keep in touch with women across Scottish Forestry to check that they are seeing the improvements they need.”





## Case Study: Supporting Women's Career Development



Scottish Forestry has continued to encourage women to develop their careers.

During summer 2024, a promotion board was held for Woodland Officers to progress into Technical Officer roles.

Doug Howieson, Delivery & Improvement Conservator, said: "The Technical Officer position is pivotal in our front-line operational teams, undertaking complex and challenging casework through to successful completion, while mentoring and coaching less experienced team members.



"We are delighted that we are developing a gender balance in these important roles. 2024 was the first year of the Technical Officer promotion boards. Of the seven successful candidates, three were female colleagues. This is especially important as our reach to new entrants seems to be attracting more female candidates each year."

Two of the successful females were Velda Weir and Ellie Lawton.

Velda said: "Like a lot of women, I found myself in my 30s tied up with my family and I put career progression on pause. But now the family are older, I have more time again, and I find my experience has been valued within the organisation.

"The opportunity I have been given has allowed for a bit of a career catch-up. I think it's a welcome recognition of ambition and it's a good example to other businesses and other sectors.

"Due to my background, I can bring different things to the table. A lot of our experience is baked in and people of my age can often be a little less likely to be rattled by the kinds of pressures the workplace can bring."

The significance of promoting women in the organisation is not lost on Velda.

She added: "Forestry has probably traditionally been seen as a male-dominated industry. In the 1970s, 80s, and maybe even the 90s, it was often seen as a place that attracted young men who were keen to work outside.

"The organisation is doing a lot of things to bring women into more senior roles across different areas. The creation of the Women's Network is a great example, allowing us, as women, to discuss the unique challenges of being a woman."

Ellie agrees the opportunity to apply for promotion in a technical officer role is a welcome chance to progress her career.

Joining the organisation in 2020 on a student placement, Ellie has progressed from the role of Assistant Woodland Officer to Woodland Officer, before being promoted into the role of Technical Officer.

Ellie said: "I always had quite a positive feeling about progression from when I first joined Scottish

Forestry and I always felt there was a real desire to support staff, particularly women.

“Women have played a really important role in forestry throughout history from establishing various forest institutes, the invention of the circular saw, and of course the Lumberjills, who replaced male forestry workers during World War Two. I think this influence remains today and it is great to see women in so many diverse roles across the sector.

“I think it’s very important to work towards a gender balance in more senior positions. I think the organisation and the industry is taking good steps forward to support women’s career progressions by offering more promotion and development opportunities. I am happy there are proactive platforms in Scottish Forestry that allow women to come together and share experiences.”

We will be continuing to run the Technical Officer promotion board in 2025, where we are hoping for similar success.





## Equality Outcome Two: We will increase the number of staff sharing their equality data.

Of our 238 employees we recognise that not everyone wishes to share their equality data; however, the majority of employees who do feel comfortable to share show that:

- 92% of employees have shared their disability status.
- 94% of employees have shared their ethnicity.
- 67% of employees have shared their sexual orientation.

- 66% of employees have shared their religious beliefs.
- 97% of employees have shared their marital status.

It is of note that some staff don't feel comfortable sharing data pertaining to sexual orientation and religious beliefs. We will explore this further with a view to increasing the number of staff willing to share information on these aspects.





## Equality Outcome Three: Staff from all equality groups will feel increasingly safe to challenge and feel included.

Scottish Forestry is a friendly organisation, and we want to continue to develop a culture where people feel welcome and able to bring their full selves to work. We have already highlighted our BRAVE values and behaviours that define who we are, the high standards we expect in our working environment, and that enable our staff and stakeholders to feel, valued, included, respected, and, safe to challenge.

Staff are encouraged to speak up and respectfully challenge behaviours which are unacceptable and may result in colleagues feeling uncomfortable. To support this, we delivered Engaging the Bystander sessions, which explore our BRAVE values more in-depth and equip our staff with the skills and confident to speak up when they see something that they feel is not right. The philosophy for the session is 'the standard you walk past is the standard you accept'.

In 2025, our Learning and Skills Development team will lead the launch of a management and leadership programme. The purpose is to ensure our managers and leaders have the knowledge and skills to support and develop their teams, while addressing unacceptable behaviours.

Work on the programme has been informed by a series of facilitated workshops focusing on what a good manager and leader looks like within Scottish Forestry. The programme will educate, inform and develop our managers and leaders to enable them to role model best practice and inspire our next generation.

In the first quarter of 2025, we will be implementing Inclusive Cultures learning, which will explain our commitment to diversity, what different terms mean, types of bias, micro behaviours, and barriers people may experience. All staff will be required to complete this learning as we are all responsible for maintaining and developing an inclusive culture. This learning module will form part of our induction process so that new colleagues are aware of the expectations of inclusion from the start of their employment.

The behaviours that impact our people are not just a result of interactions with Scottish Forestry colleagues. Many of our staff engage with stakeholders and members of the public. This can at times result in them encountering challenging behaviours. The Corporate Planning and Governance Manager is working on articulating expectations of stakeholders. To read more about this please see the below case study.





## Case Study: Addressing Inappropriate Behaviour



Scottish Forestry has an open and friendly culture. We strive to ensure that every member of staff feels comfortable, valued, and able to contribute to the best of their ability. In addition to setting ourselves high standards in our behaviour towards each other, we support our staff to ensure that our engagement with stakeholders meets the same standards.

Our staff work with landowners, forestry professionals, communities and a wide range of stakeholders interested in forestry across Scotland. Our regulatory commitments do not always align with the expectations of stakeholders and can lead to conflict. It is therefore important that we equip staff to deal with these challenging conversations and situations.



In May 2024, Scottish Forestry's Executive Office team was asked to review the way the organisation deals with complaints of inappropriate behaviour towards our staff and to ensure a consistent approach is being taken. This was progressed by holding a workshop with senior managers to talk through the issues staff are facing and reviewing the options available.

Marliese Richmond, Corporate Planning and Governance Manager, said: "We realised we could use the principles outlined in the Scottish Government's Unacceptable Actions Policy, and it's a useful document we could proactively adopt. We also looked at the Scottish Public Services Ombudsman's Engagement Policy, which could also be tailored to suit Scottish Forestry."

These two documents, and the approaches they advocate, were discussed as part of an all-staff workshop at Central Conservancy in October 2024. Staff unanimously agreed that the tenets of the policies should be implemented. The learning from the workshop is now being discussed with our senior operational leaders on how it can be shared and implemented across the whole of Scottish Forestry.

One of the key messages that Marliese and her team conveyed at the workshop is the importance of reporting issues of concern.

Marliese said: "We have stressed that it's important to get records of what is happening. We want our staff to know they are supported if they call out unacceptable behaviour.

"Sometimes issues like woodland creation, felling, or the transport of large amounts of timber through small communities, can prove to be controversial and can cause concern among some members of the public.

"Staff have occasionally been on the receiving end of some negative views and behaviours. So, another issue we have been looking at is enabling our staff to end those conversations that are disrespectful or argumentative earlier and supporting them to do that.



“What we have found in these situations is that staff tend to handle these issues very well, but it can be draining and stressful for them. I think it’s really important they know that we are there to support them and we are consistent in how we deal with these issues.

“Our BRAVE values (Be professional, Respect others, Act with integrity and honesty, Value teamwork and collaboration and Encourage innovation and creativity) are the cornerstone of the behaviours we expect from each other and our stakeholders.”





## Case Study: Promoting Equality through Communications Channels



Ensuring every member of staff feels valued, included, and welcomed is a key objective of Scottish Forestry. Our internal communication channels bring people together and encourage participation in activities celebrating various annual events.

The Corporate Communications team work closely with the Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion Manager to celebrate and share key dates, news, and events throughout the year.

Jenny Collings, Internal Communications Officer, said: “There are regular events in the calendar which give us the opportunity to celebrate diversity. For example, recognising religious holidays, such as Easter or Hanukkah, which we share via the intranet or the weekly Staff Briefing.”



Jenny also sees Scottish Forestry’s communications channels as an opportunity to help raise awareness of colleagues’ needs: “Many Muslims fast during Ramadan, so we can help to create an understanding and supportive environment by making staff aware of what their colleagues are doing and why.”

“Another key date in the calendar is the annual LGBTI+ event, Pride, where we celebrate, raise awareness, and share any local events that staff may be interested in attending.”

Last year (2024), Jenny ordered Pride pin badges and distributed them among staff so they could show visible support for the LGBTI+ community by wearing them on their lanyards.

Jenny said: “I think part of my role is trying to ensure everyone feels included and how we can do practical things to help staff feel accepted and to celebrate who they are at work.”

Jenny understands that inclusive language also plays a crucial role: “One example of what we do at Scottish Forestry is to encourage staff to use their pronouns in their email signatures – these things can make a world of difference. The aim is for there to be nothing that alienates people and that everyone feels included in all we do.”

Another example of Scottish Forestry’s commitment to inclusive language is the drive to preserve, promote, and celebrate the native Scots language, Gaelic.

The Corporate Communications team led the initiative to launch its first ever Gaelic Language Plan in 2023. It centres around increasing the use of Gaelic within Scottish Forestry, with the aim of providing staff with the opportunity to learn the language through awareness and training, enhancing its status, and supporting the use of Gaelic.

The team ran an internal audit, which provided insight into the number of staff who can speak, read, write, and understand Gaelic, as well as those wishing to improve their language skills.

Jenny said: “The information gathered was really valuable and will help Scottish Forestry establish clear policies and practices to support staff and ensure that external stakeholders are aware of our Gaelic offer.”

By using a variety of communication channels in her work, Jenny can reach some groups and individuals who may not be as forthcoming with their views as others. For example, Jenny helped to engage attendees of Scottish Forestry’s first Women into Leadership event.

By setting up an online anonymous feedback form, it enabled staff to speak out if they felt they wanted to. Jenny said: “There are people who will feel anxious about speaking up in a group environment. We are keen to hear their views, so have tried to find ways where they can have their say without feeling uncomfortable.”

Alongside proactively raising awareness of equality and diversity, the Corporate Communications team has also worked on Scottish Forestry’s branding, corporate templates, and colour palette to ensure that they are accessible to all.

Jenny said: “We have done a lot of work on our internal systems such as using contrasting colours on our intranet, trying to ensure that neurodivergent staff, for example, are not left out.”

Jenny concluded: “It’s all about making the most of the diversity within our workforce. We want everyone to benefit from the different backgrounds people have and everyone to feel valued.”



## Equality Outcome Four: Our policies, processes and practices continue to have a positive impact on equality and people from and across protected characteristics.

This is a general commitment to mainstreaming equality, diversity and inclusion. It has also been developed out of our findings that completed Equality Impact Assessments (EqIA) are often high quality, however, we would like to improve on the quantity of assessments completed.

In February 2023, we implemented the Scottish Government's employee passport scheme, to further support employees with a disability or caring responsibilities, to ensure they receive the support they need at work. Its purpose is to create an inclusive and supportive work environment which enables everyone to perform their best.

The employee passport provides a framework to support employees to have a conversation with their manager with a view to agreeing adjustments to their working arrangement. As more people engage with the employee passport, it is envisaged that conversations around supporting each other will become part of everyone's vocabulary, helping to create an open and supportive environment where people feel able to discuss their needs with their line manager and colleagues.

We continue to work with colleagues in our sister agency, Forestry and Land Scotland, to offer support and share knowledge and experience of menopause.

Guidance to advise managers and colleagues on how to support women experiencing symptoms, education around what symptoms may impact colleagues, and adjustments that can be made, are all available through our menopause champions and our intranet. In 2024 there have been six menopause cafes where staff can come together and speak in a safe space and share stories, hints and tips.

Scottish Forestry has championed flexible working and adopted a successful model of hybrid working. The model adopted ensures that we continue to meet our obligations while supporting staff to achieve a balance between home and work life. The next case study showcases our hybrid working journey.



## Case Study: Hybrid Working



Like many organisations, Scottish Forestry faced something of a dilemma post-pandemic – there was a desire for a new permanent hybrid way of working among many staff but it was unclear how practical that arrangement would be in such a multi-layered organisation.

The Future Working Project was formed to work through what hybrid working meant for Scottish Forestry. A model based on activity-based working principles was eventually implemented, where there was a balance of working from offices, external sites, and home, depending on business needs.



As with all projects, it was important that a review took place to ensure that this approach was working, for both staff and Scottish Forestry, which happened throughout the project and again in September 2024.

Bastian Altrock, Future Working and Corporate Sustainability Manager, said: “We are a modern organisation and we knew there would be a lot of benefits that a hybrid way of working could bring, such as flexibility and wellbeing.

“But, as well as opportunities, we also identified a few hurdles to overcome, if that was the direction we were going to be moving in.

“The view was that we want to support this flexibility - but could we support it from a business need point of view? For example, we knew some job roles lent themselves better to a hybrid way of working than others, so we had to be aware of not disadvantaging certain groups. Our review was data-driven and evidence-based.

“We knew there would be great benefits for those with caring responsibilities, say with young children or elderly relatives. Our staff with disabilities told us it was better for them if they didn’t have to travel into work as often.

“We also have staff members who prefer not to be lone working, who very much want the social contact you have from coming into an office, so we took all of these views into account.”

The Future Working Project ran for ten months, and a more permanent system of hybrid working was introduced in February 2024.

One member of staff reaping the benefits is mother-of-two, Case Support Officer, India Phillips, who divides her time between home and Scottish Forestry’s office in Dingwall, in the Highlands. With children aged one and four, she said the flexibility hybrid working allows her is crucial.

India stressed: “I really don’t know what I would do without it. If I’ve got a doctors’ appointment, for example, whether that is for me or one of the children, I can attend it as part of the flexi-time arrangements that are available.

“It just makes things so much easier when you’re trying to juggle family and work life. I am very grateful.”



Gareth Phillips, Head of Forestry Development, also shared his experience: “In our household we’re juggling a young family, and my wife has recently started studying for a degree. Flexible and hybrid working means I can deliver my work goals but also be adaptive to the requirements of home life. It’s hard to imagine how things would work for us if I didn’t have this flexibility.”

Bastian said these are good examples of why Scottish Forestry chose hybrid working: “Finding systems that work for your staff is the right thing to do, it increases your attractiveness as an employer and enables us to support employee wellbeing.”

**Equality Outcome Five: We will improve engagement with the communities we serve to enable a wider section of society and under-represented groups to enjoy the benefits and opportunities that our woods and forests provide, particularly those close to where they live.**

This has been drawn from our People and Communities team strategy, where diversity and inclusion form a principal focus.

Forests are for everyone, and for all abilities. Trails provide equal access to the beauty and benefits of nature. Green space and woodlands provide the ideal setting to promote healthy lifestyles, including mental, physical and social benefits.

Our People and Communities team offer support and encouragement to community groups to use and enjoy woodland spaces. We also support woodland owners to engage with local communities and involve them more directly in the use and management of woods.

Woodlands are the perfect learning environment, and we work with education professionals to promote the use and benefits of teaching outdoors. Our work with community woodland groups can nurture community resilience, increase the enjoyment of nature, protect woodlands for future generations and reduce inequalities.

Our Community Fund empowers communities to consider activities that can help alleviate stress, improve confidence, facilitate learning, and build relationships.





## Case Study: Community Events



Scottish Forestry continues to reach out to communities who find accessing Scotland's woodland areas more challenging. Women's groups, members of the refugee community, disability groups, and faith-based organisations are among those who have taken part in a range of community events set up to ensure that the benefits of green spaces are accessible to all sections of society.

Initiatives have included Wellbeing of the Woods, organised alongside Open Aye, a community interest company, which has provided photography workshops to diverse groups in Glasgow across the seasons, and Woodland Wheels, providing cycling sessions to improve health and wellbeing.



Groups that have benefitted have included the Glasgow Association of Mental Health, the Scottish Refugee Council, and Interfaith Glasgow. Participants have had a range of lived experiences such as mental health issues like depression, anxiety, and post-traumatic stress disorder.

The sessions add to the success of Pride Outside Festival, which was set up by Scottish Forestry to encourage members of the LGBTI+ community to enjoy the benefits of the great outdoors.

Romena Huq, Engagement Programme Manager, said: "We are trying to engage with communities who don't ordinarily access woodland areas in the hope that, once they do, they will return."

Woodland Wheels takes place monthly in Edinburgh and Glasgow, with cyclists also being taught about woodland topics such as the medicinal benefits of some plants and ancient folklore traditions. It uses cycling to encourage people - particularly women, people from ethnic minorities and disadvantaged groups - to use woodland to help them feel good about themselves, meet new friends and discover more about the outdoors environment. Bikes and helmets are provided, and special events have been marked - such as Diwali, which saw bikes decorated with ribbons and lights.

Cyclists say their favourite activities have included tree identification, woodland yoga, tai chi, making a 'wild' balm or midge cream, and cooking nachos and chocolate bananas over a fire pit. Romena said: "We all know there are great benefits to be had from being in green open spaces. Our job has been to ensure that groups who may have been missing out on those benefits are able to embrace the woodland areas that are there for all of us."

Other events that have been organised include a celebration of International Peace Day, with the woodlands providing the ideal backdrop for people from different backgrounds, faiths, and beliefs to share food, drink, music, and conversation.

Romena said: "Almost everyone who has attended expressed a wish to return to the woodlands again in the future. Woodlands can provide a safe neutral space for multi-cultural groups and others to come together and appreciate Scotland's natural environment."

## Case Study: Pride Outside



Scotland's forests and woodlands can be magical places to visit, with countless studies showing how getting outdoors into natural spaces can boost both mental and physical health. However, Scottish Forestry research has also shown that some groups have been more reluctant than others to enjoy those benefits.

The need to do something couldn't be more urgent. According to a Life in Scotland for LGBT Young People report, 84% per cent of LGBTI+ young people – and as many as 96% of transgender young people – indicated they had experienced mental health difficulties.



At the same time, the World Health Organisation says 'spending time in green spaces can improve our health and wellbeing and aid in mental health difficulties'.

The challenge for Romena Huq, Engagement Programme Manager, and her team was clear – how to encourage a reluctant community to enjoy the benefits the great outdoors could offer them.

The answer was the creation of Pride Outside Festival. Since its inception, Pride Outside Festival has grown to be an annual event, which attracted more than 250 people in September 2024 to Cuningar Loop, in Glasgow's Dalmarnock area, for a mixture of crafts, painting, and music.

Romena said: "We wanted to understand what was preventing young LGBTI+ people from accessing woodlands and we wanted to ensure we worked with people from the community to come up with a solution. We helped arrange pre-engagement sessions to understand what we could do to help inclusion.

"Pride Outside has formed because of the initial support from Scottish Forestry and they are now the organisation we support and fund to take forward the sessions and organise the festival."

"We're still a key partner in Pride Outside Festival and the feedback we have received tells us that, for many people from the LGBTI+ community, it has helped them break down barriers in terms of them returning to the woodlands."

Pride Outside said: "The event is now not being held at the same time as the main Glasgow Pride event. One of the groups it caters for are people who want to be part of Pride but can be put off staying there later in the day. Pride Outside Festival is more activity-led – there is still music, but it provides a different vibe and an environment where hopefully people feel comfortable and safe."

Members of LGBTI+ groups including asylum seekers, trans groups, Buddhists, Quakers, sports and university groups, have all been represented at Pride Outside.

The feedback Pride Outside has received has been overwhelmingly positive, with one participant saying: "I feel like there aren't many safe places for trans people, but my friend had come to one of your events and said the woodlands felt like a secret garden.

"I liked the wellbeing sessions and also liked that we could just sit and enjoy our picnic – the woodlands were so sunny and chilled, it felt like a magical day!"



## Case Study: Wellbeing of the Woods



Numerous studies have shown the clear benefits that accessing green spaces has for people's mental and physical health, but research has also found that some communities are less inclined to take advantage of Scotland's woods and forests than others. The Wellbeing of the Woods (WoW) project is one of the ways we have been working to address under-representation.

In partnership with Open Aye, an organisation which has long had an interest in how being creative in a natural environment can enhance personal wellbeing, Scottish Forestry has helped arrange photography workshops in woodlands around Glasgow.



The idea was to use natural areas as a backdrop for photography sessions, with women's, refugee and addiction support groups among those to benefit.

Romena Huq, Engagement Programme Manager, said: "We got involved with the WoW project because it fitted nicely with Scotland's national forestry strategy, where one of the priorities is to increase the use of Scotland's forests and woodlands to improve the health, wellbeing, and life chances of the people of Scotland."

She added: "There are groups who are less likely to access our woodlands. This can be due to lots of reasons. Some women may have safety concerns, for example."

The WoW project identified groups of people that would benefit from being introduced to the natural environment who have maybe been reluctant to previously, or who have just never been given the opportunity.

Open Aye photography sessions were organised in Glasgow's Pollok Country Park, with those taking part recruited from groups including the Glasgow Association of Mental Health, the Scottish Refugee Council, and the British Red Cross. This was designed to provide people with varying needs a safe, natural, and creative space to help improve their own personal sense of wellbeing.

Cameras were provided, and the idea was to use the woods as a backdrop, with tips given, like creating the right frame.

A lot of the people involved said they did not regularly visit any parks or woods before joining the project. Some people also found it difficult to be in group settings. Projects like this can break down these feelings of isolation and anxiety.

Help with transport was provided, with some of those taking part coming to a new area of Glasgow for the first time. Some groups were met off the train, which was important as they were arriving at an unfamiliar area to them.

After the photography, reflection sessions were held for participants to view their printed work. The feedback has been really positive, which participants saying they enjoyed being in a woodland environment. Many also said they felt their wellbeing had improved as a result.

The hope of the project by Open Aye and Scottish Forestry is that everyone leaves with a feeling of wanting to return, but also a sense of achievement and a boost to their self-esteem, which we hope has been achieved.



## 2025 and Beyond

As we reflect on the progress we have made in mainstreaming equality, we also see areas where we can make further improvements and advancements, which have been highlighted throughout this report.

With the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Action Plan being incorporated into our 2025 Corporate Plan and Strategy, it will raise awareness of our commitments, ensure that everyone feels part of our journey, and enable clearer reporting of progress.

As an agency we will continue to pursue partnership opportunities that assist us in moving equality forward. This includes working across the forestry sector and with colleagues in other Scottish Government agencies and bodies to share learning and good practice.

We will be exploring the possibility of developing an apprenticeship scheme. Part of this work will include understanding the profile of young people and what they are looking for as a career path so

that we are better positioned to attract them to apply for our vacancies. We will also continue the work on women's development so that women feel supported and have avenues for career advancement.

Over the next two years, Scottish Forestry will continue to strive to ensure that more people and communities have the opportunity to engage with our expanding forests and woodland, and benefit from using and enjoying these woods to support community inclusion, cohesion and improve their health and wellbeing. This work will include engaging with a range of delivery partners to encourage and support initiatives with under-represented groups, such as those highlighted in this report, to use and benefit from their local woodlands.









# Equal Pay

Scottish Forestry is committed to ensuring employees are fairly and equitably rewarded for the work they do and for the skills, knowledge and experience they bring, regardless of gender, disability, ethnicity, or other personal characteristics.

All posts within Scottish Forestry are allocated to a pay band using robust job evaluation methodology. The job evaluation process provides a systematic, fair, and consistent means of assessing the demands of jobs based on evidence-based criteria.

Equal Pay Monitoring is part of the annual pay review process. The review, which is negotiated with the recognised trade unions, includes Equality Impact Assessments of age, gender, ethnicity and disability. Earnings of these groups are compared to all-staff earnings by pay band.

Details shown in green in the table highlight where the number is greater than 5% or less than -5% to help identify differences considered significant.

Pay Band	Mean FTE Salary	Gender		Disability			Ethnicity		
		Female	Male	No	Yes	Prefer not to Respond	White	BAME	Prefer not to Respond
SSG1	94,383	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
Pay Band 1	79,887	0.0%	0.0%	3.3%	0.0%	-6.6%	3.3%	3.3%	-6.6%
Pay Band 2	67,587	1.5%	0.0%	0.1%	0.4%	1.5%	0.3%	0.0%	0.0%
Pay Band 3	53,050	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	1.6%	-3.0%	0.1%	1.2%	-3.0%
Pay Band 4	44,345	0.3%	0.0%	0.0%	0.7%	-0.1%	0.0%	-0.3%	-1.8%
Pay Band 5	35,936	0.0%	0.0%	0.1%	0.1%	-2.8%	-0.1%	1.6%	-1.2%
Pay Band 5 (Op)	42,116	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
Pay Band 6A	32,647	0.9%	-1.0%	-0.1%	1.5%	-3.2%	0.2%	-1.6%	0.0%
Pay Band 6B	29,303	0.1%	0.0%	0.0%	-0.2%	0.9%	0.0%	-1.4%	0.9%

The discrepancy within the ethnicity and disability category relates to staff with fewer years of service compared to staff with more service, as there is a 10% difference between the lowest and highest pay scale within this pay band.

In conjunction with equal pay monitoring, we are taking the following actions to improve equal pay data and results.

- **Equality Monitoring:** We will continue to engage staff to share their equality data with us. Care is taken to explain how and why we collect this sensitive personal information, including data handling and confidentiality. Disclosure rates have increased across the information, and now stand at 100% for gender, 94% for ethnicity, and 93% for disability.
- **Supporting progression and retention:** We have introduced the Scottish Government employee passport scheme to support staff with a clearer workplace adjustments process and have launched comprehensive menopause guidance to support staff and managers to have open conversations about menopause at work. We also have two promotion boards to help operations staff progress their careers.

- Ensuring dignity and respect in the workplace: We are refreshing our policy around bullying and harassment to incorporate a broader approach to dignity at work. Alongside our active bystander approach, we are committed to creating an inclusive workplace where people feel empowered to raise concerns with the assurance that they will be dealt with appropriately.

# Occupational Segregation

Vertical occupational segregation measures the headcount of female and male staff by pay band:

Payband	Gender Headcount	
	Female	Male
Pay Band 1	0	*
Pay Band 2	*	16
Pay Band 3	15	23
Pay Band 4	31	27
Pay Band 5	35	27
Pay Band 5 (Op)	*	*
Pay Band 6A	9	10
Pay Band 6B	29	7

Percentage of Headcount in each Pay Quarter				
	Lower	Lower-Mid	Upper-Mid	Upper
Male	27%	47%	48%	73%
Female	73%	53%	52%	27%

Gender Pay Gap				
	Female	Male	All Staff	Pay Gap
Mean Hourly Wage	19.94	23.91	21.93	19%
Median Hourly Wage	18.91	22.39	18.97	Under 16%

Female staff are more concentrated in the lower than upper pay quarters, with the upper pay quarter consisting of just 27% women compared to a total female representation of just over 50%.

We’ve increased female representation and headcount in the lower-middle pay quarters since 2023 but decreased female representation in the lower and upper pay quarters. The lower-middle quarter has stayed the same at 53%. Our gender pay gap has increased since 2023 and it is recognised that there is more to do to address this.

We will continue our work to attract and retain women in senior positions and have a more balanced gender representation in pay bands 4 and above. We are also going to continue our work with the Women’s Network, where women can support and provide advice to each other.







# Appendix: Our Workforce Statistics

The figures here represent the total workforce figures for Scottish Forestry as of 01 March 2025. To protect anonymity, figures <5 have been replaced by \* to prevent disclosure of personal data.

## Overall Employees

Gender		Disability			Ethnicity			Age	
Female	Male	No	Prefer not to share	Yes	BAME	Prefer not to share	White	39 and Under	40 and Over
121	117	200	18	20	5	13	220	69	169

Sexual Orientation			Gender Reassignment		Religion			
LGBT+	Heterosexual/ Straight	Prefer not to share	No	Prefer not to share	Agnostic	Atheist/ No religion	Religious	Prefer not to share
16	143	79	176	62	11	96	50	81

Marital Status							
Civil Partnership	Divorced	Married	Prefer not to say	Partner	Separated	Single	Widowed
*	12	115	6	31	5	63	*

## Workforce by Contract Type

	Gender		Disability			Ethnicity		
Full Time	Female	Male	No	Prefer not to share	Yes	BAME	Prefer not to share	White
Fixed Term	6	5	10	0	*	0	0	11
Permanent	87	105	159	17	16	5	12	175

	Gender		Disability			Ethnicity		
Part Time	Female	Male	No	Prefer not to share	Yes	BAME	Prefer not to share	White
Permanent	28	7	31	*	*	0	*	34



	Age		Sexual Orientation			Gender Reassignment	
Full Time	39 and Under	40 and Over	LGBTI+	Heterosexual/ Straight	Prefer not to say	No	Prefer not to share
Fixed Term	6	5	*	6	*	11	0
Permanent	55	137	11	117	64	142	50

	Age		Sexual Orientation			Gender Reassignment	
Part Time	39 and Under	40 and Over	LGBTI+	Heterosexual/ Straight	Prefer not to share	No	Prefer not to share
Permanent	8	27	*	20	14	23	12

	Religion			
Full Time	Agnostic	Atheist/No religion	Religious	Prefer not to share
Fixed Term	*	9	0	*
Permanent	9	77	42	64

	Religion			
Part Time	Agnostic	Atheist/No religion	Religious	Prefer not to share
Permanent	*	10	8	16

	Marital Status							
Full Time	Civil Partnership	Divorced	Married	Prefer not to share	Partner	Separated	Single	Widowed
Fixed Term	0	0	*	0	*	0	5	0
Permanent	*	10	88	6	25	5	53	*

	Marital Status							
Part Time	Civil Partnership	Divorced	Married	Prefer not to share	Partner	Separated	Single	Widowed
Permanent	0	*	25	0	*	0	5	*

## Workforce By Pay Band

	Gender		Disability			Ethnicity		
	Female	Male	No	Prefer not to share	Yes	BAME	Prefer not to share	White
Pay Band 1	0	*	*	*	0	*	*	*
Pay Band 2	*	16	11	*	*	0	*	16
Pay Band 3	15	23	32	*	*	*	*	35
Pay Band 4	31	27	52	*	*	*	*	54
Pay Band 5	35	27	54	*	5	*	*	58
Pay Band 5 (Op)	*	*	*	0	0	0	0	*
Pay Band 6A	9	10	15	*	*	0	*	18
Pay Band 6B	29	7	30	*	*	0	*	34
SSG1	0	1	0	*	0	0	*	0



	Age		Sexual Orientation			Gender Reassignment	
	39 and Under	40 and Over	LGBTI+	Heterosexual/ Straight	Prefer not to share	No	Prefer not to share
Pay Band 1	0	*	0	0	*	*	*
Pay Band 2	0	7	0	11	6	11	6
Pay Band 3	7	31	*	22	15	23	15
Pay Band 4	14	44	*	40	15	48	10
Pay Band 5	30	32	9	33	20	47	15
Pay Band 5 (Op)	0	*	0	0	*	0	*
Pay Band 6A	8	11	0	13	6	15	*
Pay Band 6B	10	26	*	24	9	30	6
SSG1	0	*	0	0	*	0	*

	Religion			
	Agnostic	Atheist/No religion	Religious	Prefer not to share
Pay Band 1	0	0	0	*
Pay Band 2	0	5	6	6
Pay Band 3	*	12	8	17
Pay Band 4	*	27	13	14
Pay Band 5	*	29	10	19
Pay Band 5 (Op)	0	0	0	*
Pay Band 6A	0	9	*	6
Pay Band 6B	*	14	9	11
SSG1	0	0	0	*

	Marital Status							
	Civil Partnership	Divorced	Married	Prefer not to share	Partner	Separated	Single	
Pay Band 1	0	0	*	0	0	0	*	0
Pay Band 2	0	0	11	*	0	0	*	*
Pay Band 3	0	*	24	*	*	0	8	*
Pay Band 4	*	*	29	*	8	*	15	0
Pay Band 5	*	*	21	*	11	*	24	0
Pay Band 5 (Op)	0	0	*	0	0	0	*	0
Pay Band 6A	0	*	8	0	5	*	*	0
Pay Band 6B	0	6	18	0	6	*	*	0
SSG1	0	0	*	0	0	0	0	0

## New Starts

Gender		Disability			Ethnicity			Age	
Female	Male	No	Yes	Prefer not to share	White	BAME	Prefer not to share	39 and Under	40 and Over
12	15	20	*	5	25	0	*	16	11

## Leavers

Gender		Disability			Ethnicity			Age	
Female	Male	No	Prefer not to share	Yes	ME	Prefer not to share	White	39 and Under	40 and Over
10	9	18	0	*	17	*	0	5	14

## Maternity

In the reporting period, 7 employees had some period of maternity leave.

## Grievance and Disciplinary

There have been no formal Grievance and/or Disciplinary cases in Scottish Forestry for the reporting period.



## Learning and Development – Training Course Attendance

Gender		Disability			Ethnicity			Age	
Male	Female	No	Yes	Prefer not to share	White	BAME	Prefer not to share	39 and Under	40 and Over
2522	2858	4537	398	304	4894	118	270	1891	3489

## Vacancy reporting

Gender					
Vacancy Ref	Male	Female	Self-Describe	ND	Totals
Applicants	1,538	1,126	15	112	<b>2,791</b>
%	55%	40%	1%	4%	
Passed Sift	110	123	*	15	<b>249</b>
%	44%	49%	0%	6%	
Passed Interview	34	31	*	5	<b>71</b>
%	48%	44%	1%	7%	
Posted	17	23	*	*	<b>45</b>
%	38%	51%	2%	9%	

Disability				
Vacancy Ref	Yes	No	ND	Totals
Applicants	175	2434	182	<b>2791</b>
%	6%	87%	7%	
Passed Sift	23	200	26	<b>249</b>
%	9%	80%	10%	
Passed Interview	7	57	7	<b>71</b>
%	10%	80%	10%	
Posted	*	38	*	<b>45</b>
%	7%	84%	9%	

Sexual Orientation						
Vacancy Ref	Heterosexual/ Straight	Bisexual	Gay Man	Gay Woman/ Lesbian	Prefer not to share	Total
Applicants	2230	161	67	50	283	<b>2791</b>
%	80%	6%	2%	2%	10%	
Passed Sift	192	11	*	*	40	<b>249</b>
%	77%	4%	2%	1%	16%	
Passed Interview	47	8	*	0	14	<b>71</b>
%	66%	11%	3%	0%	20%	
Posted	28	7	*	0	8	<b>45</b>
%	62%	16%	4%	0%	18%	



Ethnicity							
Vacancy Ref	Asian/	Black/ African/ Black British	Mixed Ethnicity	Other Ethnic Groups	White	Prefer not to share	Total
Applicants	149	192	40	23	2288	99	<b>2791</b>
%	5%	7%	1%	1%	82%	4%	
Passed Sift	7	21	*	0	210	9	<b>249</b>
%	3%	8%	1%	0%	84%	4%	
Passed Interview	0	*	0	0	67	*	<b>71</b>
%	0%	1%	0%	0%	94%	4%	
Posted	0	*	0	0	41	*	<b>45</b>
%	0%	2%	0%	0%	91%	7%	

Age Group											
	16-24	25-29	30-35	35-39	40-44	45-49	50-54	55-59	60-64	65+	Total
Applicants	304	678	564	405	251	227	171	133	50	8	<b>2791</b>
%	11%	24%	20%	15%	9%	8%	6%	5%	2%	0%	
Passed Sift	8	43	52	33	32	32	18	18	11	*	<b>249</b>
%	3%	17%	21%	13%	13%	13%	7%	7%	4%	1%	
Passed Interview	0	14	16	10	*	14	5	*	*	*	<b>71</b>
%	0%	20%	23%	14%	6%	20%	7%	4%	4%	3%	
Posted	0	9	11	6	*	9	*	*	*	*	<b>45</b>
%	0%	20%	24%	13%	4%	20%	7%	4%	4%	2%	

## Gender Pay Gap

	Mean Hourly Wage	Median Hourly Wage
Female	19.94	18.91
Male	23.91	22.39
All Staff	21.93	18.97

Percentage of Headcount in each Pay Quarter				
	Lower	Lower-Mid	Upper-Mid	Upper
Female	73%	53%	52%	27%
Male	27%	47%	48%	73%

## Equal Pay

Mean FTE Salary Scottish Forestry	
Grade	Salary
SSG1	94,383
Pay Band 1	79,887
Pay Band 2	67,587
Pay Band 3	53,050
Pay Band 4	44,345
Pay Band 5	35,936
Pay Band 5 (Op)	42,116
Pay Band 6A	32,647
Pay Band 6B	29,303

Mean FTE Salary by Gender		
Grade	Female	Male
SSG1	-	94,383
Pay Band 1	-	79,887
Pay Band 2	68,625	67,523
Pay Band 3	53,032	53,062
Pay Band 4	44,470	44,202
Pay Band 5	35,937	35,935
Pay Band 5 (Op)	42,116	42,116
Pay Band 6A	32,957	32,368
Pay Band 6B	29,332	29,184



Mean FTE Salary by Disability			
Grade	No	Yes	Not Known
SSG1	-	-	-
Pay Band 1	82,542	-	74,577
Pay Band 2	67,623	67,890	68,625
Pay Band 3	53,072	53,919	51,454
Pay Band 4	44,331	44,646	44,282
Pay Band 5	35,957	35,969	34,937
Pay Band 5 (Op)	42,116	-	-
Pay Band 6A	32,620	33,125	31,611
Pay Band 6B	29,296	29,231	29,556

Mean FTE Salary by Ethnicity			
Grade	White	BAME	Not Stated
SSG1	-	-	-
Pay Band 1	82,542	82,542	74,577
Pay Band 2	67,798	-	-
Pay Band 3	53,118	53,673	51,454
Pay Band 4	44,362	44,210	43,556
Pay Band 5	35,900	36,494	35,511
Pay Band 5 (Op)	42,116	42,116	-
Pay Band 6A	32,721	32,116	-
Pay Band 6B	29,312	28,906	29,556



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