



## Public Authority Statutory Equality and Good Relations Duties Annual Progress Report 2022-23


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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 2022 and March 2023**

## **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 2022-23, 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 ensure that these functions are overseen and supported at a senior level within the Department and that they continue 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 Northern Ireland Civil Service (NICS) Peoples Survey is an annual survey of employees' attitudes to and experiences of working in the NICS.

Staff were asked questions on a range of topics but in relation to "Inclusion and Fair Treatment," results showed a positive increase of 6% taking DAERA's overall score to 80%.

For example, when asked:

"I think that my department respects individual differences (e.g., culture, working styles, backgrounds, ideas, etc.) 74% of staff responded positively, an increase of 7% from the previous year, and

"My department is committed to creating a diverse and inclusive workplace" 73% of staff agreed, an increase of 7% from the previous year.

The Equality and Diversity Steering Group (EDSG), which is currently a sub-group of the DAERA Board, continued to meet to discuss and promote equality and diversity issues and to ensure continued leadership and ownership of equality, good relations, diversity, and inclusion at senior levels. This in turn has ensured equality, diversity and inclusion 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 Departmental Board invited ECNI to attend its meeting on 15 February 2023 and to present to the Board its Section 75: Demonstrating Effective Leadership guidance. ECNI representatives at the meeting complimented the Department on its commitment and performance on promoting equality issues and highlighted areas where further improvement might be achieved.

The Equality and Diversity Working Group (EDWG), which was established during the reporting period 2017, continues to develop and membership includes a diverse cross section of DAERA staff. The Head of Equality and Diversity chairs the EDWG, and the group met quarterly in the reporting period.

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.

DAERA Equality Unit staff are also members of the cross-departmental Equality Practitioners' Group (EPG) and actively attend the Equality Forum meetings where the Equality Commission for Northern Ireland (ECNI) is also a member.

Additionally, members of the Equality Unit are members of the NICS Disability Staff Network and recently have become Event Volunteers (for a sub-committee) to help raise disability awareness across all the Departments.

The Menopause affects 51% of the working population directly and is an issue that impacts on us all. In DAERA, a safe space has been created to encourage communication and dialogue about the Menopause and the impact it sometimes has on working lives.

DAERA's Menopause Support Circle was started in 2021 and offers a forum for discussion, information, advice and most importantly, support. The circle which now consists of over 60 members, meets quarterly, and maintains contact, when needed, between meetings. The Circle signposts members to helpful services and resources as well as specialised events such as attendance of a GP to answer many questions DAERA staff had with regard to Menopause.

Most recently an In-house video on 'Let's talk Menopause...Continuing the conversation' was created via the Menopause Support Circle and can be watched by staff on the Department's Intranet.

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

As part of Food and Farming Group, Area-based Schemes Division deliver Area-based Schemes grants and subsidies to Farm Businesses. The annual Single Application and Map Service (SAMS) provides farm businesses with 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 2022-23 period, to improve accessibility for all customers, the Department implemented a Digital Assistance (DA) strategy. This strategy set out the basis on which DAERA would provide Digital Assistance, beyond general help and guidance, to customers who had various accessibility issues when completing the claims themselves.

DA has been provided in three ways:

- DA by telephone. Telephone assistance to help customers complete applications themselves, online. Provided by Advisory Service staff using 'Acquire' screen-sharing software;
- DA face-to-face. In-person assistance provided by Customer Services Branch (CSB) staff in DDOs. Customers complete applications themselves using their own DAERA Online Services account on a DAERA computer. This is used where a customer confirms that they have for example a disability which makes it difficult for them to complete the claim but can travel to a DDO; or they do not have access to a computer or broadband internet at home; or that they lack the IT skills necessary to complete the SA online themselves; or they have complex mapping issue which cannot be addressed via DA by telephone; and
- DA by DAERA Agent. DAERA staff (either Advisory Service or CSB) complete an application on behalf of the customer using information provided by them via telephone. This is to ensure accessibility for those customers with a physical disability or other medical reason that prevents them from attending their local DDO in person.

In addition to DA, the SAMS is accessibility tested annually, leading to improvements in accessibility and usability for all customers. The outcome of the testing results in a published Accessibility Statement from the Internal UIUX Expert who will suitably word the Accessibility Statement, and ensures the Statement is updated and made accessible prior to the SAMS Go Live date.

An annual Browser and device test is also carried out. The SAMS's Supported Browsers & Devices webpage are made available and kept up-to-date so that customers can see which versions of browsers and devices can be used to access the Application.

The SAMS has a live chat facility allowing customers to communicate directly with advisory staff if they experience difficulties while completing their applications. There is functionality for customers using SAMS to Zoom to 200%, and to use speech software to

read to the user including a link to a “how to” guide to use those features, to aid accessibility.

DAERA has developed a Widening Access and Participation Plan (WAPP) for CAFRE to cover the 2023-24 to 2025-26 period. The WAPP ensures that higher tuition fees do not have a detrimental effect on widening participation of under-represented groups in higher education (HE).

The following ten initiatives are included within the WAPP:

- Improved Student Data Recording and Tracking Capability
- HE Access Bursary
- Care Experienced Bursary
- Affordable Transport Links
- WAPP Research
- Schools Outreach
- Community Outreach
- Additional Student Support
- Disabled Student Support (DSA)
- Male Outreach

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 up until June 2022. From September 2022, recruitment activities were delivered face-to face with the Student Recruitment Team delivering careers talks, assisting with interview skills, and attending careers fairs in schools. The College also attended a number of key recruitment events such as Higher Options, Schools Summit, UCAS, Machinery Shows and Chemistry at Work. The Autumn Open Days were held on Campus with over 1,000 visitors. Several curriculum support events were held at both Loughry and Greenmount Campuses.

As a new initiative, CAFRE worked with “Speakers for Schools” and “School Employer Connections” to deliver virtual work experience and “Inspirational Speakers.” 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.

In 2022-23 CAFRE’s enrolments were 1,885, of which 43% identified as female, 56.5% identified as male, and 0.5% did not declare a gender identity. The number of students declaring a disability or learning need in 2022-23 was 15%, a slight increase from 14% in 2021-22. 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 Student Support Service provides information and advice to all students at induction and throughout the year at each of its three campuses. The Student Support Officers are 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 or learning need, by signposting them to supported employment services.

During the 2022-23 academic year, provision has also been made to offer laptops on loan to students on Further Education (FE) programmes who require accessibility software. Students on HE programmes can access accessible technology through the Disabled Students Allowance (UK students) or the Fund for Students with a Disability (Republic of Ireland students).

The Student Support Service manage 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 Service and wider campus teams also developed a programme of events for all students to promote positive health and wellbeing amongst the student population. As well as student counselling provided under contract by Inspire, the programme included topics such as:

- Managing stress during exam periods
- Mental Health and Resilience workshops
- Promotion of safeguarding
- Health and safety awareness workshops
- Consent workshops in partnership with the PSNI
- Drugs and alcohol awareness
- Signposting – A postcard drop to homes “Supporting You in 2023” 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.
- A series of student wellbeing days took place in February 2023 on each campus. These wellbeing days focused on key themes raised by CAFRE students in the Public Health Agency (PHA) Health, and Wellbeing Survey, earlier in the academic year. Key areas covered included healthy eating on a budget, mental health, drugs and alcohol, sexual health, cancer awareness and some fun activities also.
- Students' Representative Council (SRC) fundraising activities in aid of PIPS (Personal Independence Payment), NI Air Ambulance, Cancer Research NI, and The Injured Jockey Fund. Seven relay teams of students participated in the Belfast Marathon to raise money for their respective charities.

In addition to the means tests HE Access Bursary, and to help offset some of the costs incurred by CAFRE students during their education throughout 2022/2023, CAFRE students were awarded £91,500 financial support in Student Bursaries and Scholarships from industry organisations.

### **Equine Assisted Therapy**

A new blended (part on-line/part face-to-face delivery) OCN Level 3 Award in Horse Handling and Behaviour in Equine Assisted Activities was introduced at CAFRE Enniskillen Campus in September 2022. This course, which ran from September to May, provided training for those who are working in or intend to work in the area of equine assisted activities. Benefits of Equine Assisted Therapy have been reported as including; improving confidence, calmness, communication, resilience, relationships and positivity. Equine-based psychotherapy has been used in children and adults with a range of conditions including ADHD, autism, depression, eating disorders, generalised anxiety disorders, PTSD, social anxiety disorder and substance misuse. Equine Assisted therapy involving physiotherapists and occupational therapists when the horse/pony is ridden can also help to develop balance, posture, gait patterns, muscle tone, flexibility, co-ordination, core strength, self-esteem, and confidence.

- **MARINE AND FISHERIES DIVISION**

### **Inland Fisheries**

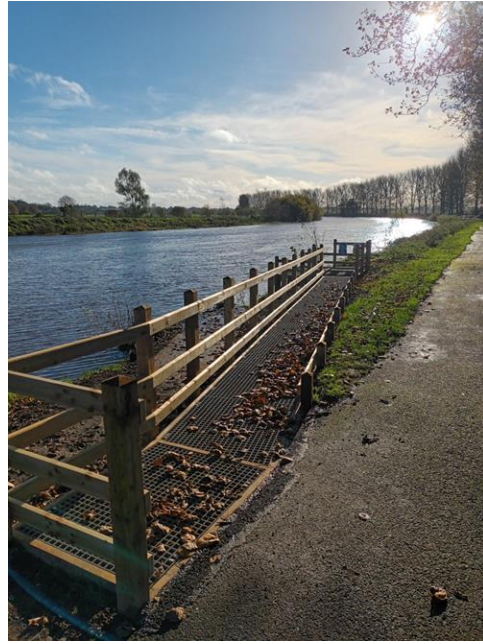
In order to increase participation in angling, Inland Fisheries provides concessionary licences and permits to those over 60 years of age and those with disabilities in receipt of benefits specified in the Fisheries Regulations 2014, at a significant saving on the full cost.

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. The guide provides detailed information on the suitability of access for those with different disabilities. There are 34 fishing platforms for anglers with disabilities at thirteen different waters across the Public Angling Estate. Works have been completed on a replacement angling platform on the Upper River Bann section of the Public Angling Estate near Portadown during 2022-23.

Before:



After (November 2022)



Works were also completed on two new platforms for anglers with disabilities on the Quoile Pondage near Downpatrick.

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. The Department re-opened the grant scheme for the 2022/23 period in May 2022 until November 2022.

- **RURAL AFFAIRS DIVISION**

The TRPSI Framework supports the development and delivery of initiatives to address the Framework's three priority areas of financial poverty, access poverty and social isolation. In 2022-23, through successful bids in the monitoring rounds, the annual opening budget of £5.5m was increased to £7.15m. 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. Social Farming is a service which provides disadvantaged groups of people in NI with an opportunity for inclusion, to increase their self-esteem and to improve their health and wellbeing through participating in meaningful activities in a farm environment. Social farming is 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.

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 2022-23 include:

- the enhancement of Forest Parks
- 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 these 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.

- **ESTATE TRANSFORMATION DIVISION (ETD)**

The DAERA estate consists of approximately 860 buildings spread across 240 sites, as well as 83,000 hectares of land with approximately 74,000 of this being 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 works 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 DDA. Where deficiencies have been identified, the Division liaises with relevant business areas to identify corrective measures that could be implemented. Subject to funding availability, ETD intends to roll out further condition surveys and is currently liaising with business areas to prioritise the properties to be included.

- **GREEN GROWTH AND CLIMATE ACTION DIVISION**

DAERA, on behalf of the NI Executive, is 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, [Screening - Draft Green Growth Strategy \(2021\) Combined.pdf \(daera-ni.gov.uk\)](#) and its subsequent EQIA [Equality Impact Assessment for the Draft Green Growth Strategy.pdf \(daera-ni.gov.uk\)](#) were developed and a consultation completed. The aim was to understand and 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, was 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 represented young people from 16 to 22 years, from both rural and urban backgrounds, with a wide range of interests. They included 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 Northwest Ministry of youth (Derry and Strabane Youth Voice group). The conclusions and recommendations from the youth research, were presented by the young people to

DAERA and helped shape the Strategy. DAERA further commissioned The Education Authority to work with a team of young people from various organisations to explore attitudes and behaviour towards climate action, evaluate strengths and challenges in local communities and develop ideas for short- and longer-term climate action goals. The focus groups consisted of around 40 young people from a range of backgrounds and geographical locations. These took place across four separate workshops between November 2022 and January 2023. They included Hammer Youth Club Belfast, CAFRE Greenmount Campus Antrim, Ulster Wildlife Youth Belfast, and Lenamore Youth Club Derry/ Londonderry. Findings from the focus groups are being used to help develop policies and proposals for the draft Climate Action Plan.

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 its equality work. Feedback from the public consultation, although small in quantity, was incorporated and helped improve the revised Green Growth Strategy which awaits consideration and approval from the next Executive.

DAERA is leading the development of Northern Ireland's first Climate Action Plan (CAP) as required by the Climate Change Act (Northern Ireland) 2022. Equality screening of this Act was carried out in 2022 and determined that, while meeting the requirements of the Act is likely to impact across all sectors and on all people, the actual impacts will depend on the policies and proposals taken forward to deliver emissions reductions.

The CAP will set out Northern Ireland's approach to meeting the carbon budget for 2023 to 2027 through a set of proposals and policies for emissions reductions. It will also establish a pathway towards the interim targets for 2030 and 2040 and the overall net zero by 2050 target.

Equality screening of Northern Ireland's first Climate Action Plan is being taken forward with the expectation that it will be screened in. Subsequently, an EQIA consultation exercise on the CAP will be taken forward during 2023-2024, aligned with the planned consultation on the first CAP. DAERA will consult again with young people along with other Section 75 groups, as part of this process to get feedback on what has been produced and to ensure that their views are considered in the final document.

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

Thirty-six projects were delivered in 2022-23, funded by the Environment Fund Challenge Competition. The theme of these projects included Nature and Climate Recovery: Building ecological and climate resilience and Connecting People with the environment. They improved inclusivity and accessibility throughout Northern Ireland, and many supported all ability access to the natural environment. Examples of these projects are:

**Accessible Mount Stewart**

Delivered by the National Trust, this project was for the creation of a fully equipped Changing Places in the Mount Stewart car park through redevelopment of the existing toilet block. It provides a free facility to enable those with additional needs and their families to enjoy outdoor recreation in the natural environment both at the Mount Stewart site and more of the local area.

### **Parks for People**

Delivered by Keep Northern Ireland Beautiful, this project saw the development and expansion of community led management of (free public access) green space through international Green Flag for Parks and Open Spaces programme to, (i) increase opportunities for people to connect with nature and to raise the standards of these places for societal health and wellbeing, environmental quality and biodiversity recovery and, (ii) increase the number of community sites awarded under the international Green Flag for Parks Programme.

### **Reviving Killyfoyle Lough LNR (Local Nature Reserve)**

Delivered by Fermanagh and Omagh District Council, this project is for the replacement and increased accessibility of the walkway and bridges around Killyfoyle Lake; establishment of a Friends of Killyfoyle Nature Reserve; development of a management plan; and additional facilities outside the outdoor classroom.

### **Connecting with Minnowburn**

Delivered by the National Trust, this project is for a properly planned and laid out car park with increased capacity incorporating Sustainable Urban Drainage Systems (SUDS) with disabled parking spaces and, by introducing appropriate paths and connections, provides access for all to the riverbank path.

### **Looking After NI's Busy Coast and Countryside**

Delivered by the National Trust, the aim of this project is to ensure appropriate management of sites by having additional ranger resource to focus on high pressure sites to deliver both site management and visitor engagement. Initially this project would focus mainly on sites along the North Down coast and Antrim coastal areas. They would gather data about visitor trends and the impact on these sites which will be used to identify the needs and inform the future management approaches required to sustainably manage the sites including visitor numbers, infrastructure needs and prioritisation of investment and projects across the region in the coming years.

The 2019 to 2023 Multi-year Strategic Strand of the Environment Fund ended on 31 March 2023. A new Environment Fund programme covering 2023 to 2028 was developed in 2022 and an Equality and Disability Duties Screening exercise was carried out, which resulted in the programme being screened out for a full assessment as it was deemed to be either of a neutral or positive impact on the s75 categories.

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

Site management staff within the Regional Operations branch have largely continued to focus on the ongoing upkeep and maintenance of our existing infrastructure to the benefit of all visitors to our publicly accessible locations, with a number of site-specific projects outlined below:

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

Following on from the works completed over the previous four reporting periods, the Department has continued to deliver improvements in service provision to all visitors at the Quoile Pondage National Nature Reserve (NNR) in keeping with the legal obligations concerning conservation of this nationally and internationally important site.

Site managers worked in tandem with colleagues within Inland Fisheries to facilitate the provision of a dedicated disabled access fishing stand at the recently refurbished Floodgates Car Park, this being in addition to smooth surface provision from the main path along the Quoile Road.

### **Roe Valley Country Park**

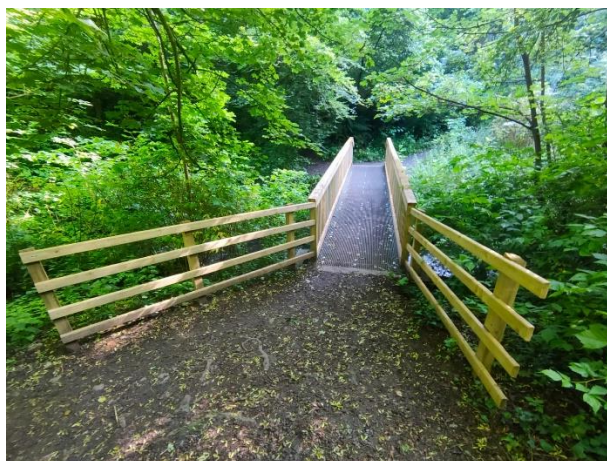
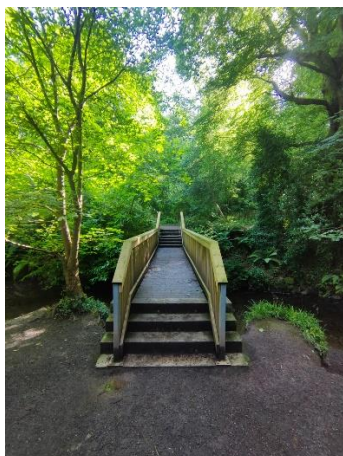
Planning permission is currently being sought in respect of the installation of a new pedestrian footbridge onsite to improve accessibility for all while enhancing safety when traversing the currently mixed vehicle/pedestrian bridge forming part of Dogleap Road. The proposed new footbridge is aimed at providing enhanced visitor access through the park with the creation of a safe, contained, circular walking route for all visitors.

### **Crawfordsburn Country Park**

The replacement toilet facilities located in the beach car park onsite have largely been constructed and are in use with various snag issues currently being resolved. While not currently in service, the replacement toilet block does include a “changing places” facility, which it is hoped will be completed and in use in the near future.



Additional to this, site management staff have continued to dynamically assess routes throughout the park and have consulted with Central Procurement Directorate (CPD) structural engineering colleagues in respect of bridge replacement designs. This has resulted in the replacement of two bridges within the park, thereby ensuring the ongoing accessibility of this ever-popular location to all visitors.



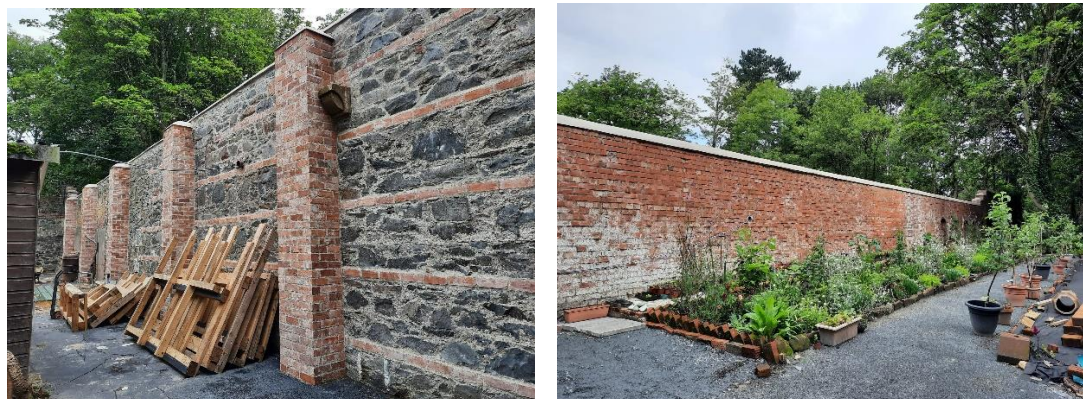
### **Castle Archdale Country Park**

Designs have been completed for the refurbishment of the park's Duross Bay toilets to include enhanced services for people with disabilities, which will include a "changing places" facility. Planning permission has been received for these facilities which are now entering a detailed design phase.

### **Redburn Country Park**

As a result of a previous fall of stones from the wall of the old Stable Yard, leased to the Men's Shed, site managers worked with CPD structural engineering colleagues in designing and implementing a long-term solution to any structural concerns, which is now complete. This project utilised period accurate materials and installation techniques as far as possible and has safeguarded ongoing access to this area for the

local community. Further to this, site managers worked with representatives of the Men's Shed to enable reorganisation of the yard to provide enhanced accessibility.



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.

- **FOREST SERVICE**

The importance of green space to people's health and wellbeing is acknowledged in the Regional Development Strategy for Northern Ireland 2035. 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 2022-23 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:

- During the period Forest Service continued to engage with stakeholders to encourage their early involvement in the development of Forest Plans. Stakeholders were invited to contribute at the scoping stage of forestry planning to ensure that the diverse needs of people, wildlife and industry are considered. Press releases, posters, social media, telephone calls and email correspondence were used to inform stakeholders that a consultation was ongoing.
- 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.

- Forest Service continued to promote the forestry scoping consultations as widely as possible through the production of an Easy Read Companion. This was made available in printed format and online via the following link: [Easy Read companion to the NI forestry scoping consultation documents](#).
- During 2022-23, Forest Service completed two scoping consultations for the development of forest plans in West Fermanagh and Down Forestry Planning Areas. This concluded this phase of forest planning activities with a cumulative total of 423 responses from a wide range of stakeholder interests across Northern Ireland. DAERA welcomes the wide diversity of stakeholder responses received, which will be a valuable contribution to the development of meaningful forest plans.
- During the reporting period Forest Service invited stakeholders to meet in order to present draft forest plans and to ensure comments and feedback were received. Stakeholders included community organisations and NGOs.
- In February 2023, Forest Service published a story map regarding forest plans for the West Tyrone Forestry Planning Area; it can be viewed via the following weblink: [West Tyrone Forest Plan](#). This is the fourth story map to be published. Each one is a combination of interactive maps, images, and informative text, designed to give users a clearer understanding of how our forests are managed. These will be used to promote and enhance further engagement in relation to forestry planning and management.
- 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. The most recently published report shows that 137 Section 75 forms were returned in the year reflecting a response rate of 38%. 10% 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 2022-23 Forest Service completed 54 public consultations about the environmental impact of forestry projects. 44 consultations were in connection with woodland creation, 9 were for woodland removal and 1 for forest road works.
- Forest Service continues 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. It is expected that these facilities will be completed in 2023-24.

- Facilitating partnership working between Forest Service and Newry Mourne and Down District Council with lease arrangements in Castlewellan Forest Park to enable a significant recreational development project. Work is expected to start in autumn 2023.
- 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 developing the Fallows walking trail. Works are ongoing with expected completion being autumn 2023.
- Facilitating partnership working with Mid-Ulster District Council and DAERA's Tackling Rural Poverty and Social Isolation (TRPSI) initiative to delivering access improvement works at Drumcairne Forest, with the aim of promoting and developing participation in outdoor physical recreation.

**2** Please provide **examples** of outcomes and/or the impact of **equality action plans/** measures in 2022-23 (*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 2022-23, DAERA reflected its Section 75 obligations in its corporate business planning and achieved all targets set in relation to these.

Although the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic had begun to ease, the Department completed the two meetings of the EDSG and the four meetings of the EDWG using online meeting facilities.

Following the restructuring of the business area in 2021, 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, assists 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.

In addition, members of the Equality Unit are serving members of the NICS Disability Staff Network and recently have become Event Volunteers (for a sub-committee) to help raise disability awareness across all the Departments. This good practice can then be disseminated within DAERA and used as a reference in providing advice and recommendations to senior management and/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 2022-23, 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 continued to record an increase in both formal and informal consultation requested by colleagues, to assist and produce both screening documents and EQIA's. Notably, there was an increase in requests for EQIA based advice, which was viewed as a positive result of ongoing Equality Unit communication, and support from the EDSG members, in ensuring all staff were aware of their equality responsibilities. This engagement is welcomed and encouraged as a positive outcome to the commitment and compliance of the Department's Equality Scheme.

In the last reporting period we produced the inaugural visual representation of the Department's Equality Scheme video entitled, "[Access All Areas: DAERA Equality Scheme in Action.](#)" This video highlighted 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. We followed this with our second production, entitled "[Access all Ages](#)". This second video focused on ensuring accessible services for everyone and the video showcases just some of the projects in which the Department has been involved. We strive to improve inclusivity and accessibility throughout Northern Ireland and support all age groups by providing access to the natural environment, as well as ensuring training courses are readily available and accessible to the relevant people.

These videos demonstrate that the Department understands the important role it plays in building an equal and inclusive society.

A summary of the 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 post is currently vacant, but the Deputy Officer continues to assist 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

## PART A

provision of timely, practical information and assistance, adhering to 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 2022-23 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 up to December 2022 show that in total 58,419 Section 75 Surveys have been issued to RDP 2014-2020 applicants. 20,496 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 80% or above is delivered.

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 75% in 2022. 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. 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 work is still

ongoing. In 2023, changes were made to the equality data gathering process for RDP Area Based schemes through the Single Application Form to improve accessibility and raise response rates. Increased efforts were also made to promote the benefits of equality monitoring completion for the customer. It is intended to improve and enhance Section 75 data collection within the Department by incorporating section 75 collection into new online application systems for future Area Based grants schemes. This includes RDP schemes where response rates are currently as low as 9% through the Single Application Form.

### **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. Three public appointment processes were launched within the reporting period, which are ongoing.

There was one re-appointment and seven extensions to existing appointments during this reporting period. These appointments were conducted in compliance with the CPANI Code.

In the absence of a Commissioner, the Department has confirmed to the office of CPANI that all appointments, re-appointments 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.

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. All potential applicants are provided with guidance on competency-based interviews and signposted to the CPANI workshops on public appointments.

To encourage applicants with a disability to apply for Board positions, the Department operates the Guaranteed Interview Scheme in all 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 its efforts to achieve this target. With regard to DAERA's regulated bodies, of the 35 public appointments held as of 31 March 2023, 10 (29%) were held by women. This figure reflects that three outgoing Board Members, for which a recruitment process is currently underway but has not yet concluded, were female. It is anticipated that the gender balance may change as a result of appointments made from the ongoing processes. In seeking to address the under-representation of females in these processes, lawful measures were taken which sought to encourage applications from female candidates. This included promotional videos and testimonials by current and outgoing female board members and welcome statements when advertising the vacant positions, as well as outreach to women's groups and networks. The gender balance of the appointments made as a result of the ongoing processes will be monitored.

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):*



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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 2022-23 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 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 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; and
- 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.

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5 Were the Section 75 statutory duties integrated within performance plans during the 2022-23 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 2022-23 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 2022-23 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
- 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 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 obligations and its obligations under the Rural Needs Act (NI) 2016.”*

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 2022-23 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 2022-23 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 2022-23 reporting period (*points not identified in an appended plan*):

None Identified

**9** In reviewing progress on the equality action plan/action measures during the 2022-23 reporting period, the following have been identified: (*tick all that apply*)

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

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All the time

Sometimes

Never

- 11** Please provide any **details and examples of good practice** in consultation during the 2022-23 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:

No relevant example.

- 12** In the 2022-23 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:

- 13** Were any awareness-raising activities for consultees undertaken, on the commitments in the Equality Scheme, during the 2022-23 reporting period? (*tick one box only*)

Yes

No

Not applicable

Please provide any details and examples:

- 14** Was the consultation list reviewed during the 2022-23 reporting period? (*tick one box only*)

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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*):

32
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**16** Please provide the **number of assessments** that were consulted upon during 2021-22:

5	Policy consultations conducted with <b>screening</b> assessment presented.
1	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:

Consultation on the Equality Impact Assessment for the draft Northern Ireland Peatland Strategy

Consultation on Proposed Introduction of Bovine Viral Diarrhoea (BVD) Herd Restrictions

**18** Were any screening decisions (or equivalent initial assessments of relevance) reviewed following concerns raised by consultees? (*tick one box only*)

Yes       No concerns were raised       No       Not applicable

Please provide any details and examples:

**Arrangements for publishing the results of assessments (Model Equality Scheme Chapter 4)**

**19** Following decisions on a policy, were the results of any EQIAs published during the 2022-23 reporting period? (*tick one box only*)

- Yes                       No                       Not applicable

Please provide any details and examples:

Consultation on the Equality Impact Assessment for the draft Northern Ireland Peatland Strategy

**Arrangements for monitoring and publishing the results of monitoring (Model Equality Scheme Chapter 4)**

**20** From the Equality Scheme monitoring arrangements, was there an audit of existing information systems during the 2022-23 reporting period? (*tick one box only*)

- Yes     No, already taken place  
 No, scheduled to take place at a later date                       Not applicable

Please provide any details:

**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 2022-23 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 2022-23, 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.

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 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.

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. DAERA Equality staff raised the prospect of progressing this training at the Equality Practitioners Group (EPG) meeting in January 2023. The Executive Office contacted NICS HR Learning & Development who advised they were also keen to complete the work already done. Despite DAERA staff's best efforts, no further progress has been made on this to date, however, this will be rigorously pursued.

A range of the training undertaken by DAERA staff in 2022-23 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 2022-23, 13 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 us, 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 2022-23, 20 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 2022-23, 13 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 2022-23, 20 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 2022-23, 20 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 2022-23, 6 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 2022-23 a further 100 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. 23 DAERA staff completed this training between April 2022 and March 2023.

- **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 2022-23, 27 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 2022-23, across all functions, has resulted in action and improvement in relation **to access to information and services**:

Not applicable for the period.

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

**27** How many complaints **in relation to the Equality Scheme** have been received during 2022-23?

Insert number here:

0
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Please provide any details of each complaint raised and outcome:

### 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. DAERA Equality staff raised the prospect of progressing this training at the Equality Practitioners Group (EPG) meeting in January 2023. The Executive Office contacted NICS HR Learning & Development who advised they were also keen to complete the work already done. Despite DAERA staff's best efforts, no further progress has been made on this to date, however, this will be rigorously pursued.

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. Progress has begun on the creation of a training video, and this will be shared with all DAERA staff and submitted to Senior Managers to consider as part of induction training.

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

## PART A

The Department throughout 2022 and 2023 will embrace its 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	<p><b>DAERA Disability Action Plan (DAP) Measure No. 7:</b></p> <p>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</p>	<p>Increased numbers of visitors with a disability to the DAERA estate thereby helping to increase levels of physical and mental wellbeing.</p> <p>Forest Service provides signage in our forests to enable users to assess their ability to use paths using a coloured coded method where a maximum of four categories of routes are provided.</p>	<p>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</p>

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	<p>the Forest Service estate. DAERA will provide more disability friendly recreation facilities across these areas by promoting visits from groups which support those with special needs educational needs.</p>	<p>Works completed 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>Regional</p>	<p><b>DAERA Disability Action Plan (DAP) Measure No. 19:</b></p>	<p>Forest Service promoted forestry scoping consultations to inform the review of forest plans, as widely as possible though the production of an</p>	<p>Increased opportunities for people with a disability and/or their representatives to participate in, and influence, the development of forest plans.</p>

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	<p>When reviewing forest plans, Forest Service will engage with people with disabilities and/or their representatives.</p>	<p>Easy Read Companion. This was made available in printed format and online.</p> <p>Stakeholders invited to contribute to scoping consultations included groups representing LGBTQI+, disability, ethnic minority, women's, and retired people's interests.</p> <p>Forest Service received a cumulative total of 423 responses from a wide range of stakeholder interests across Northern Ireland.</p>	<p>Forests are managed to deliver of a wide range of ecosystem services and contribute to the health and well-being of all NI citizens.</p>
<p>Local</p>	<p><b>DAERA Disability Action Plan (DAP) Measure No. 11:</b></p> <p>Through the Tackling Rural Poverty and Social Isolation Programme continue to create participation 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).</p>	<p>In 2022/23, 5k users recorded to date.</p>	<p>Increased numbers of applications for funding by people with disabilities in the rural and farming communities and thereby increasing levels of participation and decreasing levels of social isolation.</p>

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Regional	<p><b>DAERA Disability Action Plan (DAP) Measure No. 15:</b></p> <p>Ensure the use of the Guaranteed Interview Scheme for each public appointment.</p>	<p>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.</p>	<p>Increased opportunities for people with a disability to participate on the boards of public bodies.</p>
Regional	<p><b>DAERA Disability Action Plan (DAP) Measure No. 16:</b></p> <p>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 (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</p>	<p>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.</p>	<p>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.</p>



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	encourage applications from those with a disability.		
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2(b) What **training action measures** were achieved in this reporting period?

	Training Action Measures	Outputs	Outcome / Impact
Local	<p><b>DAERA Disability Action Plan (DAP) Measure No. 2:</b></p> <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>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 2022-23, 13 DAERA managers completed this training.</p>	<p>All staff will have an awareness of the needs of people with disabilities.</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 2022-23, 20 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 2022-23, 20 staff completed this virtual training.</p> <p><b>Disability Awareness for front line staff – E-Learning</b>          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 2022-23, 22 DAERA staff successfully completed this training.</p>	
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		<p><b>Supporting Vulnerable People – E-Learning</b>          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 2022-23, 6 DAERA staff successfully completed this training.</p> <p><b>Unconscious Bias – E-Learning</b>          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</p>	
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		<p>above and 1,629 staff successfully completed the training. During 2022-23 a further 100 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 direct 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 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 are therefore due to complete it this year.</p> <p>Members of the DAERA Safeguarding group also completed this training in 2021/22 and will receive it again this year.</p>	
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		<p>Training for Forest Service, EMFG, &amp; NIEA staff was last completed in 2021/22. This included new members of the DAERA Safeguarding Group. 172 staff completed the Safeguarding Level 2 training, 7 staff completed the Designated Officer training.</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 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 2022-23, 27 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</p>	
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		the full training with the rest of their group at the next scheduled session.	
Regional	<p><b>DAERA Disability Action Plan (DAP) Measure No. 3:</b></p> <p>Participate in NICS JAM (Just-A-Minute) card initiative and roll out through DAERA.</p>	<p>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 was initiative relaunched on 31/03/23 and will be reported upon in the subsequent APR.</p>	<p>This has been communicated to staff via internal communications and rolled out across the DAERA Direct Offices with posters distributed to Premises Officers to be displayed in all DAERA buildings</p>

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

	Communications Action Measures	Outputs	Outcome / Impact
Local	<p><b>DAERA Disability Action Plan (DAP) Measure No. 4:</b></p> <p>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</p>	<p>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.</p>	<p>Increased awareness for staff of the diversity of staff &amp; customers and encouragement of inclusion for all.</p>

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	<p>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.</p>		
Local	<p><b>DAERA Disability Action Plan (DAP) Measure No. 6:</b></p> <p>Line managers to document all requests for reasonable adjustments and the outcomes, in compliance with data protection and records management policies.</p>	<p>Staff survey results and NICS HR figures for reasonable adjustment implementation. However, to note, NICS HR have begun the process of reviewing the Reasonable Adjustments Policy and this will be updated on in the subsequent report.</p>	<p>Line Managers have been compliant in their responsibilities for their staff.</p>
Regional	<p><b>DAERA Disability Action Plan (DAP) Measure No. 9:</b></p> <p>Inland Fisheries attended Disability Shows and actively promoted angling to disability groups and individuals including increasing the awareness of the Inland Fisheries events small grant programme.</p>	<p>Inland Fisheries continue to promote reduced rate angling licence and permits. Queries on concessionary licences are answered regularly by Inland Fisheries staff, who make relevant anglers aware of their concessionary entitlements.</p>	<p>Increased sales of licences and permits for people with disabilities and increased participation by disadvantaged groups.</p>

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<p>Regional</p>	<p><b>DAERA Disability Action Plan (DAP) Measure No. 13:</b></p> <p>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). 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>	<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>	<p>Encouragement of uptake in enrolment across CAFRE courses from young people with disabilities.</p>
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2 (d) What action measures were achieved to ‘encourage others’ to promote the two duties:

	Encourage others Action Measures	Outputs	Outcome / Impact
Local	<p><b>DAERA Disability Action Plan (DAP) Measure No. 1:</b></p> <p>DAERA will make Senior Management Team &amp; Departmental Board aware of the two duties and direct them to relevant available training.</p>	<p>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 &amp; Diversity Steering Group meetings held twice during the reporting period.</p> <p>The Departmental Board invited ECNI to attend their meeting on 15 February 2023 and presented to the Board their Section 75: Demonstrating Effective Leadership guidance.</p>	<p>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.</p>

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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	<p><b>DAERA Disability Action Plan (DAP) Measure No. 8:</b></p> <p>Marine &amp; Fisheries Division promoted their accessibility by the promotion of the Angling Event Fund which, requires 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 worked 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</p>	<p>The Events Funding Pilot ended in November 2022. Up to this date 35 successful events were funded, with 822 complementary licences issued. Staff had continued 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,</p>	<p>Increased numbers of visitors to the DAERA estate thereby helping to increase levels of physical and mental wellbeing.</p>

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	<p>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>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>with the intention of promoting angling events through the fund for visually impaired.</p> <p>Since the downturn during the Covid-19 pandemic, there has been a return to normalcy seeing a range of schools and educational organisations undertaking visits to NIEA parks and reserves.</p>	
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<p>Regional</p>	<p><b>DAERA Disability Action Plan (DAP) Measure No. 10:</b></p> <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. As Schemes have closed there is no further information available for funding to people with disabilities.</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 wellbeing.</p>
<p>Regional</p>	<p><b>DAERA Disability Action Plan (DAP) Measure No. 12:</b></p> <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>From August 2022, one SSO is based at Greenmount Campus, and one divides their time between Loughry and Enniskillen campuses.</p> <p>The Student Support Officers arrange a wide variety of learning support for students, depending on their needs, to facilitate their continuation and achievement across the education</p>	<p>CAFRE has improved support to students who declare learning needs or disability by employing an additional Student Support officer (SSO). During the 2022/23 academic year the team has provided bespoke support to 273 learners with learning needs or medical condition. This support ranges from one-to-one mentoring, exam access arrangements or signposting them to a variety of services and initiatives to help them during their time at College. All learners engaging with Student Support have reasonable adjustments in place and the team works closely with Program Managers to ensure that these learners are supported in order</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>

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	<p>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>to enable them to achieve their academic potential.</p> <p>Students are signposted to a wide range of support resources on the CAFRE website and CAFRE student Virtual Learning Environment.</p>	
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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><b>DAERA Disability Action Plan (DAP) Measure No. 5:</b></p> <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 2021 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. Unfortunately due to the COVID pandemic there was no survey completed for 2022.</p>

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Local	<p><b>DAERA Disability Action Plan (DAP) Measure No. 14:</b></p> <p>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.</p>	<p>A forum would support staff with disabilities and raise awareness within DAERA.</p>	<p>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.</p>	<p>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.</p>
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4. Please outline what action measures **have not been achieved** and the reasons why.

	Action Measures not met	Reasons
Regional	<p><b>DAERA Disability Action Plan (DAP) Measure No. 17:</b></p> <p>DAERA will promote identified opportunities on its working groups, steering groups, committees or similar within the</p>	<p>DAERA has continued to promote public appointment opportunities across a range of media and via our equality networks and Section 75 consultee list, including to a</p>

	<p>disability sector and work with the sector and NICSHR and CPANI to encourage uptake of these opportunities.</p>	<p>range of disability groups. Our advertising and promotional communications also feature a welcome statement in respect of under-represented groups, including people with a disability.</p> <p>In relation to Public Appointments and CPANI, DAERA wants to extend its efforts to promote public appointments to people with disabilities. The intention is to implement some practical measures to help in this area. Planned work led jointly by the Equality Commission and CPANI was placed on hold. DAERA will actively support this work whenever it is resumed.</p> <p>This work 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>
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Regional	<p><b>DAERA Disability Action Plan (DAP) Measure No. 18:</b></p> <p>DAERA will work with NICSHR and offer up suitable placements through the NICS Work Experience Scheme for People with a Disability.</p>	<p>DfC lead on this initiative. The Department is awaiting further instructions from DfC on how they will be proceeding in the future and stand ready to fully engage with them at the appropriate time.</p>
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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 monitoring 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.



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- 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.

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			

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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.

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<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.