

Poverty and Inequality Commission Biodiversity Report 2019-2020

Biodiversity duty

Under the Nature Conservation (Scotland) Act 2004, all public bodies in Scotland are under a statutory duty to further the conservation of biodiversity when carrying out their responsibilities. Public bodies are required to report every three years on the actions which they have taken to meet this biodiversity duty. More information about the biodiversity duty can be found at [Biodiversity Duty | NatureScot](#).

About the Poverty and Inequality Commission

The Poverty and Inequality Commission was established through the Child Poverty (Scotland) Act 2017 and came into being on 1 July 2019. It is an advisory non-departmental public body which provides independent advice and scrutiny to Scottish Ministers on poverty and inequality.

The Commission's responsibilities and powers are set out in the Child Poverty (Scotland) Act 2017. The Commission's role is to:

- Advise Scottish Ministers on any matter relating to poverty or inequality in Scotland, including the impact of policies and the use of resources in reducing poverty and inequality
- Monitor progress in reducing poverty and inequality in Scotland
- Promote the reduction of poverty and inequality in Scotland

The Commission has specific responsibilities in relation to child poverty where it:

- Provides advice to Scottish Ministers on the Child Poverty Delivery Plans which the Scottish Government has to produce every four years
- Comments on annual progress towards the child poverty targets and what further progress is needed to meet the targets

The Commission responds to requests for advice from Scottish Ministers, but also develops its own work programme to scrutinise progress and to promote the importance of particular issues in reducing poverty and inequality. In order to do its work the Commission can gather evidence, carry out research, and publish reports.

The Commission has nine members, including the Chair. All members are non-executive appointments made by the Scottish Ministers in line with the Code of Practice for Ministerial Public Appointments in Scotland. The Poverty and Inequality Commission is supported by a secretariat of three staff, all of whom are employed by the Scottish Government and based in Scottish Government buildings.

The Commission has no physical offices. Its main environmental impact is through travel by Commissioners to its meetings and travel between Scottish Government Edinburgh and Glasgow offices by the secretariat.

Actions to protect biodiversity and connect people with nature

The Commission does not have its own offices but enables secretariat staff to work at the Scottish Government office nearest their home in order to minimise travel. It encourages Commissioners to travel to meetings by public transport where that is possible and transport is accessible.

During the COVID-19 pandemic the Commission has used video-conferencing for its meetings and to engage with experts by experience. The Commission will consider more use of video-conferencing in the future to reduce travel impacts.

Mainstreaming biodiversity

Due to the Commission's role as an advisory body, and the fact that its staff are employed by Scottish Government, it has limited direct opportunities to incorporate biodiversity measures into policies, plans or strategies.

Nature-based solutions, climate change and biodiversity

The Commission is keen that actions to reduce poverty and inequality and actions to protect our natural environment are mutually supportive. The Commission has held a roundtable discussion with experts about the Wellbeing Economy in order to explore how tackling poverty can be part of an approach that protects and enhances the environment and biodiversity.

Workforce development

The Commission's staff are employed by Scottish Government and responsibility for workforce skills and training lies with the Scottish Government. Staff are encouraged to access Scottish Government opportunities in relation to biodiversity and the natural environment.

Research and monitoring

The Commission has not undertaken any relevant research during this period.

Biodiversity highlights and challenges

The Commission has been established for just over a year and engaged with experts about the Wellbeing Economy at an early stage. The Commission will continue to be alert to any opportunities to incorporate biodiversity in its work. The next three years should offer both challenges and opportunities to ensure that work to reduce poverty and inequality and protect biodiversity are aligned and mutually supportive.