

# Poverty and Inequality Commission Biodiversity Report 2021-2023

## 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 can have up to 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 four staff, all of whom are employed by the Scottish Government and based in Scottish Government buildings. The Commission has no physical offices.

The Commission has also set up a panel of Experts by Experience, people with lived experience of poverty, who work with the Commission.

## **Actions to protect and enhance biodiversity**

As an advisory NDPB with statutory functions relating to poverty and inequality, and child poverty in particular, the Commission's work is unlikely to have implications for biodiversity unless the Commission were to undertake a specific piece of work relating to poverty and biodiversity. The Commission's focus over the last three years has been particularly on actions needed to meet the child poverty targets, and the impact of first the Covid-19 pandemic and then the cost of living crisis on poverty and inequality. It has not undertaken any specific work relating to poverty and biodiversity. In addition the Commission does not employ staff or have offices so has limited opportunities to directly benefit biodiversity.

The Commission's main contribution to protecting biodiversity has been through reducing the impact of travel for meeting and events. Following the move to online meetings during the Covid-19 pandemic, the Commission and its Experts by Experience Panel have continued to either meet online or occasionally have held hybrid meetings. Secretariat staff either work from home or from their nearest Scottish Government office in order to minimise travel. Where travel is required, the Commission encourages Commissioners and staff to travel by public transport, where that is possible and transport is accessible.

## **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. While it has not undertaken a

piece of work in this area, it has highlighted this where possible in advice to Scottish Government. Examples include:

- The Commission's response to Scottish Government's 2022 Resource Spending Review consultation welcomed the focus on addressing climate change as a priority and encouraged the Scottish Government not to see its priorities of child poverty, climate change and a stronger, fairer, greener economy in isolation from each other.
- The Commission's contribution to the Social Renewal Advisory Board proposed strengthening the links between work on green jobs and addressing poverty and inequality.

## **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 nature of the Commission as an advisory body which does not employ staff or have offices limits the opportunities for it to take action to improve biodiversity. The Commission will continue to consider whether there are opportunities to incorporate biodiversity in its work over the next three years.