



## Public Authority Statutory Equality and Good Relations Duties Annual Progress Report 2021-22

### Contact:

<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Section 75 of the NI Act 1998 and Equality Scheme</li></ul>	Name: Colin Campbell Telephone: 028 77442046 Email: <a href="mailto:Colin.campbell@daera-ni.gov.uk">Colin.campbell@daera-ni.gov.uk</a>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Section 49A of the Disability Discrimination Act 1995 and Disability Action Plan</li></ul>	As above <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> (double click to open) Name: Telephone: Email:

Documents published relating to our Equality Scheme can be found at:

<https://www.daera-ni.gov.uk/publications/daera-equality-scheme-2021-2025>

### Signature:



**This report has been prepared using a template circulated by the Equality Commission.**

**It presents our progress in fulfilling our statutory equality and good relations duties, and implementing Equality Scheme commitments and Disability Action Plans.**

**This report reflects progress made between April 2021 and March 2022**

## **PART A – Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998 and Equality Scheme**

### **Section 1: Equality and good relations outcomes, impacts and good practice**

- 1** In 2021-22, please provide **examples** of key policy/service delivery developments made by the public authority in this reporting period to better promote equality of opportunity and good relations; and the outcomes and improvements achieved.

*Please relate these to the implementation of your statutory equality and good relations duties and Equality Scheme where appropriate.*

During this reporting period DAERA's governance structures continued to ensure delivery of its equality and good relations duties and diversity and inclusion priorities, in line with its Equality Scheme commitment to having effective internal arrangements in place for ensuring effective compliance with the Section 75 duties. The governance structures ensured that these functions are overseen and supported at a senior level within the Department and that they continued to be mainstreamed and made central to policy development and the delivery of services to our citizens. This approach has continued to contribute to enabling cultural change within DAERA by helping create a working environment where equality and good relations are embraced as core business values, and that they are promoted and respected both within the Department and in our engagement with stakeholders and customers.

The Equality and Diversity Steering Group (EDSG), which is chaired by the Permanent Secretary and is a sub-group of the DAERA Board, continued to meet to discuss and promote equality and diversity issues. This demonstrates the continued leadership and ownership of equality, good relations, diversity, and inclusion at the most senior levels, which, in turn, has ensured they are better promoted and championed. The EDSG is also responsible for overseeing and monitoring the Department's progress against its equality, good relations and human rights obligations and relevant strategies, policies, and action plans. As set out in the Terms of Reference, this group met twice in the reporting period and ensured that initiatives were given due consideration and progressed appropriately.

The 2017-18 Progress Report highlighted that an Equality and Diversity Working Group (EDWG) should be established within the Department. The development of this group has continued and has included the restructuring of membership to ensure a diverse cross section of DAERA staff. The Director of Staff Engagement, Equality & Diversity Directorate, now chairs the EDWG.

This group is responsible for, amongst other things, promoting equality, good relations and diversity best practice across business areas and maximising collaborative working on equality and diversity initiatives where possible. During this reporting period, the group continued to report, and made several recommendations to the EDSG.

The DAERA Equality and Diversity Unit provided administrative support to both groups and assisted in taking forward any necessary actions.

The DAERA Equality Unit are also members of the cross-departmental Equality Practitioners Group (EPG) as well as actively attending the Equality Forum meetings where the Equality Commission for Northern Ireland (ECNI) are also a member.

**(i) FOOD AND FARMING GROUP and COLLEGE OF AGRICULTURE, FOOD AND RURAL ENTERPRISE (CAFRE)**

The annual Single Application and Map Service provides farm businesses online access to submit a range of claims for Area-based Schemes, including the main agricultural subsidy scheme in Northern Ireland, the Basic Payment Scheme. During the 2021-22 period, the Department implemented a Digital Assistance (DA) strategy, which provides enhanced support, beyond general help and guidance, to allow customers to complete Single Applications (SAs), Entitlement Transfer applications, and applications to the Environmental Farming Scheme, DA was provided by telephone, face-to-face, and by DAERA Assistant in 2022. In addition, the online application was further enhanced to improve accessibility and usability for all customers.

DAERA has developed a Widening Access and Participation Plan (WAPP) for CAFRE to cover the 2023-24 to 2025-26 period. This aims to ensure that higher tuition fees should not have a detrimental effect on widening participation of under-represented groups in higher education. Ten initiatives are being considered which include schools and community outreach, access to additional bursary funding and affordable transport links.

During this reporting period, the recruitment activities for DAERA's College (CAFRE) were partially disrupted due to the Covid-19 pandemic, and a blended approach to promotion and engagement activities was employed using both online and face-to-face events. The College hosted virtual open day events in October 2021 and March 2022. These events were discipline specific and hosted on Facebook Live making them accessible to everyone. CAFRE also hosted an On-Line Work Experience Day focusing on Careers in the Food industry for females. The College also offered face-to-face pre-booked Campus Tours for potential applicants, on-campus Applicant Days and school careers talks and interviews. Four Curriculum Support events were offered at Loughry Campus as part of the NI Science Festival and the Recruitment Team attended several recruitment events such as the Balmoral Show, the UCAS event, Machinery Shows in Lisburn, and Cavan.

CAFRE promotes the range of programmes and courses available through its website, [cafre.ac.uk](http://cafre.ac.uk). The College is committed to making its website accessible, in accordance with the Public Sector Bodies (Websites and Mobile Applications) (No. 2) Accessibility Regulations 2018. The CAFRE website was tested and updated for compliance with the Web Content Accessibility Guidelines 2.1 level A and level AA, with an accessibility audit conducted in March 2022.

## PART A

In 2021-22 CAFRE's enrolments were 1,884, of which 45% were female. The number of students declaring a disability or learning need in 2021-22 was 14%, which is unchanged from 14% in 2020-21. The promotion of support available for students with disability or learning need by the Student Support Officer (SSO) and teaching staff continued throughout the year both online and, when possible, face-to-face with early disclosure encouraged to ensure the receipt of approval for support from Awarding Organisations prior to formal / alternative assessments taking place.

As a demonstration of DAERA's commitment to ensure that its services are fully accessible to everyone, CAFRE's full-time Student Support Officer provides information and advice to all students at induction and throughout the year at each of its three campuses. The officer is also available to provide targeted assistance to students who have additional needs. At the end of their education programme, additional assistance is provided by CAFRE staff to students with a disability, by signposting them to supported employment services.

Towards the end of the 2019-20 academic year and during the 2020-21 academic year, the delivery of CAFRE's programmes was impacted by the Covid-19 pandemic. In March 2020, all face-to-face delivery ceased, and students completed the academic year through online delivery. During September 2021 CAFRE Education programmes recommenced, using a largely face-to-face approach to programme delivery. Arrangements put in place by Awarding Organisations and validating Universities have ensured that student success and progression has not been impacted by the pandemic.

In CAFRE teaching staff continue to undertake a range of training courses to support digital learning activities. The College continues to offer a laptop loan scheme to ensure that those students who do not have access to a personal computer / mobile device can access online lessons. Provision has also been made to offer laptops on loan to students who require accessibility software.

CAFRE's Student Support Officer managed a comprehensive programme of support across all campuses. This support was either a targeted one-to-one programme based on a specific student need, or a general programme for all students to support and signpost them to a variety of services and initiatives to help them during their time at college. The Student Support Officer and wider campus teams also developed a programme of events for all students to promote positive mental health and wellbeing amongst the student population. As well as Student Counselling provided under contract by Inspire, the programme included topics such as:

- Mental Health and Resilience workshops
- Promotion of safeguarding
- Diversity and inclusion video
- Consent workshops in partnership with the PSNI
- Drugs and alcohol awareness
- Sexual Health Week – #LetsTalkSex
- National Student Money Week – Sustainable Spending
- Safer Internet Day – All fun and games?
- Exploring respect and relationships online

- International Woman’s Day – #BreakTheBias
- Time to Talk Day – conversations about mental health and well-being
- Signposting – A postcard drop to homes “Supporting U in 22” to coincide with Blue Monday
- Student Water Bottles – provided to all full-time students in the hope that these will encourage students to drink more water throughout the day.
- Staff training on the Bloom programme which is delivered through scenario-based discussion and relatable topics designed to leave young people with a better understanding of mental health in themselves and others.
- Exam pressures workshops
- SRC fundraising activities in aid of PIPS, Cancer Focus, Dementia NI, Marie Curie and Crosskennan Animal Sanctuary.

## **(ii) NORTHERN IRELAND ENVIRONMENT AGENCY (NIEA)**

Thirty-two projects were delivered in 2021-22, funded by the Environment Fund Challenge Competition. The theme of these projects included Nature Recovery: Building ecological and climate resilience and Connecting People with Nature. They improved inclusivity and accessibility throughout Northern Ireland, and many supported all ability access to the natural environment. These projects were:

### **Ballyronan Wood path**

Delivered by Mid Ulster District Council (MUDC), the project was for the redevelopment of Woodland at Ballyronan as a quality off-road multi-use 1km trail. The entire Ballyronan Marina & Wood site underwent Equality & Good Relations screening in March 2021.

Since completing the Wood project, the site is used on a regular basis by the local Community Playgroup who are located within Ballyronan. The site is also used by Primary Schools, both locally and within the wider MUDC area.

### **Enabling access to Collinward and Cave Hill**

Delivered by Woodland Trust, the project created an access plan, upgrade of 3.4km of paths and visitor infrastructure on Collinward to provide public access to the site, alongside boundary management.

Public access at Glas-na-Bradán Wood is now open to the public to access on foot for free and has been greatly improved in the following ways:

#### Pedestrian Access

The existing 2km track from the entrance off the Hightown Rd (St Edna’s) to the summit of Glas-na-Bradán Wood (at the mast) has been substantially upgraded. When the Woodland Trust bought the site, the track was wet and waterlogged in places and muddy with a very uneven and in places rocky surface.

Upgrade work has included improvements to drainage (culverts and drainage pipes) and resurfacing using a fine stone that has been compacted. The upgraded

track offers improved access as it is now dry to walk on and has an even and stable surface. The track is up to 3m wide and has good lines of sight.

#### Improved Vehicle Access

Although the track is not 'all-ability' for walkers, due to the steep gradient, it is fully accessible by car. A ford has been installed where the Glas-na-Bradán stream crosses the track and three temporary car parking spaces have been created about 1.5kms along the 2km track beside a metal container. The container will act as a volunteer and visitor hub. When events take place on site, visitors with limited mobility can be driven to this point.

There are plans to further develop the trail system on site and this will include an all-ability trail.

### **Lough Park & Windmill Hill Community Trail**

Delivered by Newry, Mourne and Down District Council, the project involved the upgrading and linking of path networks and visitor infrastructure at Lough Park and Windmill Hill in Ballynahinch to create a 3.1km walking trail.

Two adjacent sites, Lough Park, and Windmill Hill have undergone new trail build and trail upgrades with the primary purpose of making both sites more accessible to more people from within the locality and improving the overall visitor experience.

Lough Park is a very flat site. Prior to trail development it had no formal walking trails. Some local people made use of amenity grassland for walking, but wet underfoot conditions and sections of dense vegetation growth made options for walking limited. A newly constructed compacted gravel path has created a continuous, step-free loop around the perimeter of Lough Park. Trail construction included areas of raised causeway to overcome wet underfoot conditions within grassland. This loop can be accessed step-free from Hillcrest Drive and Loughside Drive, and directly via a gated entrance to Ballynahinch Community Centre. Due to the easy topography and finished surface, these new trails will improve access for all.

The adjacent Windmill Hill is, by its very definition, a hilly site. It had an existing network of trails that were in a degraded state and that took the shortest and steepest route towards the Windmill at the hill's summit. The new trail design limits the steepness of trails by re-aligning them to work better with the contours of the hill. Although there are still some steep sections, that due to gradient are not all-ability, conditions have significantly improved upon what previously existed meaning the site is more accessible to more people within the local surrounding community.

### **Growing Awareness of Outdoor and Green Spaces & Responsible Behaviour**

Delivered by Outdoor Recreation NI, the project involved an awareness campaign to encourage responsible behaviour by those using natural space and trails.

### **Mountsandel Experience Land Purchase**

Delivered by Causeway Coast and Glens Borough Council, the project was for the purchase of land to secure additional access point in perpetuity to Mountsandel scheduled Archaeological Site, Monument and adjacent woodland and trails. In all projects and activities, we recognise these obligations and confirm our commitment to the principles of affording equality of opportunity in all aspects of our organisation's activities, regarding access and participation in the design and development of all projects.

#### **Access on Inisherker Island at Crom**

Delivered by the National Trust, with DAERA providing funding towards the costs, the project reinstated a 2.3km path on Inisherker Island at Crom. Unfortunately, however, National Trust do not have any details on groups benefiting from the work as there was no reach-out made and none specifically made with any disability groups in this instance.

The path work at Inisherker was undertaken principally as a repair to an existing woodland access route, which had become denuded, flooded in places and generally in poor condition for public access. The path would not be termed an 'all-ability' in the strictest sense of that category definition. It does however conform to most of the elements that are required for a Category 1 All-Ability path or trail, but it does not, nor had it prior to the works, any provision on it for rest areas at the required intervals along the route. The routeway is the correct width, is a clear walking tunnel and corridor with no gradients or incline issues, which would exceed what is required for a Category 1 path. However, it's like for like re-surfacing with compacted stone, which was rolled and provides a consistent flat, dry surface throughout, does not meet the specification for 'all-abilities', as while it is hard and firm it does contain stones as surface material which are over 10mm size.

Although the works to the path have made a significant improvement for access by our current visitors, we did not change the nature of the pathway, which would be classified as being in a Rural and Working Landscape. For example, the users of this trail would be well over 1km from the nearest site facilities and there is currently no provision for disabled parking on Inisherker.

With that said, we are always seeking to make improvements for disabled visitors to Crom. We have improved the linking access between the Crom Visitor Centre and main Car Park, have made disabled drop off point at the back of the Visitor Centre, and recently an area has been set aside close to our Ranger Office specifically for disabled parking to allow visitors to better explore this part of the estate.

The Trust is also looking at further options for improving access more, particularly for disabled visitors including the possibility of providing a Trampler, (all terrain mobility scooter), which would be especially relevant for access around Inisherker. We would be seeking to make further improvements to our present visitor car park at the Visitor Centre to create better provisions for our disabled visitors.

#### **Lough Neagh - Connecting people with nature**

Delivered by Lough Neagh Partnership, the project was to raise awareness of the importance of Lough Neagh and its biodiversity

## PART A

- To create more opportunities for local people to connect to nature
- To reach out to 'hard to reach/overlooked' groups and wider audiences (e.g. community, wildfowling, elderly, people with disabilities)
- To empower and equip volunteers with skills they need to undertake conservation work

In order to achieve the above objectives we have completed "Community Bird Hide Feasibility Study" which aims to establish a network of Bird Hides around the lough. This will involve the refurbishment of three existing hides and four new builds. Some of the new builds will include an outdoor classroom. The aim of this project is to encourage more people to appreciate the wildlife of the lough, in particular young people and schools. Five Primary schools were consulted on the design of individual hides close to their school. They will be further involved as the project progresses through RIBA Stages 4-7 and completion. Completion of next phase and construction is also dependent on funding.

The proposed designs are intended to appeal to a younger audience however; accessibility and the gradient of approach path/surface materials were both considered in the initial selection of preferred locations. Planning applications have been submitted for 7 proposed schemes as appropriate/required.

Lough Neagh is better known for its commercial value (water, sand extraction) and as wildfowling area rather than somewhere to enjoy wildlife. This proposal aims to appeal to a wider audience and help to change the mind-set of those living around or who use the lough. Actual implementation of the project will be dependent of further funding.

To reach out to 'hard to reach/overlooked' groups and wider audiences (e.g., community, wildfowling, elderly, people with disabilities) we had a pilot project which involved the installation of nest cams and feeder cams at six Care Homes around the Lough Neagh area. It targeted an often, over-looked section of the community – Care Home residents, but also aimed to engage staff and wider family members. Many residents had been very isolated during the Covid-19 pandemic, and it was hoped that this project would help to bring a little stimulation and enjoyment to their lives (particularly for patients with dementia). In simple terms, the nest cam aimed to bring nature to Care Home residents. Care Homes were selected after discussion with the Care Home Managers and included a range of homes specialising in different kinds of care. Many of the Care Home residents were from the surrounding rural area and it was hoped that the project could help to reconnect them with early memories.

This project is still ongoing. Some aspects of the project were undeliverable (e.g., proposed 'in person' presentations at each Care Home) due to Covid-19 regulations. The Partnership will evaluate the impact of the project in conjunction with the Care Home Managers later this year.

Podcasts and Short Film: The podcast aimed to use digital media to reach out to wider audience and raise awareness of the importance of Lough Neagh for wildlife. The short film aimed to engage a wider audience by featuring different aspects of the lough such



as fishing, wild fowling, and water extraction. The podcast is envisaged as the first of a possible series aiming to raise awareness and appeal to a wide audience around the Lough and further afield. It can be accessed from the Lough Neagh Partnership website.

UTV Life covered Primary School involvement in the Community Bird Hide project. This helped to highlight our work to a wide audience.

### **Valley Park Greenway**

Delivered by Antrim and Newtownabbey Borough Council, with DAERA providing funding towards the costs, the project was for the construction of new accessibility 900m trail, 3 metres wide, to link existing pathways to form 2.3-mile route.

This new route (within a previously scrubby/overgrown inaccessible part of the park) was identified by both Disability Sport NI (DSNI) and Valley Parkrun organisers as something that would be of high value to its members, as a result of a consultation exercise carried out by Council back in 2020.

More specifically, in recent years, Council have been working with Disability Sport NI in the placement of inclusive sports equipment (i.e., hand cycles, trikes and tandems) within the Borough, to improve participation in active outdoor recreation for people with disabilities, and in turn, improve their health and wellbeing. Council currently has such specialised equipment available to hire at the Valley Leisure Centre hub, while DSNI employ Hub Leaders to deliver taster and training sessions, in order to encourage people with disabilities in the areas, to make use of the equipment and increase their activity levels. DSNI have been progressing options to improve outdoor facilities for this specialised equipment to be used within the Valley Park. Therefore, they previously approached Council with regards to providing a greater range of outdoor trails specifically designed for use with them, as scope was limited within the Valley Park – until recently there were only small sections at the southern end of the site which could be availed of. Following site visits with both DSNI and the local Parkrun volunteers, potential to enhance a number of the existing informal trails within the northern section of the park was identified, as well as the opening up of new routes through current inaccessible dense wooded areas, subject to external funding.

The new 3m-wide trail will extend the range of outdoor trails and programme scope that the activity leaders can use with their clients/groups. It will also be of great benefit to individuals who merely wish to hire the specialised equipment already in place, to partake in inclusive active outdoor recreation within the park, while improving their health and wellbeing. The trail will prove attractive and of benefit to those using the hub's equipment, but also wheelchair users, people with prams, mobility issues, and of course, the local Parkrun programme – the new trail could provide an alternative route that would appeal to those who may have been put off by taking part previously. Therefore, we would anticipate an increase in those participating at this weekly events programme at the park. It would also provide organisers / volunteers with the scope to establish a Park walk, which is also sweeping across the country. This would appeal to novices and those who are not fit enough to run the course.

The new trail should encourage those that may not currently take part in any physical activity programmes and/or are members of any local groups, and perhaps don't use the leisure facilities at the local Council leisure centres (e.g. Valley), due to various barriers – low fitness levels (perceived or otherwise), disabilities, cost and/or interest. By promoting the existence of an accessible doorstep walking trails, in green open spaces that connect with residential areas, should entice more local people to get out and explore the trails and partake in some gentle exercise.

It is about providing shared use trails that connect dense residential areas to their green spaces, which are of a suitable surface and gradient, to make it more accessible for wheelchair users, people with limited mobility etc.

There have been several successful sessions at Valley Leisure Centre using the 'inclusive bikes' and we plan to start a new programme in August 2022 with a DSN staff member running weekly cycle sessions for a local assisted housing group, with potential opportunities for other users to utilise the bikes. This will be reported on in next year's APR.

Quote from Northern Trust staff member who links with us for the cycling sessions, "Can I just say how much our guys are enjoying this. It has been a great activity for them, and our member has built such a great rapport with them."

### **Creation and Extension to Glenmore Parkland trail and Biodiversity enhancements**

Delivered by Lisburn and Castlereagh City Council, with DAERA providing funding towards the costs, the project created an accessible pathway, including planting schemes to enhance and raise awareness of biodiversity to an area that will link into the Glenmore Parkland trail.

These trails have been designed to assist those with mobility issues, including those who look after or care for children using buggies/pushchairs, those who have disabilities and older people who are using rollator walking aids or walking sticks. These trails will be accessible to the community seven days per week. This is a free service and is inclusive to the whole community and open to all who wish to use it.

Gradients were taken into consideration, and all are within the guidelines for wheelchair users and pushchairs. Paths have been designed to be 2 metres wide, which is over the recommendation of 1.8 metres for paths. This will allow for social distancing for walkers, and for two wheelchairs or pushchairs side by side or one wheelchair and a pedestrian alongside. Benches will be provided along the walking trails to allow older people, those with dependents, those with disabilities and all other groups to rest. Rest places, which are flat areas where people can pull off the main path and rest on a level surface, will be provided. Care has been taken to ensure that all rest areas are accessible for all and are ideal for wheelchair users and those with buggies to stop and rest if needed.

Covid-19 is an ongoing pandemic, and the health and safety of our users will be always paramount. It has been found by the Council that during the Covid-19 pandemic more people wanted to take exercise outdoors, in natural surroundings, to help both their physical and mental health and wellbeing. The Council recognised the need for creating accessible places for everyone to exercise.

At several sites, funding has been sought to construct tarmac trails. This replaces inaccessible paths that were essentially grass and mud. This opens sites to wheelchair users, buggies/pushchairs and those using rollators, making sites largely accessible to all. This has made these sites inclusive for those Section 75 groups who often experience access issues.

On other sites, new paths have been created through wet, marshy-grassed areas that are largely unknown to the public. New trails have created accessibility to areas that were previously disused and enables people to come closer to nature and witness the biodiversity which has been created over many years. This is especially important for people with disabilities, those with dependents and older people, who often never have a chance to explore areas that are 'off the beaten track' because of access issues. The Council wish to make parks and trails as accessible for as many section 75 groups as possible. At a number of sites, where it is appropriate, tactile maps and braille signs have been installed. This means that many more sites will be accessible for those who are blind and partially sighted.

Where opportunities arise, the Council will explore new ways to access the countryside. If this is through obtaining formal planning permissions or permissive path agreements, with local landowners, the Council will pursue all avenues, to create new trails that are accessible to all.

The Councils Castlereagh Safe and Well Project (CSAW) programme for people with disabilities, older people, and new mums, organised a bulb planting and litter picking session for phase 2 of this project.

The Council organised a class from a local school within the area that included children with disabilities, to plant some bulbs and wildflowers on two occasions for phase 2 of this project.

## **NIEA Regional Operations – Country Parks and Nature Reserves**

### **Improvements at Quoile Pondage Nature Reserve**

Following on from the works completed over the previous three reporting periods, we have continued to deliver improvements for accessibility at the Quoile Pondage National Nature Reserve (NNR).

Following on from works to the Old Floodgates Car Park (located on the Quoile Road), we have opened the site to views from the road thus increasing visibility. Additional hard surfacing from the area close to the designated disabled parking spaces has been completed enabling further ease of access to the full length of the public paths

throughout the nature reserve. This has resulted in the car park being the most used around the Quoile. A local community group uses this daily for people with a range of abilities.

We are in discussions with Inland Fisheries about installing a, proposed, fishing stand near the Old Flood Gates Car Park.

#### **Improvements at Peatlands Park**

All sections of boardwalks within the park and at Derryadd Lake have now been upgraded and where necessary replaced, which constitutes a network of over 10km of accessible pathway throughout the site. Major sections of previously stone-topped lanes have also been upgraded with a tarmac finish to improve accessibility throughout the heart of the site.

A substantial CCTV system rollout has been completed, improving security and safety within the site.

Play parks continue to be highly utilised by visitors with significant numbers visiting since the easing of COVID-19 restrictions.

#### **Roe Valley Country Park**

The Roe Mill Bridge has been re-designed to provide greater access, to include the removal of steps and inclusion of graded access. It is hoped this enhancement will enable greater access to the country park for visitors of all abilities. Plans are currently being progressed with respect to the installation of a new bridge on site with enhanced accessibility for all, for which planning permission is currently being sought. The proposed new footbridge will provide enhanced visitor access through the park, including the created provision of a safe, contained, and circular walking route.

#### **Crawfordsburn Country Park**

Construction of the replacement beach toilet block facility at Crawfordsburn Country Park is nearing completion. This amenity will include enhanced services for people with disabilities including a “changing places” facility. In the interim, temporary, wheelchair accessible toilet facilities have been provided to ensure the ongoing maintenance of services across the site.

Additional to the above, the main entrance to Crawfordsburn Country Park has been re-surfaced and additional pedestrian access has been provided along with safe crossing means. As a result of park inspections, one bridge has been structurally improved thereby maintaining access across the Crawfordsburn Country Park. These measures continue to ensure ongoing, safe access for all to the site.

#### **Castle Archdale Country Park**

Designs have been completed for the refurbishment of the park’s Duross Bay toilets to include enhanced services for people with disabilities, to now also include a “changing places facility.” Planning permission has also been sought for these facilities.

In summary, the above interventions at NIEA Parks and Reserves have resulted in positive outcomes in terms of improved inclusivity and accessibility at DAERA funded sites for people throughout Northern Ireland, in line with DAERA's commitment to ensuring accessible services for everyone.

In terms of headline visitor figures across the properties managed by the Northern Ireland Environment Agency (7 Country Parks and in the region of 60 Nature Reserves), they have attracted an estimated 3.3 million visitors during 2021.

### **(iii) MARINE AND FISHERIES DIVISION**

#### **Inland Fisheries**

In order to increase participation in angling, Inland Fisheries provides concessionary licences and permits to those over 60 years of age and those with disabilities in receipt of benefits specified in the Fisheries Regulations 2014, at a significant saving on the full cost.

In addition, the online purchasing system for licences and permits (including telephone access) is designed to improve access for anglers, particularly those with, for example, a disability or caring responsibilities, as this online interaction removes the physical barrier of travel and visiting a distributor to obtain a licence or permit. Both methods of purchasing are still available. The Department has a separate guide to Public Angling Estate fisheries with the focus on anglers with disability access and this provides detailed information on the suitability of access for those with different disabilities.

Inland Fisheries funds a small grant scheme to encourage new participants into angling. This is particularly targeted at under-represented groups, including those who are socially excluded, those who have disabilities, or those who are disadvantaged in some way. It also aims to introduce underrepresented groups, such as children, young people, and women to the sport.

Covid-19 pandemic restrictions curtailed the number of such events in 2021-22, but as restrictions have eased, the Department re-opened the grant scheme for the 2022/23 period in May 2022. Since the grant scheme re-opened, seven applications have been received.

### **(iv) FOREST SERVICE**

The importance of green space to people's health and wellbeing is acknowledged in the Regional Development Strategy for Northern Ireland 2025. Research evidence shows how various interventions in green spaces, which include forests and woodland, can help address public health issues related to obesity, cardiovascular effects, mental health, wellbeing, and equality. Community participation in the planning process is an effective way to increase the success of these interventions and generate benefits.

#### **Early engagement, collaboration, and partnership**

In 2021-22 Forest Service, in collaboration and partnership with other organisations, implemented a number of actions in relation to forestry and the forests it manages to maximise social, health and equality benefits. These are in line with DAERA's commitments in terms of consultation, effective communication and improving access. Relevant actions included:

- Early engagement with stakeholders to encourage their involvement in the development of Forest Plans. Stakeholders are invited to contribute at the scoping stage of forestry planning to ensure that the diverse needs of people, wildlife and industry are considered. For each scoping exercise, stakeholders are informed that a consultation is ongoing by press releases, posters, social media, by telephone and by email.
- Stakeholders invited to contribute to scoping consultations include groups representing LGBTQI+, disability, ethnic minority, women's, and retired people's interests. Other stakeholders that are invited to contribute include community groups, environmental organisations, farming groups, councils, private individuals, forestry industry and government.
- During 2021-22, Forest Service completed a scoping consultation for the Armagh Forestry Planning Area. DAERA welcomes the 50 stakeholder responses received, which will be a valuable contribution to the development of meaningful forest plans.
- Due to Covid-19 precautions, meetings with stakeholders were paused, and subsequently recommenced using video conferencing. Forest Service invited stakeholders to meet, in order to present draft forest plans and to ensure comments and feedback was received. Stakeholders included community organisations and NGOs.
- In September 2021, Forest Service published "What People Told Us – scoping a new forestry plan for forests and woodlands in West Tyrone." The document is a summary of consultation responses received for West Tyrone. The document outlines the diverse, and sometimes competing, demands of stakeholders.
- In March 2022 Forest Service published a story map regarding forest plans for the Antrim Forestry Planning Area; it can be viewed via [Antrim Forest Plan](#). This is the third story map to be published. Each one is a combination of interactive maps, images, and informative text, designed to give you a clearer understanding of how our forests are managed. These will now be used for engagement in relation to forestry planning.
- Forestry Grant Schemes operate within the Rural Development Programme. The schemes are continuously monitored to assess the impact and outcomes of policy decisions and section 75 forms are collected for new forestry grant

scheme applicants. An annual report is published<sup>1</sup> and 137 section 75 forms were returned in year reflecting a response rate of 38%. 10% percent of beneficiaries are female which compares to four percent of farmers being female and religion and age group indicators are comparable with the farming context figures.

- Environmental Impact Assessment (Forestry) Regulations seek to protect the environment for the benefit of society and require the Department to consult the public, which also helps achieve equality and good relations outcomes. In 2021-22 Forest Service completed 72 public consultations about the environmental impact of forestry projects. 63 consultations were in connection with woodland creation, 6 were for woodland removal and 3 for forest road works.
- We continue to develop and facilitate partnership working with Ards and North Down Borough Council and DAERA's Tackling Rural Poverty and Social Isolation Initiative (TRPSI) delivering access improvement works at Cairn Wood Ballysallagh Forest with the aim of promoting and developing participation in sport and outdoor physical recreation. Phase 2 included an improved trail network.
- Continue to develop and facilitate partnership working with Lisburn and Castlereagh City Council to facilitate development of new and improved recreation facilities at Hillsborough Forest, creating health opportunities and improving access to physical recreation in the forest.
- Facilitating partnership working between Forest Service, Newry Mourne and Down District Council with lease arrangements in Castlewellan Forest Park to enable a significant recreational development project.
- Continuing to facilitate a collaborative partnership between Forest Service and Fermanagh and Omagh District Council to promote recreation and tourism in their council area facilitating the development of new and improved facilities at Gortin Glen Forest Park, which include all-ability play area and access arrangements.
- Further development of recreation infrastructure at Rostrevor Forest through partnership working with Newry, Mourne and Down District Council to improve visitor provision and amenities, including a developing the Fallows walking trail.
- Facilitating partnership working with Mid Ulster District Council and DAERA's TRPSI initiative to delivering access improvement works at Iniscairn Forest, with the aim of promoting and developing participation in outdoor physical recreation.

---

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.daera-ni.gov.uk/publications/northern-ireland-rural-development-programme-nirdp-2014-2020-section-75-report-2020>

**(v) RURAL AFFAIRS DIVISION**

Rural Affairs Division is committed to ensuring that all initiatives supported are fully accessible to everyone in the community.

The **Tackling Rural Poverty and Social Isolation** (TRPSI) Framework supports the development and delivery of initiatives to address the Framework's 3 priority areas of financial poverty, access poverty and social isolation. In 2021-22 through successful bids in the monitoring rounds, the annual opening budget of £5.5m was increased to £7.85m. This enabled TRPSI Programme support to be made available across a range of initiatives, the majority of these being delivered in partnership with other Departments, Agencies or Councils seeking to address poverty, isolation, loneliness, and mental and physical health issues in rural areas. Details of these initiatives are set out below.

The **Rural Support** charity operates a telephone Helpline and signposting service for farmers and rural dwellers seeking various forms of support. Their volunteers, mentors, and counsellors support clients with a range of issues pertaining to farming matters and emotional health.

The **Social Farming** support service provided by Rural Support staff operates as a hub for Social Farming, which provides disadvantaged groups of people in NI with an opportunity for inclusion, to increase their self-esteem and to improve their health and well-being through participating in meaningful activities in a farm environment. Social Farming is a service provided by farmers who give their time and experience to help others and who also benefit from offering this support and using their farm in this way. The Support Service supports existing and new Social Farming initiatives and promotes Social Farming to raise awareness of its benefits to ensure the expansion of the service across NI.

**Farm Families Health Checks Programme** – Through this Programme, on an annual basis, 2,600 rural dwellers avail of a comprehensive physical and mental health screening service. A record of the screening results is forwarded to the client's GP for consideration and potential action. Those clients that have an identified health issue are encouraged to attend their GP. After a 12-week period, those clients who had a health issue detected will receive a follow up call from a Programme trained nurse to further assess their health and encourage solutions.

**SPRING Social Prescribing** – This project is delivered with the support of the Department of Health, the Health and Social Care Board and in partnership with the rural Healthy Living Centres. It aims to link medical care to non-clinical locally delivered support services by enabling medical professionals to refer rural patients to a range of activities and services to support greater independence, reduce reliance on primary healthcare, tackle poverty/isolation and deliver better outcomes for rural people and society.



Other TRPSI funded initiatives that played a significant role in 2021-22 include:

- the enhancement of Forest Parks (several Schemes are mentioned above in the Forest Service update)
- the development of Community Trails
- the utilisation of school facilities for community use
- the regeneration of disused historic buildings in rural villages
- the continued funding for the Rural Support Networks
- a small grants scheme to assist the rural community and voluntary sector to continue to provide services for rural dwellers.

All of which helped in addressing issues that can lead to poor physical and mental health.

Rural Affairs Division is also a joint partner in the **Access and Inclusion Programme**, which is delivered by the Department for Communities, in partnership with the Public Health Agency (PHA), NI Museums Council and local Councils. Its key aim is to improve accessibility to arts, cultural and active recreation venues in existing premises for people with disabilities.

#### **(vi) ESTATE TRANSFORMATION DIVISION (ETD)**

The DAERA estate consists of approximately 850 buildings across over 230 sites, as well as 84,000 hectares of land with approximately 75,000 of this belonging to forestry. While the scale of the DAERA estate is significant, it is also diverse with a wide range of accommodation including science, education, marine and agriculture facilities.

ETD work on an ongoing basis with relevant business areas to maintain and develop the estate. As part of this ETD seeks to ensure the maintenance of Disability Discrimination Act (DDA) measures, which are already in place across our estate and arranges for work to be undertaken where it is identified that additional measures are required.

To support DDA compliance across the DAERA estate a pilot 'condition survey exercise' has been undertaken of selected DAERA properties. A key facet of the surveys involves assessing how well each property complies with the latest statutory standards, including compliance with the Disability Discrimination Act. Where deficiencies have been identified, the Division is liaising with relevant business areas to identify corrective measures that could be implemented. ETD plans to roll out further condition surveys and is currently liaising with business areas to prioritise the properties to be included.

**(vii) GREEN GROWTH AND CLIMATE ACTION DIVISION**

DAERA, on behalf of the executive, are leading the development of a multi-decade Green Growth Strategy to tackle climate change. The Green Growth Strategy will ensure future Government policy making focuses on delivering a zero-carbon economy and society through a just, inclusive transition. A Just Transition is at the heart of the Strategy and one of the ten proposed Executive commitments to ensure that the transition is fair for all our citizens by establishing a Just Transition Commission in 2022.

Comprehensive Equality Screening of the Strategy, [EQIA Screening - Draft Green Growth Strategy \(2021\) Combined.pdf \(daera-ni.gov.uk\)](#) and its subsequent EQIA [Draft Equality Impact Assessment for the Draft Green Growth Strategy.pdf \(daera-ni.gov.uk\)](#) has and will be further developed to better address any inequalities experienced by Section 75 groups. Equality impacts are complex given the diversity, range and scale of potential actions to achieve zero carbon for Northern Ireland's economy, environment and society. The transition to net zero will be dynamic and take place over thirty years. The eventual impact will depend on policy choices and the way the economy adjusts over time, as well as a range of factors, such as technological development, efficiency improvements, consumer preferences, interest rates and income growth over the next thirty years. The impacts of actions will often be experienced very differently across Section 75 groups and indeed across society in general.

One of the Section 75 groups of particular relevance to the Strategy, identified from the outset, were young people. Listening to and acting on the views of young people is necessary for the success of the Strategy development and delivery. DAERA commissioned The Education Authority to work with a team of young people from various organisations to co-design a youth survey and facilitate focus groups to obtain their input to the Strategy. The focus groups represent young people from 16 to 22 years, from both rural and urban backgrounds, with a wide range of interests. They include Mid Ulster Youth Voice; Belfast Climate Commission Youth Working Group; CAFRE; Lisburn Castlereagh Youth Council (Youth Voice group); Newry and Mourne Youth council (Youth Voice group); Ulster Wildlife; Grassroots Challenge; Causeway Coast and Glens Youth Voice; Fermanagh and Omagh Youth Voice, and North West Ministry of youth (Derry and Strabane Youth Voice group). The conclusions and recommendations from the youth research, was presented by the young people to DAERA and helped shape the Strategy.

As part of the public consultation for the equality screening and EQIA process DAERA invited all interested parties to engage and help support the interests of Section 75 groups. DAERA received positive feedback from the Equality Commission regarding the comprehensive nature of their equality work. Feedback from the public consultation although small in quantity was incorporated and helped improve the revised Strategy.

**2** Please provide **examples** of outcomes and/or the impact of **equality action plans/** measures in 2021-22 (*or append the plan with progress/examples identified*).

In addition to the outcomes and impacts outlined in Part 1, the Department continued to progress its equality scheme commitments, which are prioritised as key business activities. During 2021-22, DAERA reflected its Section 75 obligations in its corporate business planning and achieved all targets set in relation to these.

During the 2021-22 year, the Department continued to be impacted by the Covid-19 pandemic and all face-to-face meetings ceased. However, we successfully completed the two meetings for the EDSG and the four meetings for the EDWG using online Webinar meeting facilities.

Following the restructuring of the business area, the dedicated Equality Officer and Diversity, Inclusion and Wellbeing Officer, along with the deputies were relocated to Staff Engagement, Equality and Diversity Branch (SEED). The Equality Unit and Diversity, Inclusion and Wellbeing Unit became units under this branch with distinct responsibilities and are referred to (throughout the report) as individual units (and not as SEED in order to highlight work carried out by them). This ensured that Equality, Diversity, Inclusion and Wellbeing remained high on the agenda for DAERA and that the original plan, to fulfil the need to provide dedicated corporate resources, to ensure that equality duties and broader diversity priorities are mainstreamed and made central to policy development within DAERA in a consistent manner, remains a commitment for DAERA. These revised structures are designed to ensure that the Department meets its commitment to have functioning internal arrangements in place for ensuring effective compliance with the Section 75 statutory duties and for monitoring and reviewing its progress.

While the day-to-day delivery of equality functions is mainstreamed within the various business areas throughout DAERA, the dedicated Equality Officer, supported by a deputy Equality Officer assist the Department in meeting its equality obligations in line with its commitment to have the necessary resources in place to ensure compliance with the statutory duties. The Equality Officers, along with their line managers, are members of a NICS wide Equality Practitioners Group (EPG), which is responsible for sharing good practice across departments on implementation and application of the statutory equality duties. This good practice can then be disseminated within DAERA and used as a reference in providing advice and recommendations to senior management or the Minister.

DAERA maintains a Section 75 consultee list, which is reviewed regularly. This is accessible to all staff and is used to maintain regular communication with Section 75 stakeholders, especially as policies are changed or reviewed. The results of equality screening exercises are shared with our Section 75 consultees as well as being published on the departmental internet page on a quarterly basis.

During 2021-22, the dedicated Equality Unit continued to fulfil its key role in disseminating information to business areas on equality related issues; quality assuring policy-screening exercises, including advice and support on how to conduct

evidence-based screening and reviewing the effectiveness of the screening template in conjunction with the Equality Practitioners Group (EPG) forum and ECNI. During this reporting period, the Equality Unit staff have recorded an increase in both formal and informal consultation requested by colleagues, to assist and produce both screening documents and EQIA's. This engagement is welcomed and encouraged as a positive outcome to the commitment and compliance of the Departments Equality Scheme.

As a visual representation of the Department's Equality Scheme a video was produced entitled, "Access All Areas: DAERA Equality Scheme in Action" in which we hope highlights the Department's commitment to accessibility and inclusion and the positive role the development of our Disability Action Plan has had in identifying and consolidating a range of accessibility projects. The Department understands the important role it plays in building an equal and inclusive society and the video showcases people with a range of disabilities enjoying the countryside and various activities. It can be viewed using this link - <https://vimeo.com/641092135>.

Induction training for new staff includes an awareness of Section 75 and the statutory duties. In October 2021, the EDSG identified the need for refresher training. ECNI delivered Equality Screening training to the Senior Management Team on the 24 November 2021 and 25 January 2022: and provided a session for Grade 5's on 7 December 2021. Previously, ECNI had delivered two sessions on 22 and 23 June 2021, and 76 staff took part, highlighting their commitment to the fulfilment of Equality duties across the Department. It is hoped an Equality Screening podcast screening will be available shortly, which will assist staff by providing another reference tool.

A summary of the revised Equality Scheme has been made available to all DAERA staff and the complete Equality Scheme can be accessed from the departmental internet page.

The dedicated Diversity, Inclusion and Wellbeing Officer, assists the Department in meeting its objective to ensure diversity, inclusion and wellbeing are embedded firmly within the Department in a way that both embraces and values difference.

Through the Department's Diversity and Inclusion Action Plan they have encouraged and promoted all aspects of diversity and inclusion through raising awareness and championing the core basics of fairness and respect for difference, equality of opportunity and treatment across the workplace. This was achieved by raising awareness via intranet articles, accessible newsletters, online events, educating staff, contributing to enabling cultural change within DAERA, and by helping create a working environment where everyone is valued and included, and diversity is promoted and respected. The Department has further demonstrated its commitment to the wellbeing of its staff, by developing a Wellbeing Strategy. This strategy supports its vision of embedding wellbeing as an integral part of its culture and through the provision of timely, practical information and assistance, adhering that philosophy in all work activities thus creating a positive environment, compatible with promoting staff engagement performance and achievement.

**3** Has the **application of the Equality Scheme** commitments resulted in any **changes** to policy, practice, procedures and/or service delivery areas during the 2021-22 reporting period? (*tick one box only*)

Yes                       No (go to Q.4)                       Not applicable (go to Q.4)

Please provide any details and examples:

[Please provide any details and examples:](#)

**2014-2020 Northern Ireland Rural Development Programme (NIRDP)**

DAERA is committed to having effective internal arrangements in place for ensuring compliance with the Section 75 statutory duties and for monitoring and reviewing progress. An EQIA was completed at the onset of the NIRDP for 2014-20, which made a number of recommendations for improving the equality monitoring and data co-ordination. These have been set out again as a reminder and are as follows:

- Section 75 should be incorporated into the requirements of IT systems to help improve return rates and data analysis;
- A unique identifier or reference number should be included on all forms so that information can be linked back to schemes / measures / tranches;
- Monitoring forms should be issued at application stage rather than post-award in order to collect information on those that are unsuccessful as well as successful;
- The number of monitoring forms issued should be recorded in order to track response rates;
- Where possible, information such as age, gender, disability should be collected on the scheme application forms to ensure a maximum response rate;
- Consideration should be given to collecting a reduced amount of information via the monitoring forms and collecting other information such as political opinion using other methods;
- For projects with multiple beneficiaries, the project promoter should be required to submit a short equality report on those using the service rather than issuing equality monitoring forms to a large number of beneficiaries.

The statistics produced and published on the DAERA website up to August 2021 show that in total 50,137 Section 75 Surveys have been issued to RDP 2014-2020 applicants. 17,697 have been completed/partially completed, giving a total programme response rate of 35%.

Ongoing monitoring of the individual schemes within the NIRDP demonstrated that for schemes where the Department facilitates completion of the Section 75 monitoring as an integrated part of the online application process, a completion rate of 82% or above is delivered.

## PART A

Roll out of the new administration computer system for the LEADER scheme has allowed Section 75 data collection to be completed online. In 2017, the baseline response rate for LEADER was 51%. This response rate was based on manual forms issued to applicants with a self-addressed envelope supplied. With the introduction of the online completion, the total response rate for the scheme has increased to 74% in 2021. The Department continues to encourage completion of Section 75 forms to maximise response rates.

For area based NIRDP schemes, a link was included on the 2019 Single Application Form to an electronic Section 75 survey form on Citizen Space. Response rates via this method continue to be low ranging from 8% to 12% depending on the scheme. A mixture of postal returns and online Citizen Space completion is used for the smaller knowledge transfer schemes. Farm Family Key Skills, which issues a link to the Citizen Space Section 75 survey after training is completed, has the lowest response rate of 7%.

Analysis continues to be carried out by the Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency (NISRA) of equality data collected to review progress and to enable the Department to adjust actions or introduce mitigating measures as appropriate. The inclusion of identifiers has enabled analysis to be carried out based on successful and unsuccessful applications.

DAERA continues to seek to deliver a project that captures data for the Single Application Form and future farm-based grant schemes. The aim of the project is to assist DAERA to deliver equality of opportunity for all their customers, while reducing the burden of ongoing completion of Section 75 forms, reducing the risk of low response rates, and increasing data available to inform equal opportunity policy making. Meeting these objectives while remaining compliant with the UK General Data Protection Regulation is proving challenging for the Department.

The Department is committed to continuing to improve its response rate for Section 75 data collection and this remains challenging in light of the fact that the provision of this information is voluntary. The Department is aware, however, that where it supports and encourages the provision of Section 75 data as an inherent part of the application process, this leads to better response rates and the Department will continue to work towards adopting this approach where feasible.

- 3a** With regard to the change(s) made to policies, practices or procedures and/or service delivery areas, what **difference was made, or will be made, for individuals**, i.e. the impact on those according to Section 75 category?

Please provide any details and examples:

### **2014-2020 Northern Ireland Rural Development Programme (NIRDP)**

In the example provided at Question 3 in relation to improvements made to the Department's equality monitoring system for the NIRDP 2014-20, this has the potential to lead to better outcomes for our service users. Although this work has been challenging, it is important to continue with it as an effective monitoring system

will enhance the Department's capacity to perform its Section 75 duties as it will highlight possible inequalities and provide the evidence base for positive action to remove any identified disadvantage or unfairness in the system for individuals. This piece of work is still ongoing. It is intended to improve and enhance Section 75 data collection within the Department.

### **Public Appointments**

DAERA has responsibility for the following Non-Departmental Public Bodies (NDPBs):

#### Executive NDPBs

- Agri-Food and Biosciences Institute
- Agricultural Wages Board for Northern Ireland
- Livestock and Meat Commission for Northern Ireland
- Northern Ireland Fishery Harbour Authority

#### Statutory Advisory Body

- Council for Nature Conservation and the Countryside

DAERA is committed to fulfilling its Section 75 statutory duties in relation to its public appointments function and processes. The Department follows the Code of Practice for Ministerial Public Appointments in Northern Ireland (the Code) which is prescribed and published by the Commissioner for Public Appointments for Northern Ireland (CPANI). The Department also adheres to the principles that underpin the appointments process including that of appointment on merit and equality of opportunity, through fair and open competition.

Each year, the Department provides CPANI with an annual statement confirming that all relevant public appointment processes conducted during the financial year have been compliant with the Code and the principles set out therein or, in the case of any instances of non-compliance, reports on any action taken or planned, to address any non-compliance. Two public appointment processes were concluded within the current reporting period, with a further competition ongoing. The Department has confirmed to CPANI that all appointments, reappointments, and extensions were made in compliance with the Code.

DAERA's Public Appointments Unit oversees a centralised approach to the planning, management, and delivery of public appointment competitions, taking steps to promote equality of opportunity throughout the appointments process.

Equality monitoring data is collected and used to inform the public appointments process on an ongoing basis. For each competition, the breakdown of current Board members is considered. Equality monitoring information is also shared anonymously with the Northern Ireland Statistics & Research Agency for publication in the Public Appointments Annual Report for Northern Ireland, which in turn informs future competition planning.

PART A

In an effort to attract a large and diverse applicant pool, equality statements are included on the job advert to welcome applications from any under-represented groups identified through monitoring information. The Public Appointments Unit is also proactive in its outreach efforts, maximising media opportunities and directly contacting a wide range of groups and organisations to advertise positions, tailored to each competition as appropriate.

To encourage applicants with a disability to apply for Board positions, the Department operates the Guaranteed Interview Scheme in all of its public appointment competitions and seeks to offer appropriate adjustments to facilitate participation in the appointment process.

While the proportion of female Board Members on the Department's public bodies remains below the rolling 50% target set by the Executive, the Department is continuing in its efforts to achieve this target. As of 31<sup>st</sup> March 2022, with regard to DAERA's regulated bodies, of the 46 public appointments held, 19 (41%) were held by women.

Following conclusion, each public appointment process is reviewed. This helps to identify under-represented groups, signal any potential barriers and to continually improve the process and widen opportunities to participate for everyone.

**3b** What aspect of the Equality Scheme prompted or led to the change(s)? *(tick all that apply)*

As a result of the organisation's screening of a policy *(please give details):*

As a result of what was identified through the EQIA and consultation exercise *(please give details):*

As a result of analysis from monitoring the impact *(please give details):*

The outcome of Public Appointment competitions is routinely monitored to identify under-represented groups, identify any potential barriers, and apply any measures which can reduce or remove barriers and encourage applications.

As a result of changes to access to information and services *(please specify and give details):*

The change to key services to the equality monitoring system, which was provided for the NIRDP, has improved access and improved monitoring returns. The development, implementation and monitoring of these changes



have progressed over the past few years and have been set out above at Question 3.

Other (*please specify and give details*):

## **Section 2: Progress on Equality Scheme commitments and action plans/measures**

### **Arrangements for assessing compliance (Model Equality Scheme Chapter 2)**

**4** Were the Section 75 statutory duties integrated within job descriptions during the 2021-22 reporting period? (*tick one box only*)

- Yes, organisation wide
- Yes, some departments/jobs
- No, this is not an Equality Scheme commitment
- No, this is scheduled for later in the Equality Scheme, or has already been done
- Not applicable

Please provide any details and examples:

Job descriptions for relevant staff working in the Staff Engagement, Equality and Diversity Branch (SEED) include the following actions:

- Ensure that the Department fully complies with its statutory obligations, meets its Equality Scheme commitments and the targets in its Audit of Inequalities;
- Support the implementation of the Equality Scheme commitments across the Department;
- Ensure the Minister and the Department comply with their statutory duties under Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act. Monitor, manage and maintain the commitments set out in the DAERA Equality Scheme and published action plans. Provide advice to senior management and business areas on significant equality issues and lead on the preparation of regular and annual progress reports towards a range of relevant NI, UK and international equality targets.
- Provide a high quality secretariat support to the Equality Diversity Steering Group and Equality Diversity Working Group; promote Section 75 across DAERA business functions; engage regularly with colleagues in policy areas; maintain regular engagement with relevant external organisations; regular attendance and

PART A

participation on inter-departmental groups/projects; progressing work on equality-related action plans; Section 75 awareness raising, and providing a quality assurance function to business areas.

- Engage as appropriate with DAERA colleagues and others on the development of key strategies and policies; share best practice and report on the Department's progress towards its published targets, for example the Audit of Inequalities, commission, collate and quality assure returns and input from business areas and provide evidence-based recommendations and advice to senior managers on equality related issues.

5 Were the Section 75 statutory duties integrated within performance plans during the 2021-22 reporting period? (*tick one box only*)

- Yes, organisation wide
- Yes, some departments/jobs
- No, this is not an Equality Scheme commitment
- No, this is scheduled for later in the Equality Scheme, or has already been done
- Not applicable

Please provide any details and examples:

Extracts from the Equality Officer and Deputy Equality Officer's personal performance agreement in 2021-22 respectively are as follows:

"To support the Minister, Departmental Board and the wider Department in ensuring the Department meets its equality obligations under Section 75 of the NI Act and through the commitments set out in our Equality Scheme and our published action plans."

"To support the Minister, Equality Officer, Departmental Board and the wider Department in ensuring the Department meets its statutory obligations under Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998 and through the commitments set out in our Equality Scheme and published action plans."

6 In the 2021-22 reporting period were **objectives/ targets/ performance measures** relating to the Section 75 statutory duties **integrated** into corporate plans, strategic planning and/or operational business plans? (*tick all that apply*)

- Yes, through the work to prepare or develop the new corporate plan
- Yes, through organisation wide annual business planning
- Yes, in some departments/jobs

PART A

- No, these are already mainstreamed through the organisation's ongoing corporate plan
- No, the organisation's planning cycle does not coincide with this 2021-22 report
- Not applicable

Please provide any details and examples:

The Department's Strategic Plan 2021 states: As a public authority, DAERA has statutory equality obligations to meet under Section 75 of the NI Act 1998. We take these responsibilities seriously, and work hard to ensure that equality and good relations considerations are a core part of our business functions and all decision-making processes. Our Equality Scheme and Audit of Inequalities set out the actions the Department has promised to take to meet its equality obligations. We are also committed to meeting the Department's sustainable development and rural proofing obligations.

Relevant actions related to the Section 75 statutory duties are included within the Divisional and Branch Balance Scorecards. This management tool helps to ensure that these key objectives are progressed on behalf of the Department where possible. The Divisional Business Plan for DAERA's Central Management functions in 2021-22 included an objective to ensure the Department met its statutory obligations in respect of its Equality Scheme; Disability Action Plan; Audit of Inequalities and Children and Young People's Action Plan.

**Equality action plans/measures**

7 Within the 2021-22 reporting period, please indicate the **number** of:

Actions completed:  Actions ongoing:  Actions to commence:

Please provide any details and examples (*in addition to question 2*):

The majority of the actions in the Equality Action Plan were implemented at the introduction of the scheme. The ongoing actions are those that are time bound for quarterly, bi-annual, and annual completion each year. There are no actions outstanding.

8 Please give details of changes or amendments made to the equality action plan/measures during the 2021-22 reporting period (*points not identified in an appended plan*):

None Identified

9 In reviewing progress on the equality action plan/action measures during the 2021-22 reporting period, the following have been identified: (*tick all that apply*)

- Continuing action(s), to progress the next stage addressing the known inequality

PART A

- Action(s) to address the known inequality in a different way
- Action(s) to address newly identified inequalities/recently prioritised inequalities
- Measures to address a prioritised inequality have been completed

**Arrangements for consulting (Model Equality Scheme Chapter 3)**

**10** Following the initial notification of consultations, a targeted approach was taken – and consultation with those for whom the issue was of particular relevance: *(tick one box only)*

- All the time                       Sometimes                       Never

**11** Please provide any **details and examples of good practice** in consultation during the 2021-22 reporting period, on matters relevant (e.g. the development of a policy that has been screened in) to the need to promote equality of opportunity and/or the desirability of promoting good relations:

To ensure that forest plans reflect the diverse needs of people, wildlife and industry, Forest Service promotes the use of early engagement with stakeholders. During 2021-22, Forest Service completed a consultation for the Armagh Forestry Planning Area. Fifty responses were received from community groups, environmental organisations, councils, private individuals, forestry industry and government. DAERA welcomes this significant response from stakeholders, which will be a valuable contribution to the development of forest plans. Draft forest plans were presented to stakeholders, from both the community and environmental interest sectors, via online video conferencing.

A public consultation on the “future agricultural policy proposals for Northern Ireland,” was undertaken by Agricultural Policy Division from, 21 December 2021, until 15 February 2022. The DAERA Section 75 consultee list was used to ensure that views were sought from all Section 75 groups. The web-based response platform ‘Citizen Space’ was used, in addition to accepting hard copy and e-mail responses, to make the exercise as accessible as possible. In total 339 responses were received from interested organisations and individuals.

A public consultation exercise was undertaken on the Proposal to revoke the Agricultural Wages (Regulation) (Northern Ireland) Order 1977 (Abolition of the Agricultural Wages Board) between 13 May 2021 and 8 July 2021. Equality, Regulatory and Rural Needs impact assessments were presented alongside the consultation, with comments on the EQIA welcomed until 5 August 2021. The consultation was published on the DAERA website in full and easy read formats, with alternative formats available on request. Details of the consultation were sent to the DAERA Section 75 consultee list, as well as to a range of other key stakeholders and representatives. Consultees were invited to use Citizen Space, the NI Government online consultation tool, to make their responses in view of the Covid-19 pandemic, with arrangements in place to receive queries or

PART A

responses by telephone, hard copy, and email. In total 16 responses were received from interested organisations and individuals.

**12** In the 2021-22 reporting period, given the consultation methods offered, which consultation methods were **most frequently used by consultees**: *(tick all that apply)*

- Face to face meetings
- Focus groups
- Written documents with the opportunity to comment in writing
- Questionnaires
- Information/notification by email with an opportunity to opt in/out of the consultation
- Internet discussions
- Telephone consultations
- Other *(please specify)*:

Please provide any details or examples of the uptake of these methods of consultation in relation to the consultees' membership of particular Section 75 categories:

For the Armagh Forestry Planning Area, a consultation document was published, and stakeholders were invited to respond. Invitations were issued by email and using press releases, posters, and social media. Responses were received via email and the online tool, Citizen Space. Responses were also received from community groups, environmental organisations, councils, private individuals, forestry industry and government. Meetings were held with stakeholders via video conferencing.

For the consultation on the Proposal to revoke the Agricultural Wages (Regulation) (Northern Ireland) Order 1977 (Abolition of the Agricultural Wages Board) the majority of responses were made via the Citizen Space online consultation tool.

**13** Were any awareness-raising activities for consultees undertaken, on the commitments in the Equality Scheme, during the 2021-22 reporting period? *(tick one box only)*

- Yes       No       Not applicable

Please provide any details and examples:

PART A

14 Was the consultation list reviewed during the 2021-22 reporting period? (*tick one box only*)

- Yes       No       Not applicable – no commitment to review

**Arrangements for assessing and consulting on the likely impact of policies (Model Equality Scheme Chapter 4)**

This can be found via the following link:

<https://www.daera-ni.gov.uk/publications/daera-equality-scheme-2021-2025>

15 Please provide the **number** of policies screened during the year (*as recorded in screening reports*):

43
----

16 Please provide the **number of assessments** that were consulted upon during 2021-22:

19	Policy consultations conducted with <b>screening</b> assessment presented.
2	Policy consultations conducted <b>with an equality impact assessment (EQIA)</b> presented.
0	Consultations for an <b>EQIA</b> alone.

17 Please provide details of the **main consultations** conducted on an assessment (as described above) or other matters relevant to the Section 75 duties:

1. Consultation on Further Education Support and Charging Policy at the College of Agriculture, Food and Rural Enterprise (CAFRE)
2. Consultation on the development of fisheries management measures for Marine Protected Areas (MPAs) and establishment of Scallop enhancement sites in the Northern Ireland inshore region
3. Consultation Paper Extension of the existing NIEA Regulatory Charging Policy from 1 April 2021 to 31 March 2023
4. Consultation on the Proposal to revoke the Agricultural Wages (Regulation) (Northern Ireland) Order 1977 (Abolition of the Agricultural Wages Board)
5. Consultation on Future Agricultural Policy Proposals for Northern Ireland
6. Consultation on the draft Green Growth Strategy for Northern Ireland



**21** In analysing monitoring information gathered, was any action taken to change/review any policies? (*tick one box only*)

- Yes                       No                       Not applicable

Please provide any details and examples:

**22** Please provide any details or examples of where the monitoring of policies, during the 2021-22 reporting period, has shown changes to differential/adverse impacts previously assessed:

Not applicable for the period.

**23** Please provide any details or examples of monitoring that has contributed to the availability of equality and good relations information/data for service delivery planning or policy development:

Not applicable for the period.

**Staff Training (Model Equality Scheme Chapter 5)**

**24** Please report on the activities from the training plan/programme (section 5.4 of the Model Equality Scheme) undertaken during 2021-22, and the extent to which they met the training objectives in the Equality Scheme.

The Equality Unit continued to provide advice and information to the Department’s business areas throughout the reporting period to ensure that the Department was compliant in carrying out its statutory obligations in relation to Section 75.

During the reporting period, DAERA Equality Unit reviewed the existing scheme and made the relevant amendments to any out-of-date information, contact details, training courses etc. A summary of the Equality Scheme was made available to all staff. The full Equality Scheme is available to all staff via the DAERA internet.

Additionally, the five-year review has been completed to cover the period 2015 to 2020. This review concluded that, during this reporting period DAERA improved its governance structures for the delivery of its equality and good relations duties along with its diversity and inclusion priorities. This was consistent with its Equality Scheme commitment to having effective internal arrangements in place for ensuring effective compliance with the Section 75 duties. These priorities were to ensure that those functions are overseen and supported



at a senior level within the Department and that they would continue to be mainstreamed and made central to policy development and the delivery of services to our citizens. This approach was fostered in order to contribute to enabling cultural change within DAERA by helping create a working environment where equality and good relations are embraced as core business values and that they are promoted and respected, both within the Department, and in our engagement with stakeholders and customers.

Induction training for new staff includes an awareness of Section 75 and the statutory duties. In October 2021, the EDSG identified the need for refresher training. ECNI delivered Equality Screening training to the Senior Management Team on the 24 November 2021 and 25 January 2022: and provided a session for Grade 5s on 7 December 2021. Previously, ECNI had delivered two sessions on 22 & 23 June 2021, for staff who may be required to complete an Equality Screening Template and 76 staff took part, highlighting their commitment to the fulfilment of Equality duties across the Department. It is hoped an Equality Screening podcast screening will be available shortly, which will assist staff by providing another reference tool.

A working group comprising of staff from DAERA Equality Unit, Department for Communities, ECNI, NI Assembly, The Executive Office & NICS HR Learning and Development had been set up prior to this reporting period to ensure that online training was comprehensive and included an introduction to the disability duties. This work had progressed well until the Covid-19 situation brought it to a halt. Work will continue when the situation allows, and this training will be available through the online portal to all staff.

A range of the training undertaken by DAERA staff in 2021-22 is outlined below:

- **Mental Health Awareness for Managers Managing Remote Teams**

This training is designed to encourage and support managers to proactively promote good mental health and wellbeing within their teams.

On completion of the course managers should understand and be able to identify the most common mental health conditions, spot warning signs that employees may be struggling to cope, apply techniques to look after the mental wellbeing of their staff, apply techniques to help conversations regarding mental wellbeing and identify legislative responsibilities in relation to mental health and work, as well as know where and how to access support.

This training package replaced Mental Health Awareness for Line Managers as classroom courses stopped due to Covid-19. During 2021-22, 8 DAERA managers completed this training.

- **Positive Mental Health Toolkit for All staff E-Learning**

This training is designed to give all staff an understanding of how mental health affects how we think and feel and how we cope with life's ups and downs.

On completion of the course staff should understand what mental health and stress is, be able to identify problems that can lead to stress, understand what they can do to

manage stress and build resilience, and be aware of the many services available if they want to understand more about specific mental health issues. During 2021-22, 10 DAERA staff completed this training.

- **Positive Mental Health Toolkit for Line Managers E-Learning**

This training is aimed at line managers and is designed to raise awareness and promote understanding of mental health.

On completion of the course line managers should understand what mental health is and define depression, anxiety, stress, and resilience; recognise internal and external factors that could cause mental health problems in the workplace; and have knowledge of how to create positive relationships with their team members and know what steps to take to support their mental health issues. During 2021-22, 4 DAERA managers completed this training.

- **Mental Health Awareness for Staff Working at Home (Webinar)**

This virtual training course encourages all staff to proactively consider how they can maintain or improve their wellbeing when working at home and isolated from others. During 2021-22, 23 staff completed this virtual training.

- **Disability Awareness for front line staff E-Learning**

The aim of this training is to increase staff knowledge of disability and to provide frontline staff with an introduction to disability awareness. The course is aimed at staff at all grades who are in, or new to a post that deals with the public. In 2021-22, 17 DAERA staff successfully completed this training.

- **Supporting Vulnerable People E-Learning**

This course has been designed to assist staff in supporting vulnerable people who may seek to use the services offered by the department. On completion of the course, staff should be able to describe and define what a vulnerable person is, recognise ways to identify vulnerable people, explain ways to support vulnerable people, including methods for dealing with third parties, and state the sources of help, advice, and support available in the NICS for employees.

The course is voluntary and in 2021-22, 7 staff completed the training.

- **Unconscious Bias E-Learning**

This course aims to help staff discover what personal bias they may have, explore its causes and consider some techniques to manage it. On completion of the course, staff should be able to define what Unconscious Bias is; explain how Unconscious Bias can influence in the workplace and state ways to tackle Unconscious Bias.

This mandatory course was rolled out to DAERA staff during 2017/18 for completion by all DAERA staff in management grades i.e. EOII and above and 1,629 staff successfully completed the training. During 2021-22 a further 98 staff completed this training.

- **Introduction to Section 75 E-Learning**

Staff who require this training are those with responsibility for policy development or policy review and staff involved with the implementation of Section 75 duties, whether directly or indirectly. The aim of this course is to familiarise participants with the two statutory duties as outlined in Section 75 of the NI Act 1998 and the guidance provided by the Equality Commission NI. 12 DAERA staff completed this training between April 2021 and March 2022.

- **Safeguarding Children & Young People E-Learning**

This e-learning package has been designed to provide an awareness of safeguarding children and young people and is aimed at those staff who may encounter children and young people as part of their duties. The training aims to help staff understand how to recognise that a child is suffering abuse, what safeguarding is, what their responsibilities are and how to keep a young person safe. During 2021-22, 18 staff completed this training.

**25** Please provide **any examples** of relevant training shown to have worked well, in that participants have achieved the necessary skills and knowledge to achieve the stated objectives:

This is covered in responses to question 24 above.

**Public Access to Information and Services (Model Equality Scheme Chapter 6)**

**26** Please list **any examples** of where monitoring during 2021-22, across all functions, has resulted in action and improvement in relation **to access to information and services**:

Nothing specific in the reporting period.

**Complaints (Model Equality Scheme Chapter 8)**

**27** How many complaints **in relation to the Equality Scheme** have been received during 2021-22?

Insert number here:

1
---

Please provide any details of each complaint raised and outcome:

During the public consultation exercise on the Draft Northern Ireland Peatland Strategy, a complaint was received from a Horticulture Business representative who stated that the Department had not carried out a full Equality Impact Assessment on the NI Peatland Strategy.

DAERA had completed an initial Equality & Human Rights Screening exercise on the Draft Northern Ireland Peatland Strategy document, which concluded that at that stage, a full EQIA would not be required.

Following the receipt of the complaint, other initial responses to the consultation and further discussions within DAERA, the initial Equality & Human Rights Screening document was repeated, and the conclusion was to 'screen in'. An Equality Impact Assessment has been prepared for the NI Peatland Strategy and will be consulted on in due course, following agreement of the final version of the strategy document by the DAERA Minister.

### Section 3: Looking Forward

28 Please indicate when the Equality Scheme is due for review:

The existing scheme was reviewed, and a refreshed scheme was published covering 2021-2025.

29 Are there areas of the Equality Scheme arrangements (screening/consultation/training) your organisation anticipates will be focused upon in the next reporting period? *(please provide details)*

Training and awareness raising will continue to be a particular focus for DAERA in the next reporting period.

The content of the online training 'Introduction to Section 75' is currently under review. A working group comprising of staff from DAERA Equality Unit, Department for Communities, ECNI, NI Assembly, The Executive Office & NICS HR Learning and Development had been set up prior to this reporting period. The aim was to ensure the online training was comprehensive and to include an introduction to the disability duties. This work had progressed well until the Covid-19 situation brought it to a halt. Work will continue when the situation allows, and this training will be available through the online portal to all staff.

In addition, it is intended that we (DAERA) will hold our own events and awareness sessions in relation to our Equality Scheme and commitment to screening and completing EQIA's, at a time more conducive to do so.

30 In relation to the advice and services that the Commission offers, what **equality and good relations priorities** are anticipated over the next reporting period? *(please tick any that apply)*

- Employment
- Goods, facilities and services
- Legislative changes
- Organisational changes/ new functions

PART A

- Nothing specific, more of the same
- Other (please state):

The Department throughout 2022 and 2023 will embrace our transition from the EU and maximise all opportunities this presents with regular engagement with key stakeholders.

**PART B - Section 49A of the Disability Discrimination Act 1995 (as amended) and Disability Action Plans**

**1. Number of action measures for this reporting period that have been:**

**15**

Fully achieved

**2**

Partially achieved

**2**

Not achieved

**2. Please outline below details on all actions that have been fully achieved in the reporting period.**

2 (a) Please highlight what **public life measures** have been achieved to encourage disabled people to participate in public life at National, Regional and Local levels:

Level	Public Life Action Measures	Outputs <sup>i</sup>	Outcomes / Impact <sup>ii</sup>
Regional <sup>iii</sup>	Promote the social use of the DAERA estate, in particular the forest and country parks by proactively working with Councils and other organisations such as the National Trust, who liaise with disability interest groups to promote and increase awareness of accessible sites and facilities within the Forest Service estate. DAERA will provide more disability friendly	Increased numbers of visitors with a disability to the DAERA estate thereby helping to increase levels of physical and mental well-being.  Forest Service provides signage in our forests to enable users to assess their ability to use paths using a coloured coded method where	Whilst visitor numbers on the whole have greatly increased following the relaxation of Covid-19 restrictions, there are no definitive figures in relation to visitors with disabilities. However, Estate Transformation Division has commissioned surveys of selected DAERA properties. A key facet of the surveys involves assessing how well each property complies with the latest statutory standards including compliance with

PART B

	<p>recreation facilities across these areas by promoting visits from groups which support those with special needs educational needs.</p>	<p>a maximum of four categories of routes are provided.</p> <p>Works completed in 2021 to improve the facilities and the access for disabled people by Forest Service include:</p> <p>Resurfaced path and additional seating in Tollymore Forest Park (Tarmac path created from carpark to and in arboretum, additional seating installed).</p> <p>Resurfaced path and viewing area created in Glenariff Forest Park. (Tarmac path created from carpark to created viewing area).</p> <p>There have also been numerous partnership developments which have resulted in improved access for disabled people in forest such as Castlewellan, Carnagh, Gosford, Gortin Glen, Slieve Gullion, Garvagh &amp; Knockmany.</p>	<p>the Disability Discrimination Act. Where deficiencies are identified, the Division will work with the relevant business area to identify corrective measures that could be implemented to address this.</p>
<p>Local</p>	<p>Through the Tackling Rural Poverty and Social Isolation Programme continue to create participation</p>	<p>1.175 million beneficiaries recorded for 2021-22 (these</p>	<p>Increased numbers of applications for funding by people with disabilities in the rural and farming</p>

PART B

	opportunities for people with disabilities by facilitating rural community transport solutions, social farming opportunities, grant aid for inclusion and access projects and enhancing a range of recreational sites (forest parks and community walkways).	figures are users throughout the year).  In 2022/23, 5k users recorded to date.	communities and thereby increasing levels of participation and decreasing levels of social isolation.
Regional	Ensure the use of the Guaranteed Interview Scheme for each public appointment.	The GIS scheme is operated and promoted in every job advert and candidate information booklet for all public appointment competitions. No public appointment processes have commenced in the current financial year.	Increased opportunities for people with a disability to participate on the boards of public bodies.
Regional	Ensure a detailed appointments plan is prepared for all public appointment competitions for the DAERA statutory boards. They are: Agri-Food and Biosciences Institute (AFBI); Agricultural Wages Board for NI (AWB); Livestock and Meat Commission for NI (LMC); Northern Ireland Fishery Harbour Authority (NIFHA); Council for Nature Conservation and the Countryside	Appointment Plans are prepared for each public appointment process. Equality data is collected and monitored for each public appointment process and is used to inform future public appointment processes.	Increased opportunities for people with a disability to apply for positions and therefore participate on the boards of public bodies if they are successful in the recruitment phase of a competition.



PART B

	<p>(CNCC). DAERA will set out the steps in terms of outreach and process which will be taken to attract the best possible pool of applicants and encourage applications from those with a disability.</p>		
--	-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------	--	--

2(b) What **training action measures** were achieved in this reporting period?

	Training Action Measures	Outputs	Outcome / Impact
Local	<p>Disability Awareness training for all staff will be made available and staff will be actively encouraged to complete this training by management. This training will be recommended for all staff and in particular those in public facing roles.</p>	<p>Staff will have an awareness of the needs of people with disabilities which results in a better service to our customers, or colleagues, who at times may need additional assistance. Increased awareness of equality and disability issues, which, in turn, can lead to better outcomes for staff and customers across the Section 75 categories by completing the available training courses.</p> <p><b>Mental Health Awareness for Line Managers</b> The aim of this course is to raise awareness of the issue of Mental Health in the workplace, and to assist line managers in supporting and</p>	<p>All staff will have an awareness of the needs of people with disabilities.</p>

		<p>signposting staff who may be going through a mental health issue. Due to COVID-19, this course was replaced by the online training as detailed below.</p> <p><b>Positive Mental Health Toolkit for Line Managers – E-Learning</b>          This training is aimed at line managers and is designed to raise awareness and promote understanding of mental health. During 2021-22, 4 DAERA managers completed this training.</p> <p><b>Positive Mental Health Toolkit for All staff – E-Learning</b>          This training is designed to give all staff an understanding of how mental health affects how we think and feel and how we cope with life's difficulties. During 2021-22, 10 DAERA staff completed this training.</p> <p><b>Mental Health Awareness for Staff Working at Home (Webinar)</b>          This virtual training course encourages all staff to proactively consider how they can maintain or improve their wellbeing when working at home and isolated from others. During 2021-22, 23 staff completed this virtual training.</p>	
--	--	--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------	--

PART B

		<p><b>Disability Awareness for front line staff – E-Learning</b></p> <p>The aim of this training is to increase staff knowledge of disability and to provide frontline staff with an introduction to disability awareness. The course is aimed at staff at all grades who are in, or new to a post that deals with the public. In 2021-22, 17 DAERA staff successfully completed this training.</p> <p><b>Supporting Vulnerable People – E-Learning</b></p> <p>This course has been designed to assist staff in supporting vulnerable people who may seek to use the services offered by the department. On completion of the course, staff should be able to describe and define what a vulnerable person is, recognise ways to identify vulnerable people and explain ways to support vulnerable people, including methods for dealing with third parties. In 2021-22, 7 DAERA staff successfully completed this training.</p> <p><b>Unconscious Bias – E-Learning</b></p>	
--	--	------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------	--

PART B

		<p>This course aims to help staff discover what personal bias they may have, explore its causes and consider some techniques to manage it. On completion of the course, staff should be able to define what Unconscious Bias is; explain how Unconscious Bias can affect in the workplace and state ways to tackle Unconscious Bias.</p> <p>This mandatory course was rolled out to DAERA staff during 2017/18 for completion by all DAERA staff in management grades i.e. EOII and above and 1,629 staff successfully completed the training. During 2021-22 a further 98 staff completed this training.</p> <p><b>Safeguarding Children and Young People</b></p> <p>This training is mandatory for all staff who come into contact with children and young people, during the course of their work, many of whom are under 18 years of age. BMB organise this training on behalf of business areas who identify their requirement under Line of Business Training. The training is rolled out to those staff every 3 years. Staff who have additional responsibilities in ensuring</p>	
--	--	------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------	--

PART B

		<p>the safety and wellbeing of children and young people are required to complete Designated Officer Training.</p> <p>CAFRE staff last completed this training in 2020/21 and therefore do not require it again until 2023/2024.</p> <p>Members of the DAERA Safeguarding group also completed this training in 2021/22 and will receive it again in 2023/24</p> <p>Training for Forest Service, EMFG, &amp; NIEA staff was last completed in 2018/19 and is now due to be completed again. Training is currently being organised for around 170 staff to complete the Safeguarding Level 2 training, and around 10 staff to complete the Designated Officer training. This training will include some new members of the DAERA Safeguarding group.</p> <p><b>Safeguarding Children &amp; Young People – E-Learning</b></p> <p>This e-learning package has been designed to provide an awareness of safeguarding children and young people and is aimed at those staff who may encounter children and young</p>	
--	--	-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------	--

PART B

		<p>people as part of their duties. The training aims to help staff understand how to recognise if a child is suffering abuse, what safeguarding is, what their responsibilities are and how to keep a young person safe. During 2021-22, 18 staff completed this training.</p> <p>It has been agreed that new staff joining the Department who require Safeguarding Level 2 training will complete the e-learning package if, they join after the refresher training has already been delivered (under Line of Business training). They will receive the full training with the rest of their group at the next scheduled session.</p>	
Regional	Participate in NICS JAM (Just-A-Minute) card initiative and roll out through DAERA.	Initiated in June 2019, training is on-going for all new entrants to DAERA to ensure all staff understand that the JAM Card allows people with a communication difficulty to inform a service provider that they need Just A Minute of patience and understanding.	This has been communicated to staff via internal communications and rolled out across the DAERA Direct Offices.

2(c) What Positive attitudes **action measures** in the area of **Communications** were achieved in this reporting period?

PART B

	Communications Action Measures	Outputs	Outcome / Impact
Local	Improve staff awareness about disability issues through the diversity calendar of events. The Diversity Calendar is a calendar highlighting the dates of various internationally recognised days and diversity themes throughout the year and although not specifically intended to improve staff awareness about disability issues there are many of these issues highlighted through internet articles and events.	Communicating with staff via the use of newsletters, articles and events, to educate and raise staff awareness and understanding in relation to a number of Diversity and Wellbeing issues, which, in turn, will lead to improved outcomes across the Section 75 categories.	Increased awareness for staff of the diverse nature of staff & customers and encouragement of inclusion for all.
Local	Line managers to document all requests for reasonable adjustments and the outcomes, in compliance with data protection and records management policies.	Staff survey results and NICS HR figures for reasonable adjustment implementation.	Line Managers have been compliant in their responsibilities for their staff.
Regional	Inland Fisheries will continue to attend Disability Shows and will continue to actively promote angling to disability groups and individuals including increasing	Inland Fisheries continue to promote reduced rate angling licence and permits. Queries on concessionary licences are answered regularly by Inland Fisheries staff, who make	Increased sales of license and permits for people with disabilities and increased participation by disadvantaged groups.

PART B

	the awareness of the Inland Fisheries events small grant programme.	relevant anglers aware of their concessionary entitlements.	
Regional	CAFRE will encourage potential students with disabilities to consider its education programmes through a range of measures; (e.g. publications, information packs, website, during school careers talks, open nights, etc.). CAFRE has been proactive in recruiting students with disabilities. The College's careers/courses advisory team has attended transition events for students with disabilities. In conjunction with the careers team, the College's careers /courses advisory team has attended STEM events for students with disabilities as part of its recruitment activities.	<p>The Student Support Service is actively promoted through CAFRE's ongoing programme of marketing and recruitment using a variety of online and offline channels. This raises awareness of the support available to potential applicants and existing learners to encourage applications.</p> <p>CAFRE is reviewing and improving the current Learner Management System to facilitate easier identification of students with learning needs and disabilities.</p>	Encouragement of uptake in enrolment across CAFRE courses from young people with disabilities.



PART B

2 (d) What action measures were achieved to ‘encourage others’ to promote the two duties:

	Encourage others Action Measures	Outputs	Outcome / Impact
Local	DAERA will make Senior Management Team & Departmental Board aware of the 2 duties and direct them to relevant available training.	The senior managers and Departmental Board Members have been made aware of their responsibility regarding the statutory Disability Duties as per Section 49A of the Disability Discrimination Act 1995 as amended by the Disability Discrimination (NI) Order 2006 via the Equality & Diversity Steering Group meetings held twice during the reporting period. Equality Screening training was provided by ECNI to the Senior Management Team & also to the Grade 5s in a separate session.	The senior managers and Departmental Board Members will be aware of their responsibility regarding the statutory Disability Duties as per Section 49A of the Disability Discrimination Act 1995 as amended by the Disability Discrimination (NI) Order 2006. The relevant training and awareness of the 2 duties will demonstrate to DAERA staff and others, the senior managers’ commitment and leadership in creating positive attitudes towards people with disabilities

2 (e) Please outline **any additional action measures** that were fully achieved other than those listed in the tables above:

	Action Measures fully implemented (other than Training and specific public life measures)	Outputs	Outcomes / Impact
Regional	Marine & Fisheries Division promote their accessibility by the promotion of the Angling Event Fund which, requires	Although activities managed by Inland Fisheries Outreach team were severely impacted by Covid	Increased numbers of visitors to the DAERA estate thereby helping to

PART B

	<p>applicants to show how the planned event will help meet DAERA’s aim to bring more disadvantaged and under-represented groups into angling.</p> <p>They actively work with angling coaches and venues to provide information and equipment that will help them provide appropriate angling events for special needs and disabled groups.</p> <p>Also, by contacting representative organisations for special needs and disability groups to find out what further can be provided to promote our Angling Event Fund to increase uptake by those groups. We are also working with the Royal National Institute for the Blind (RNIB) and Angel Eyes (a local group for blind and partially sighted children) with a view to having meetings with other groups.</p> <p>Advertisements are placed each year in the Disability Directory.</p> <p>Branding banners of ‘Angling For All’ and our angling guides for anglers with disabilities are given equal space and promotion to our other guides at all events/shows attended.</p>	<p>restrictions, the outreach staff still maintained contact with stakeholders and members of the public throughout this period, ensuring interested parties were kept informed of opening dates etc. Throughout the relevant period, 35 successful events were funded, with 822 complimentary licences issued. We continue to work closely with coaches through the fund, and regular events incorporating disability groups and schools continue to take place.</p> <p>Contact with RNIB has been re-established post Covid, with the intention of beginning co-operation in the short-term regarding interaction and visual awareness training for staff. This will permit building rapport and working relationship with facilitators, with the intention of promoting angling events through the fund for visually impaired.</p> <p>In relation to NIEA Regional Operations, unfortunately Covid impacted on the educational visits with a marked reduction in school/nursery applications for permits. It is envisaged, as restrictions</p>	<p>increase levels of physical and mental well-being.</p>
--	------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------	---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------	-----------------------------------------------------------

PART B

	<p>The ‘Celebration of Sport’ event is attended annually with a specific invitation issued to special needs schools and the provision of a further hour at the end after general closing to allow a quieter time for autistic and other groups who may prefer or require that.</p> <p>NIEA Regional Operations facilitate educational visits from schools and nurseries through the activity permit process, thereby ensuring any additional needs can be accommodated where possible.</p>	<p>are lifted, we will see an increase in applications.</p>	
Regional	<p>Improve awareness and take up of the NI Rural Development Programme (NIRDP) (2014-2020) funding opportunities by people with disabilities in the rural and farming communities. Take forward actions to remove those barriers which we are aware of which continue to prevent participation in RDP programmes.</p>	<p>Under the current LEADER Programme within the period 2019-2021, 4% of applicants were successful obtaining a grant, 3% in 2019 but this had dropped to 1% by 2021.</p> <p>180 projects to the value of £16.7m was provided in funding by Local Action Groups (LAGs) to the Community and Voluntary Sector to develop or improve community facilities/assets which are available and used by all sections of the community which include those with a</p>	<p>Increased numbers of applications for funding by people with disabilities in the rural and farming communities, thereby increasing levels of participation and helping to increase levels of physical and mental well-being.</p>

PART B

		<p>disability. There are several Community led projects providing services for rural dwellers with a disability.</p>	
Regional	<p>CAFRE actively promote that they will meet with students with a disability to discuss adaptations that may be useful. Reasonable adjustments will be made according to their needs to improve access to the college facilities across the campuses.</p> <p>CAFRE has a full-time dedicated Student Support Officer who provides information and advice to students at all three campuses (Enniskillen, Greenmount and Loughry). The Student Support Officer arranges a wide variety of learning support for students, depending on their needs, to facilitate their continuation and achievement across the education programmes delivered at the College. In addition to this, CAFRE provides a signposting service to a wide range of support organisations at student health fairs.</p> <p>The support available from the Student Support Officer is promoted on the CAFRE website and on the student intranet.</p>	<p>CAFRE has improved support to students who declare learning needs or disability by employing an additional Student Support officer (SSO). From August 2022, one SSO is based at Greenmount Campus, and one divides their time between Loughry and Enniskillen campuses. 65 students required one-to-one support in 2021-22 academic year which was provided and funded by CAFRE. The College proactively engages with the Education Authority Transition Team to ensure that their support needs of applicants with disabilities are fully met before they are enrolled onto courses.</p> <p>Due to Covid 19 restrictions, Student Health Fairs were suspended, however plans are in place to deliver a health fair at each campus in September 2022 to signpost students to available support organisations.</p>	<p>Improved access for students with disabilities to courses and facilities across CAFRE, thereby resulting in continued participation of students' with a disability to courses and facilities, as well as new and additional students' who declare a disability.</p>

PART B

	<p>Further Education students attend a course advisory interview with Course managers and those declaring a disability or learning needs are signposted to the Student Support Officer. The Student Support Officer also speaks to student groups and their families at induction events each year and throughout the year to outline their role and how to access support.</p>	<p>Students are signposted to a wide range of support resources on the CAFRE website and CAFRE student Virtual Learning Environment.</p>	
--	---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------	------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------	--

3. Please outline what action measures have been **partly achieved** as follows:

	Action Measures partly achieved	Milestones/ Outputs	Outcomes/Impacts	Reasons not fully achieved
Local	<p>Implement the NICS Policy on reasonable adjustments by ensuring all line managers are knowledgeable of the disability duties and associated relevant legislation.</p>	<p>Staff survey results and NICS HR figures for reasonable adjustment implementation.</p>	<p>More staff declaring if they have a disability due to increased confidence in line management.</p>	<p>The recent NICS People Survey has shown a 2% decrease in staff feeling discriminated against due to their disability. However, the question does not correlate directly to the implementation of reasonable adjustment requests hence the 'not fully achieved' decision.</p>

PART B

Local	Establish a DAERA Disability Forum and encourage membership from Disability Led Groups, with the aim to identify and address any barriers to access or participation in DAERA and its range of services that may be faced by staff, customers, or stakeholders.	A forum would support staff with disabilities and raise awareness within DAERA.	Members of the Equality Team are active members in the NICS Staff Disability Forum and share information etc to all DAERA staff including management and SMT.	Due to the formation of the NICS Staff Disability Forum (NICS SDF) and following consultation with NICS Disability Champion, Ronnie Armour, it was decided that a DAERA staff Disability Forum would be a duplication of any work undertaken and may even detract from the NICS SDF. However, Members of the Equality Team are active members in the NICS Staff Disability Forum and share information etc. to all DAERA staff including management and SMT.
-------	-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------	---------------------------------------------------------------------------------	---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------	--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------

4. Please outline what action measures **have not been achieved** and the reasons why.

	Action Measures not met	Reasons
Regional	DAERA will promote identified opportunities on its working groups, steering groups, committees or similar within the disability sector and work with the sector and NICS HR and CPANI to encourage uptake of these opportunities.	<p>Unfortunately, due to the on-going COVID-19 pandemic this was not achieved, not least because of the pandemic, but also due to staff resource problems.</p> <p>In relation to Public Appointments and CPANI, DAERA wants to extend its efforts to promote public</p>

PART B

		<p>appointments to people with disabilities. The intention is to implement some practical measures to help in this area. The planned work with the Equality Commission and CPANI was placed on hold, (mainly due to the COVID-19 pandemic). It is hoped that this work will resume in 2022/23.</p> <p>This will include supporting and promotion of work being undertaken by the Commissioner for Public Appointments for Northern Ireland (CPANI) including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• CPANI workshops for people who have a disability with the Equality Commission for NI (ECNI);</li> <li>• CPANI mentoring programme for disabled individuals who have an interest in serving on public bodies;</li> <li>• Monitoring and/or participating in CPANI’s pilot project alongside TEO and Departments aimed at removing barriers to people who have a disability from the public appointments system.</li> </ul> <p>DAERA will also continue to monitor and review Board compositions and appointments to identify issues of representation and to support action to facilitate and encourage the participation of people with a disability.</p>
Regional	DAERA will work with NICSHR and offer up suitable placements through the NICS Work Experience Scheme for People with a Disability.	DfC lead on this initiative and although a NICS Work Experience Pilot was commenced, unfortunately due to the difficulties arising from the COVID-19 pandemic, was not completed within the reporting period.

5. What **monitoring tools** have been put in place to evaluate the degree to which actions have been effective / develop new opportunities for action?

(a) Qualitative

- **DAERA Website:** Regular monitoring and publication of standard of website accessibility; web accessibility testing as appropriate.
- **Facilities Management:** The effectiveness of the personal emergency evacuation plans are assessed with individuals during evacuations (practice and real) to ensure they meet all parties' needs.
- **CAFRE:** Specific training needs are discussed and assessed at the start of each academic year, and a training plan implemented to meet those needs. Review interviews with students availing of support services are held to establish if their needs are being fully met.
- **Equality and Diversity Steering and Working Groups:** These will act as a consultative forum to discuss and escalate issues in relation to disability and to consider staff and customer views.

(b) Quantitative

- **Facilities Management:** All personal emergency evacuation plans are assessed and tested twice yearly through practice evacuations. Monitoring and reviewing effectiveness of relocation projects to ensure no adverse impact on staff across the Section 75 categories.
- **CAFRE:** Training is provided for staff when it is identified that they will have students with specific difficulties. This is deemed the best approach as training can be tailored to the individual students' needs. The effectiveness of this training is monitored through interviews with the students to determine the level of satisfaction with the support they receive. CAFRE assesses the number of students availing of student support services and supported employment opportunities.
- **Marine & Fisheries Division – Inland Fisheries (IF):** Issue concessionary licences to a range of groups, including disabled anglers. In addition, complimentary licences and permits are issued to similar groups including disability groups. IF records the number of complimentary licences/permits issued. They also support groups through the angling events fund and record the grants issued to groups including disability groups such as Mental Health charities.



PART B

6. As a result of monitoring progress against actions has your organisation either:

- made any **revisions** to your plan during the reporting period or
- taken any **additional steps** to meet the disability duties which were **not outlined in your original** disability action plan / any other changes?

Not applicable

If yes please outline below:

	Revised/Additional Action Measures	Performance Indicator	Timescale
1			
2			
3			
4			
5			

7. Do you intend to make any further **revisions to your plan** in light of your organisation’s annual review of the plan? If so, please outline proposed changes?

No revisions planned.

---

<sup>i</sup> **Outputs** – defined as act of producing, amount of something produced over a period, processes undertaken to implement the action measure e.g. Undertook 10 training sessions with 100 people at customer service level.

<sup>ii</sup> **Outcome / Impact** – what specifically and tangibly has changed in making progress towards the duties? What impact can directly be attributed to taking this action? Indicate the results of undertaking this action e.g. Evaluation indicating a tangible shift in attitudes before and after training.

<sup>iii</sup> **Regional:** Situations where people can influence policy decision making at a middle impact level