

Biodiversity duty reporting 2018-20

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Biodiversity duty reporting

2018-2020

Preface

Biodiversity underpins our lives. It is the very essence of our world, supporting our lives and providing us with many of the things that sustain our lives. It is therefore essential for our health and well-being that we protect our biodiversity and the services and support that it provides.

Under the Nature Conservation (Scotland) Act 2004, all public bodies in Scotland therefore have a statutory duty to further the conservation of biodiversity when carrying out our responsibilities. This biodiversity duty is about taking care of nature all around us.

The Wildlife and Natural Environment (Scotland) Act 2011 introduced a further statutory requirement for public bodies in Scotland to provide a publicly available report every three years, on the actions which they have taken to meet this biodiversity duty. This is Education Scotland's second such report and it covers the years 2018-2020 inclusive. The format of the report follows the Biodiversity Duty Reporting Template for Level 2 organisations. Further information about the Levels is available at <http://www.biodiversityscotland.gov.uk/>.

Section 1: Introductory information

Education Scotland is an Executive Agency of the Scottish Government with responsibility for supporting quality and improvement in Scottish education, and thereby securing the delivery of better learning experiences and outcomes for Scottish learners of all ages.

The organisation's status as an Executive Agency means that it operates independently and impartially, whilst remaining directly accountable to Scottish Government Ministers for the standards of its work. This status safeguards the independence of inspection, review and reporting within the overall context of the National Performance Framework.

Education Scotland's Chief Executive is responsible to Scottish Ministers, within the terms of our Framework document, for its management, performance and future development.

During the reporting period, Education Scotland has operated from several locations spread across Scotland. The buildings we occupy are mainly managed by private landlords or other public bodies the Agency co-locates with. This arrangement means the Agency has very limited direct control over how the land surrounding these buildings is managed and used and it minimises our ability to directly influence natural habitats or ecosystems. This report therefore provides information on how the Agency has supported biodiversity on a wider scale.

Section 2: Actions to protect biodiversity and connect people with nature

Education Scotland's remit includes supporting curriculum development and providing guidance, resources, advice and professional learning to a wide range of practitioners. Within Curriculum for Excellence, Learning for Sustainability (LfS) is an entitlement for all learners and outdoor learning is a key pedagogical approach. Through our work we encourage early learning settings and schools to engage with nature on a daily basis and to make outdoor learning a

curriculum-led and regular experience for all learners. Learning for Sustainability and outdoor learning are also promoted through all curriculum areas, with subjects such as sciences and social studies offering significant opportunities for learners to learn about biodiversity.

Throughout 2019 Education Scotland also worked closely with Keep Scotland Beautiful and authorities in the West Partnership to support the [Upstream Battle](#) Campaign. This is one of the largest citizen science projects in Europe which was set up to monitor and promote engagement in tackling marine plastic pollution.

The following report provides an overview of activities, reach and impact:



Upstream Battle PLP
Twilight 4 and Conc

In 2019, the Education Scotland STEM Team also took part in a litter pick along the banks of the River Clyde to support the campaign and raise awareness of this in schools through social media.

Section 3: Mainstreaming Biodiversity

Biodiversity is mainstreamed in Scottish education as it is included in curriculum content. As a result, all young people in Scotland learn about the importance of biodiversity.

Education Scotland continues to work with the Scottish Government and a wide range of Learning for Sustainability (LfS) and outdoor learning partners to support the implementation of the [Vision 2030+ Report and action plan](#). At the heart of this plan is the ambition to ensure that each learner in Scotland receives their entitlement to Learning for Sustainability, which includes contact with nature.

Both Learning for Sustainability and outdoor learning continue to be embedded in core Education Scotland improvement guidance including [How Good is Our School?](#) [Fourth edition]. This is the key improvement framework for Scottish schools and contains quality indicators to support the self-evaluation of schools.

We also continue to liaise with key partners such as the GTCS and SQA to support the mainstreaming of LfS and outdoor learning within the GTCS [Professional Standards](#) and development of [new qualifications](#). We did this in 2019 by responding to consultations on new standards and by participating in relevant working groups.

Over £1.9 million of funding was made available to education settings and partners through the second round of Education Scotland's STEM Grants Programme in 2019/20. Outdoor learning and LfS were embedded as priorities within the grant application process. As a result a number of projects were supported with an outdoor learning, forestry or sustainability theme. This included projects run by East Ayrshire Council Learning Outdoors Support Team, Forestry Scotland and the [STEM by Nature](#) Programme run by the Field Studies Council.

In September 2020, Education Scotland was due to host its Scottish Learning Festival in the SECC in Glasgow. This is our biggest annual event which regularly attracts 4000+ visitors and education professionals from across Scotland. The theme for 2020 was to be Learning for Sustainability to support preparations for the COP26 Summit which was to be held in Glasgow

in November 2020. Unfortunately the conference was cancelled due to COVID but it is hoped that LfS may still feature strongly if the event is to be held in 2021.

Every year, Education Scotland also hosts the Scottish Education Awards in partnership with the Daily Record. This celebrates the work of schools and early learning centres in relation to key national education priorities. These awards continue to have significant national profile and the Learning for Sustainability Award continues to feature in the award programme. A record number of schools (over 30) applied for the LfS award in 2020.

We also continue to follow the Scottish Government's principles of procurement. The Agency's procurement policy includes a requirement to ensure that contract specifications reflect the Scottish Ministers approach to sustainability and where appropriate form part of the evaluation of tenders and conditions of contract. Our Procurement Strategy, published in 2019, therefore confirms that in carrying out a regulated procurement, we will assess whether the procurement process can improve the economic, social and environmental wellbeing of communities.

We also consider at the procurement strategy stage whether it is possible to incorporate a community benefit requirement in the contract. A community benefit clause is intended to improve the economic, social or environmental wellbeing in Scottish communities in a way which is additional to the main purpose of the contract.

Following the previous successful implementation of an electronic records management system for employees which led to a significant reduction of paper use, we have recently introduced eRDM Connect for Advisory Board and Audit and Risk Committee meeting papers to reduce the level of printed materials now required by our Non-Executive Board members.

The number of printers in operation across our Estates has also been rationalised. This has included the replacement of all personal printers with multifunctional devices linked to mailboxes, reducing paper and energy consumption.

At the same time we have provided multiple screen technology for a number of staff to reduce the need to print documents for review. We also continue to enforce a minimum order value for stationery to reduce the number of deliveries and the stationery that is procured is from recycled, sustainable and environmentally friendly sources.

Education Scotland has continued to promote the need to reduce unnecessary travel, investing in technologies such as video conference and Skype of Business to reduce the need for travel.

Education Scotland's sustainability performance is published in the [Annual Accounts](#), reporting on targets to reduce energy, waste, water and travel.

Section 4: Nature based Solutions, Climate Change and Biodiversity

Education Scotland continues to provide a wide range of guidance and resources to support learning and teaching about biodiversity and climate change in Scotland's curriculum. For example, the following resources continue to be made available through our National Improvement Hub:

- [Climate change in Scottish Education](#) Briefing
- [Weather and Climate Change](#) resources for primary schools

- [Exploring Climate Change](#) resources for secondary schools

Biodiversity and climate change information, opportunities and practice has also been promoted through the [Glow and Yammer platforms](#).

We also continue to work with policy colleagues and partners to prepare for the COP26 Climate Summit in Scotland to develop ideas and programmes to engage young people and schools fully in this opportunity.

Section 5: Public Engagement and Workforce Development

As indicated above, Education Scotland continues to produce a wide range of communications and professional learning with promotes outdoor learning and Learning for Sustainability. Engagement with nature and developing a respect for ecosystems is an important theme within all of this work.

To see a comprehensive list of resources, guidance and professional learning, visit our Outdoor Learning Summary Page on our National Improvement Hub:

<https://education.gov.scot/improvement/learning-resources/a-summary-of-outdoor-learning-resources/>

This page on our National Improvement Hub contains a comprehensive list of guidance, resources and support for Learning for Sustainability:

<https://education.gov.scot/improvement/learning-resources/a-summary-of-learning-for-sustainability-resources/>

Over the last three years, Education Scotland has continued to communicate regularly with 7000 subscribers through our monthly Learning for Sustainability e-bulletin. These bulletins contain a wide range of resources, news and information to promote outdoor learning and LfS. Our @EdScot LfS #ThisIsLfS Twitter stream has over 4600 followers and is used to share interesting practice, news and opportunities in relation to outdoor learning and LfS. We also have an LfS blog to support our communications in this area:

<https://blogs.glowscotland.org.uk/glowblogs/lfsblog/>

We also continue to support citizen science activities through our networks and using resources such as Education Scotland's [Citizen Science in Curriculum for Excellence](#) briefing and also through [Scotland's Environment Web](#). Education Scotland worked in partnership with SEPA to develop the education content of this award-winning website.

During the first wave of COVID lockdown, Education Scotland collated a diverse selection of resources on outdoor learning and LfS which could be used to support home learning and remote learning. These were made available to practitioners through our outdoor learning and Learning for Sustainability [Wakelet collection](#). We also created and published activities to support parents explore the theme of biodiversity with their children.

In November 2019, we ran an afternoon professional learning session for Education Scotland staff on the themes of outdoor learning and Learning for Sustainability. This was attended by over 50 staff from across the organisation.

Education Scotland also has a crucial role to play in building the capacity of early learning and childcare, school and community learning and development practitioners in relation to learning

and teaching. There has been a growing demand for professional learning in outdoor learning following the onset of the COVID pandemic. Our STEM Team has led a significant programme of professional learning to support this. This has involved a wide range of colleagues from across the organisation including mathematics and numeracy, inclusion, gender balance, Additional Support Needs and Religious and Moral education, amongst others. Over 1000 ELC and teachers have attended these sessions which have been run with partners. Details of this professional learning and other online professional learning modules that have been developed can be found on our National Improvement Hub: [a summary-of-outdoor-learning-resources](#)

Internally, increasing staff awareness of the need to work toward being a more efficient and sustainable estate is important. We have a Sustainability section on our Intranet that provides information about how our business decisions can have a positive impact on Biodiversity and sustainability and providing information about our commitment to reduce:

- our greenhouse gas emissions;
- the waste we generate;
- our water usage; and
- our level of travel.

We operated a Health, Well-Being and Sustainability Group until earlier this year which promoted important events such as Climate Change Week and Fair Trade fortnight. Recognising the need to give sustainability a greater focus, we have now agreed to set up a separate Sustainability Group with membership drawn from across the Agency.

We have an internal Travel Team who arrange travel for staff across the organisation. They actively promote public transport as a sustainable way to travel on official business, encouraging colleagues to use public, rather than private, transport for travel between offices and external locations.

Given the many benefits and advantages of cycling to both the environment and people's health we participate in the Scottish Government's **Cycle to Work scheme**. This allows staff to hire a bike and safety equipment, paying for it through monthly salary deductions. We also encourage our staff to take part in walking activities within the workplace and local community, with information circulated on a regular basis about walking events and the benefits of being active. These activities include the promotion of staff walking groups and walking meetings during the working day; all aimed at encouraging staff to take a break outside and explore local green spaces. In addition, we also promote an annual organisational-wide Step Count Challenge, whereby colleagues are encouraged to record their step counts and exercise totals over the course of a month. These various walking initiatives provide opportunities for all colleagues to experience and enjoy nature regularly.

Education Scotland employees can apply for up to six days of paid special leave per year for volunteering. This has been increased from three during the coronavirus outbreak. Volunteering on environmental and conservation projects is included within the policy. In 2019, Education Scotland STEM Team took part in a litter pick along the banks of the River Clyde to tackle marine plastic pollution and raise awareness of this in schools through social media.

Section 6: Research and Monitoring

Through our communication channels to schools, education professionals and partner organisations, Education Scotland continues to promote research in relation to Learning for Sustainability, outdoor learning, biodiversity and nature. For example, the findings from the

recent PISA Global Competence Report were promoted through Education Scotland Learning for Sustainability blog and Twitter feed. Other similar news items have been included in our Scotland Learns e-bulletin.

Research findings are also promoted through our professional learning programmes, for instance, research relating to outdoor learning, biodiversity and nature featured heavily in our recent programme of outdoor learning webinars. Our references to research can be found in our [outdoor learning summary page](#) on Education Scotland's National Improvement Hub.

[The Climate Change \(Duties of Public Bodies: Reporting Requirements\) \(Scotland\) Order 2015](#) came into force on 23 November 2015 requiring all public bodies, including Education Scotland, to report annually to Scottish Ministers on their compliance with climate change duties. We therefore monitor and report our CO2 emissions via the Public Bodies Climate Change Duties Reporting mechanism. Our latest annual Climate Change Report shows a reduction of 548t CO2e from 2014/15 to 2019/20.

We also continue to collate data and monitor our carbon footprint, volunteer work and service delivery to further improve conservation of biodiversity in areas of our influence and to inform future decisions relating to local and wider impact of our estate on biodiversity and nature. As indicated above, our sustainability performance is published in our [Annual Report and Accounts](#).

The impact of estate changes on local biodiversity will be carefully considered during the next review of our estate strategy.

Section 7: Biodiversity Highlights and Challenges

In October 2020, the Organisation for Economic Development published the 2018 International Programme of Student Assessment (PISA) Global Competence Report: [How are we preparing students to thrive in an interconnected world?](#). This report is supported by a [Scotland Highlights Report](#) published by Scottish Government.

The assessment included a test which assessed pupils' knowledge and understanding of global issues and the world views of others. Only two countries out of 27 which took part scored higher than Scotland.

Some of the other highlights include:

- Scotland's average score in the global competence assessment was 534 which was higher than the average of all participating countries of 474.
- Scotland's average score was one of five countries to score at least 50 points above the average. Twelve per cent of students in Scotland were assessed at Level 5, the highest level in the assessment, compared to 4.3% of students across all countries.
- Girls outperformed boys in every country taking part in the assessment, with the exception of Scotland where performance was similar.
- The global issues that students in Scotland were most familiar with were causes of poverty (87% of students), equality between men and women (85%), and climate change/global warming (78%).
- A higher proportion of students in Scotland (81.4%) reported thinking of themselves as a citizen of the world than the OECD average (76.2%).

- Almost two-thirds of students in Scotland (64.2%) reduce the amount of energy that they use at home to protect the environment.
- More than 4 out of 5 students (82.2%) were in a school where teachers felt they could adapt their teaching to the cultural diversity of students.
- Students in Scotland were among the 10 countries/economies (out of 66) with the most positive attitudes towards immigrants.

COVID has brought many challenges, not least to the many excellent outdoor education centres and partner organisations that have provided transformative experiences to generations of learners. Many of these centres have experienced a very challenging financial situation due to the many cancelled school bookings. Throughout 2020, Education Scotland and Scottish Government policy colleagues have engaged with a wide range of partners, networks and outdoor centres to develop a support package and to explore options for protecting the future of these centres. A £2 million package of support was agreed in October 2020. In addition, a wide range of professional learning partners and resources have been developed to support engagement with outdoor education centres and partners including Scottish Government COVID guidance on visits and trips: [a summary-of-outdoor-learning-resources](#)

The buildings we occupy are mainly managed by private landlords or other public bodies the Agency co-locates with. This means the Agency will continue to have limited influence over how the land surrounding these buildings is managed and used, minimising our ability to directly influence natural habitats or ecosystems.

Our most notable carbon footprint (96%) arises from the level of travel which is crucial for our organisation. We will therefore need to review the way the organisation's business is conducted over the next 10 years if we are to achieve the next carbon reduction target in 2030.

Perhaps the biggest challenge of all, however, will be the pressures on budgets following COVID. Future biodiversity or climate change activity is highly likely to have a financial impact and may require initial investment, for example for the purchase of an electric pool car and installation of electric Vehicle charging points. The necessity to safeguard and promote biodiversity will therefore need to be made even stronger.

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