

EQUALITY MAINSTREAMING

Highlands and Islands Enterprise

2023



Highlands and Islands Enterprise
Iomairt na Gàidhealtachd 's nan Eilean

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STUART BLACK
Chief Executive

FOREWORD

Equality, diversity and inclusion are at the heart of our mission to develop a prosperous wellbeing economy across the Highlands and Islands. As we state in our [2023-28 strategy](#), we aspire to build and sustain a greener, fairer and more resilient region that benefits everyone.

This report showcases our progress in mainstreaming equality in the Highlands and Islands, not only in how we operate as an organisation, but as a core value and driver of success in the businesses and communities we support. It provides details of how we mainstream equality in all our activities, with evidence and analysis of how we've performed against each equality outcome.

Like any report of its kind, it offers a snapshot, a moment in time that marks significant achievements and good practice while recognising that we must always challenge ourselves to do more, do better.

That's why I wish to take this opportunity to affirm our commitment to tackle poverty, inequalities and inclusive growth through growing a wellbeing economy and accelerating community wealth building across all of four pillars of our new strategy: People, Place, Planet and Prosperity.

We will enhance business and community resilience and growth through ambitious leadership to accelerate investment, innovation and productivity, with specific focus on young people, women and rural leadership.

HIE will promote the Fair Work agenda through our own working practices and continuing to apply fair work conditionality to our funding support, a principle that we pioneered in 2022.

In partnership with other agencies and government, we will address barriers that can limit equality of opportunity, such as childcare provision.

We will build on the success of our programmes to support young people, including graduate placements and innovative leadership development initiatives such as IMPACT30.

Above all, we will use the evidence and findings of this report to inform our future actions and ensure we remain focused on our goal of mainstreaming equality.



INTRODUCTION

HIE is the Scottish Government’s economic and community development agency for the Highlands and Islands of Scotland. Our purpose is to build and sustain a greener, fairer and more resilient region that benefits everyone. We want the Highlands and Islands to be a leading net zero region with a dynamic wellbeing economy, which benefits its growing population and makes a valued contribution to Scotland.

The Highlands and Islands covers more than half the geography of Scotland and includes all of Scotland’s inhabited islands. A number of factors impact on equalities within the region with strong evidence of a correlation between peripherality, socio-economic experiences, economic growth and wellbeing. There are lower than average income levels in parts of the region and household income has to stretch further with significantly higher costs of living, particularly fuel and transport. A declining working age population continues to be of major concern and our equalities approach seeks to support the retention and attraction of young people alongside other interventions.

Our 2019-2022 strategy covered the period of this mainstreaming report with annual operating plans setting out in-year priorities and actions. We embed equalities in the actions we deliver, how we deliver these, and in how we operate as an organisation. In particular we do this through:

- Our strategy, priorities and actions
- Appraisal and decision-making (including equalities and people impact assessment)
- Delivery approaches and procurement
- Collaboration and partnership
- Measurement, targets and evaluation
- Developing our evidence base

HIE’s equality outcomes for 2021-2023 were:

- The diversity of leadership, entrepreneurship and workforce participation in the Highlands and Islands is increased
- Positive community engagement and support help sustain empowered, capable, and inclusive communities
- The working age population grows in every part of the Highlands and Islands

Through our eight area teams we ensure we are connected to our local communities. Through enhanced digital tools and services, we extend our reach and support across the region, adapting our approach in recognition of disparities within our region.

Further information on our approach and full details of our services can be found on our [website](#).

LEGISLATIVE FRAMEWORK

The [Equality Act 2010](#) and the [Public Sector Equality Duty \(PSED\)](#) set out how the public sector should consider equality in everything it does. The Act places on HIE a requirement, the “General Equality Duty”, to consider the need to:

ELIMINATE UNLAWFUL DISCRIMINATION, HARASSMENT AND VICTIMISATION

We can do this by eliminating less favourable treatment or indirect discrimination

ADVANCE EQUALITY OF OPPORTUNITY

We can do this by removing or minimising disadvantage, meeting needs which are particular to some groups of people and encouraging participation of under-represented groups.

FOSTER GOOD RELATIONS

We can do this by tackling prejudice and promoting understanding

The Act applies in relation to the “protected characteristics” of age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership (discrimination duty only), pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation.

The aim of the General Duty is to make sure we consider equality in our day-to-day activities, including our role as employer and work carried out by others on our behalf. Specific duties set by the Scottish Government include the publication of an Equalities Mainstreaming Report and demonstrates how we have used the PSED to make a material difference for the people of the Highlands and Islands.

FAIRER SCOTLAND DUTY

The new Fairer Scotland duty came into effect from April 2018. The duty places a legal responsibility on public bodies in Scotland to actively consider how they can “reduce inequalities of outcome caused by socio-economic disadvantage, when making strategic decisions”.

The Scottish Government guidance defines socio-economic disadvantage in broad terms as “living on a low income compared to others in Scotland, with little or no accumulated wealth, leading to greater material deprivation, restricting the ability to access basic goods and services”. It elaborates that socio-economic disadvantage can be experienced in both places and communities of interest, leading to further negative outcomes such as social exclusion.

HUMAN RIGHTS

The UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights are based on a framework of state responsibility to protect human rights; business responsibility to respect human rights; and the requirement for remedy for negative human rights impacts. Scottish Government guidance has informed procedures undertaken by HIE on appropriate due diligence on companies specifically in relation to their human rights record, before entering a business relationship with them.

ISLANDS ACT

The Islands Act was passed in 2018, with the National Islands Plan launched in December 2019, and includes the duty to have regard to island communities in carrying out functions and undertaking Island Community Impact Assessments. These are undertaken where the impact of a policy, strategy or service is likely to be significantly different on an island community than on others and assessing the extent to which this can be mitigated or improved.

OUR ORGANISATION

As of 31 March 2023, HIE currently employs 278 members of staff (63% female, 37% male). Employees range in age from 17 to 71 years old and our 2 longest serving employees each have over 45 years' service. HIE recognises it has a low number of employees who identify themselves as having an ethnic origin other than White British (only 5% which has increased from 3.5% in 2021). Our number of disabled employees also remains low, representing 7% of our workforce, however this has increased from 3% in 2019.

HIE is committed to equality, diversity and inclusion where employees work in an environment and culture in which they can be challenged and developed; reaching their personal career goals regardless of sex, race, religion or belief, age, marriage or civil partnership, pregnancy/ maternity, sexual orientation, gender reassignment or disability.

HIE is proud to actively promote the Fair Work agenda and embeds its principles through working practices, policies and procedures. The development and embedding of Fair Work principles and a flexible approach to family friendly working has made a positive impact in attracting a wider range of diverse talent, retaining staff, improving business reputation, and creating a happier, more engaged workforce that supports the specific needs of employees with caring responsibilities, which for many employees can be unpredictable.

OUR VALUES

HIE employees are passionate about HIE's purpose and proud to make a difference to the region we serve.

We are **outward-looking** and **think long-term**



We are **customer-focused**



We **work together** and **learn from each other**

We are **committed to excellence** and **innovation**



We encourage **diversity** and **respect** each other



We **network** and **collaborate**



We **listen** and **communicate** clearly

MAINSTREAMING AS AN EMPLOYER

Over the past two years we have continued to work hard to ensure the best possible work experience for our employees.

HIE has a suite of family friendly and flexible working policies that help set the context and tone for our approach, backed up by practical support, tools, facilities and resources to help all our employees balance the demands of work and home, whether that's for periods of maternity, paternity and adoption leave, childcare, foster care, eldercare, young people, pre-retirement, or as community volunteers making a social impact.

The majority of our employees welcome flexibility in both how and where they work and choose to work a blend of home and office-based working. Current practices, performance and feedback demonstrate that hybrid working is working effectively.

Through mainstreaming equality into what we do, we will build on our work to date. We aim to further develop by:

- Continuing to embed a culture which fosters respect and values diversity
- Continuing to ensure that any unlawful discrimination, harassment, victimisation or bullying is not tolerated
- Undertaking a review of our recruitment processes to ensure they continue to be free from any unconscious bias and promote strategies that help us to attract a more diverse mix of applicants
- Understanding the needs of different groups of employees and developing a better understanding of how we can meet their needs

PROGRESS WITH OUR EQUALITY OUTCOME AS AN EMPLOYER

What we set out to do

Legislation requires us to outline a new set of outcomes every 4 years. Our equality outcomes as an employer for 2021-2025 are:

1. Our employees have an enhanced awareness of mainstreaming equality, diversity and inclusion matters
2. Pathways are in place for our young people to provide structured routes from our modern apprenticeships and graduate placements to longer term positions with HIE

What we have achieved so far

We actively use our employee data and feedback to inform our policies and practices. This has successfully allowed us to achieve the following:

Our employees have an enhanced awareness of mainstreaming equality, diversity and inclusion matters

- **Created a neuroinclusion employee network** – set up an internal peer support group which aims to create a neuroinclusive employee-led community for support, awareness raising, to develop understanding of neurodiversity and to help to explore practical implications and adjustments which may enable employees to achieve their potential.
- **Menopause support** – developed a menopause support policy, commenced training for line managers and developed awareness raising via our HR communications and updates.
- **Equality, diversity, and inclusion policy** – updated and refreshed our policy.
- **Gender pay gap reporting** – HR continue to work with Leadership Team to review and understand how HIE can positively impact its gender pay gap.
- **SCQF inclusive recruiter** – updated our recruitment processes to measure candidates against the SCQF skills framework rather seeking and scoring against a narrower more traditional set of qualifications. We have also updated our recruitment system and practices so that line managers can now shortlist anonymised candidate applications aiming to remove potential for unconscious bias.
- **Learning and development** – implemented refresher training on E&D (ACAS Introduction to Equality and Diversity training) to increase awareness and upskill employees.

Pathways are in place for our young people to provide structured routes from our modern apprenticeships and graduate placements to longer term positions with HIE

The aim of this outcome is to put in place measures that make our workplace more attractive for young people and in turn increase the number of young people we employ.

As at 31 March 2021, our youngest employee was 21 years of age. At 31 March 2023 our youngest employee is 17 years of age. HIE has strived to recruit from a diverse market to enhance opportunities for young people. Our [employee stories](#) share feedback on these programmes.

- **Modern apprenticeships** – We recruited 5 MAs between 1 April 2021 and 31 March 2023. HIE will continue to develop the programme and review the challenges and opportunities of this recruitment pathway.
- **Graduate placements** – In October 2022 we recruited eight employees to undertake graduate placements. The roles covered a variety of subjects including front line area office activities, Gaelic development, economics, net zero and system development.

PROGRESS ON PREVIOUS OUTCOMES

Between 2017 and 2021 our equality outcome as an employer was “to increase our own workforce diversity and meet disabled and other employees’ needs through better use of employee equality monitoring information”. As at 31 March 2023, the number of employees who identify as having a disability is 7% (increased from 3% in 2019). This demonstrates our continued commitment to our outcomes and acknowledges that the actions required to meet our outcomes are long term and often progress may not be apparent for several years.

FUTURE ACTIONS

Over the remainder of the reporting period (1 April 2023 to 31 March 2025) to support us in achieving our equality aims and outcomes we will:

- Action inclusive recruitment and retention strategies to achieve diverse representation through the organisation
- Adopt an evidence-based approach to tackle gender and ethnicity pay gaps and career progression
- Build managers’ capacity to embed inclusive work cultures
- Nurture the next generation of diverse leaders to strengthen talent pipelines
- Review the use of the Scottish Government’s Minority Ethnic Toolkit for recruitment practices
- Develop training for line managers on a range of E&D issues including neuroinclusion
- Develop e-learning refresher modules on ED&I topics on our online learning platform

USING OUR EMPLOYEE DATA

We use the employee information we gather to inform a range of policies and employment practices. This enables us to chart trends over time, to highlight areas for investigation of potential discrimination and to provide evidence for people impact assessment. This has enabled us to review the impact of our equality outcome since 2013 and other policy development on employee demographics and working practices.

To enhance the quality of our employee monitoring information, we continue to undertake internal awareness raising to emphasise the importance of all employees reviewing and updating their equalities data. Having up-to-date personal data recorded for all employees is vital to ensure our monitoring is accurate and the data provides a meaningful foundation for taking action to promote equality of opportunity for all employees. A key consideration in achieving this has been reassuring employees on the safeguarding and security of this sensitive and personal information.

Our employee demographics for our workforce composition, recruitment, training and development, promotions and leavers can be viewed in [Appendix A](#).

ORGANISATIONAL CULTURE AND AWARENESS RAISING

Our Staff Forum is a key route for helping us consult and communicate on policies e.g. recently this has included forum members providing feedback on our equality, diversity and inclusion, menopause support, substance misuse, smoke free, and health and wellbeing policies.

We use national campaigns and awareness raising days to help promote a range of events and activities that support the promotion of diversity such as:

- mental health support
- cancer support
- menopause support
- disability awareness
- baby loss awareness
- LGBT history month
- neurodiversity celebration week
- pride month
- women’s/men’s health

We continue to intend to review and update our range of subject matters and gather feedback on the subjects we promote.

PROTECTED CHARACTERISTICS

Under the headings below we have identified key areas of focus for HIE as an employer to help encourage participation of under-represented groups and address specific needs identified from our employee data. In taking this approach, we also aim to tackle prejudice and promote better awareness and understanding across the HIE workforce.

SEX AND GENDER

As at 31 March 2023, 63% of employees identify their sex as female, 37% male which remains very consistent with previous years.

With a predominantly female workforce, it is vital we offer flexibility and inclusion via our policies and procedures as the majority of employees with caring responsibilities are female. We provide a tailored approach for all employees to ensure their individual preferences and needs are catered for, wherever possible.

Since 2020, HIE has adopted a hybrid working model and this is our standard working practice which offers a full range of flexibility for individual employees, appropriate to their job role.

Gender pay gap

HIE's gender pay gap has reduced since 2007. Our most recent gender pay gap review was based on data as at 31 March 2022 and shows a mean gender pay gap of 12.2% (reduced from 15.86% in 2021). Full details on our gender pay gap can be found in our [2022 report](#). A summary of our progress is detailed as follows:

	Dec 2009	April 2010	Nov 2012	Aug 2014	Aug 2016	Aug 2018	March 2021	March 2022
Pay Gap	22.54%	21.61%	18.25%	15.94%	14.25%	14.35%	15.86%	12.2%

We are confident that the existing gender pay gap is not because men and women are paid differently for the same or equivalent work but exists because men and women work in different roles and those roles attract different salaries.

Despite still being a significant gap between male and female pay, the data does show a downward trend with a reduction of 3.66% from HIE's previous gender pay gap report and reduction of 3.3% on the 2020 UK national mean gender pay gap.

Although there are no conclusions on the exact reasons for gender pay gaps, there are several widely accepted contributing factors. By understanding why, the gender pay gap exists, HIE is better equipped to take action to reduce the existing gap and bring future data returns closer to the ideal 0%.

A widely drawn conclusion, and historically the one that has been considered to be the greatest contributor to the gender pay gap, is that men are more likely to be employed in senior roles in organisations than women. The data from HIE's 2022 report reflects this national data. In 2022 there were 104 full pay relevant males and 38 of these males sit within quartile D (the highest paid population of employees). This equates to 36.5% of the total male population at HIE. By comparison, 31 females of the 169 total full pay relevant female population sit within quartile D, which equates to 18.3% of the total female population. This is a significant difference of representation and is likely to be the most impactful influence on HIE's gender pay gap.

Another substantial contributor to the gender pay gap is that women are more likely to work part-time. The importance of this is that opportunities for part-time work tend to be in lower-level roles. HIE data does not entirely reflect this. Of the total full pay relevant male population (104), 11 males work part-time, equating to 10.6% of the male population. Of the total full pay relevant female population (169), 50 females, 29.6%, work part-time. This data return demonstrates that a higher proportion of females work in part-time roles than males. Although there is a significant difference between the male and female data associated with part-time working, there could be a positive interpretation drawn from this data that suggests the flexibility offered through the availability of part-time roles within HIE allows a higher proportion of females to remain in employment. It is also important to note that there is part-time worker representation at each quartile in respect of both male and female employees. The table below shows a breakdown by quartile and an even distribution can be seen:

QUARTILE	NUMBER OF PART-TIME MALES	NUMBER OF PART-TIME FEMALES
A	2	17
B	3	14
C	3	12
D	3	7

The last commonly reported reason considered to have the most influence on the gender pay gap is that women are more likely to take long breaks from work and this limits the speed of and/or accessibility to career progression. HIE data reflects this national position. In our gender pay gap report we stated that there was a total relevant employee population of 276 and there was a total full pay relevant population of 273. This difference of three employees is a result of one employee being on reduced pay due to long term sickness absence and two employees being on reduced pay due to periods of maternity pay. All three of these employees are female, which is reflective of the national generalisation that women are more likely to take long breaks from employment. The impact on career progression cannot be definitively confirmed, however, it is reasonable to assume that a long period away from the workplace limits opportunities both during the periods of absence as well as on return to work where there may be new, external influences on an individual's career.

Actions to address the gender pay gap

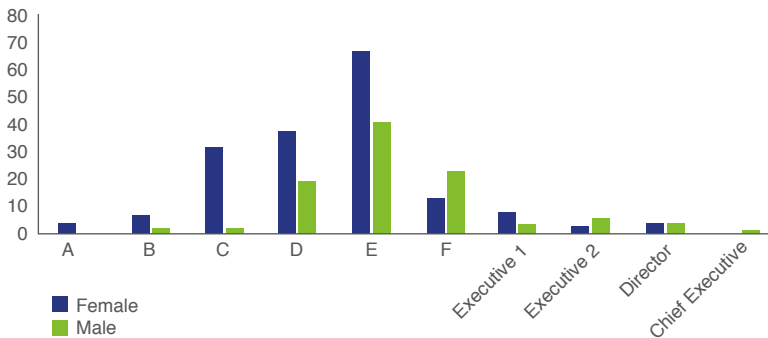
HIE is working on the following key areas to positively impact the gender pay gap.

- Talent attraction
- Career progression and succession planning
- Building an inclusive culture

Occupational segregation

Occupational segregation is the unequal concentration of men and women in different types of occupation and at different pay levels. It is widely accepted as an indicator of inequality - a barrier which prevents both men and women from fulfilling their potential in the labour market and narrowing the recruitment pool available to employers. The occupational segregation data displayed in the following chart and tables is effective as at 31 March 2023.

Vertical occupational segregation



Horizontal occupational segregation

Directorate	Business Improvement and Internal audit		Communities and Place		Enterprise Support		Executive Office		Finance and Corporate Services		Human Resources		Strategic Projects		Strategy and Regional Economy		Total
	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	
Grade																	
A					*				*								*
B			*	*	*				*	*	*						9
C	*	*	*		12	*	*		5		*		*	*		34	
D	*	*	5	5	24	10			*	*	*		*	*	*	58	
E	*	*	7	*	41	24	*	*	*	*	*		*	*	8	5	108
F	*		*	6	*	7		*	*	*	*		*	*	*	*	36
Executive 1	*		*	*	*								*	*	*		11
Executive 2					*	5							*				9
Director	*		*	*	*				*	*			*	*	*	*	8
Chief Executive								*									*
Total	12	*	22	19	89	47	*	*	18	8	11		5	9	15	11	278

The table above shows horizontal occupational segregation – the number of men and women in each directorate (by job type). Where there are fewer than five employees in any grade within a directorate this is represented by * to avoid inadvertently identifying individual employees.

Compared to the workforce composition of 63% women and 37% men, women continue to be slightly overrepresented in support functions (Business Improvement and Internal Audit, Finance and Corporate Services and Human Resources). Men and women continue to be proportionately represented in HIE's customer facing roles (Enterprise Support directorate) at 65% female and 35% male.

Occupational segregation by race and disability

HIE has also gathered occupational segregation information by race and disability since 2009. This shows that the proportions of disabled and minority ethnic staff have remained broadly similar across HIE.

Although those with disabilities are few, they are represented across HIE's grades and in job roles across most directorates.

Disability by grade	A	C	D	E	F	Total
Disability	*	*	*	8	*	19

Disability by directorate	Enterprise Support	Communities and Place	Business Improvement and Internal Audit	Strategy and Regional Economy	Finance and Corporate Services	Human Resources	Total
Disability	11	*	*	*	*	*	19

RACE

HIE's workforce is currently made up of 81% White British employees, 6% from other racial groups or preferring not to disclose, with 13% not completing any selection.

We will encourage disclosure and completion of this category over the next reporting period and aim to reduce the number of non-completions by reminding employees of the benefits of selecting a response to this question.

HIE therefore has no employees at present who have declared that they are in a BAME category. Within the local population that we serve, the last census shows that ethnic minority populations range from 0.4% to 0.8% across the local authority areas.

We are working to ensure that our processes and procedures (recruitment in particular) are free from any artificial barriers, such as prejudice or a failure to respond to the specific needs of people with different protected characteristics.

We are also going to review the Scottish Government's Minority Ethnic Toolkit to explore if there are any actions that could be implemented, particularly within our recruitment practices, to attract employees from a broader range of racial groups and backgrounds.

DISABILITY

As at 31 March 2023, the number of HIE employees identifying as having a disability is 7%. The figures have not been published by grade or business unit to avoid inadvertently identifying individual employees.

However, analysis has been carried out to understand the spread of disabled people across HIE's workforce by grade and by business unit (job type). This has indicated that there are no areas of concern around vertical or horizontal occupational segregation as disabled employees, although few, are represented across HIE's grades and in a variety of job roles across most business units.

The number of employees who have not selected any response to the disability question on our monitoring form, has continued to reduce. We are pleased to see that more employees are willing to declare a selection as this will help us to ensure our policies and processes best support the needs of our employees.

HIE strives to be a fully inclusive employer and is recognised both as an 'SCQF Inclusive Recruiter' and a 'Disability Confident' employer. We encourage applications from applicants with disabilities or health conditions and ensure such employees are fully supported to allow them to work to their full potential.

SCQF inclusive recruiter

Over the last year we have revised our recruitment practices to reflect SCQF inclusive recruitment levels to offer clarity around skills and experience required for the role, rather than looking for a specific academic qualification.

Disability confident



We will continue to explore the experiences of employees in more depth, particularly in relation to disability. HIE is recognised as a Disability Confident employer having reached level 2 of the scheme. HIE has therefore demonstrated that it has met all core criteria associated with the themes of the level 2 standard. We are currently reviewing the criteria associated with the next and top level of the scheme – Disability Confident Leader – with a view to seeking accreditation in due course.

As well as meeting the specific and varied needs of any disabled employees through a range of reasonable adjustments, we have also considered the needs of employees caring for disabled dependents. There have been a number of examples where existing employees have acquired caring responsibilities while in our employment. This has included the care of disabled children where a range of flexible working arrangements have been put in place and time off agreed to cope with treatment and therapy.

Neuroinclusion

Our Inclusive Workplace programme involves fostering an environment that celebrates neurodiversity, encourages open communication, provides reasonable accommodations, and ensures that everyone has an equitable chance to thrive and contribute their unique talents and abilities.

Over the past 12 months we have focused on progressing our work in this area in response to both the raised external profile of neurodiversity in society/workplaces, along with an observed increase in employee relations cases within HIE following lockdown where neurodiversity was seen to be an increasing factor for individual staff and managers. When developing our approach to hybrid working following a return to office working we saw some resistance from some employees. It was apparent that a number of employees were struggling with changes to working practices highlighting a lack of support and adjustments from line managers and colleagues to accommodate neurodivergent preferences.

In showcasing a genuine enthusiasm for employees who think differently, our Inclusive Workplace programme encouraged existing neurodivergent employees to self-disclose and to advocate for the needs of existing neurodivergent employees.

Interactive webinars open to all employees were delivered in December 2022 and January 2023 in partnership with Auticon where approximately 140 employees participated and given the opportunity to explore neurodiversity; unique challenges in the workplace, as well as strengths associated with common conditions.

As well as running webinars, a comprehensive intranet support page was created with two strands, general employee awareness information along with information specifically targeted to line managers to help them support employees in their teams who are neurodivergent. Content and materials are regularly updated and refreshed to ensure information is current and in line with ever changing best practice.

A neuroinclusion employee-led support group was also established on our Viva Engage platform which has proved to be very active and popular for sharing ideas, information, tools and techniques as well as mutual support. The group has benefited from people who combine knowledge of the real challenges of being neurodistinct, with a passion for helping HIE live its values and become truly inclusive for all.

Benefits

Neurodiversity in the workplace brings immense value, including enhanced innovation, productivity, problem-solving abilities, and a more inclusive work culture. In line with our wider approach to equality, diversity, and inclusion, we want to demystify neurodiversity, help to break down workplace barriers that neurodivergent people often face, and ultimately seek to foster an environment where our managers are enabled to recruit, develop and retain a more inclusive workforce.

As a public sector organisation, HIE is obliged to meet statutory targets, but we continually go above and beyond the minimum. One of HIE's core values 'we encourage diversity and respect each other' highlights to our employees what we expect and demonstrates a genuine interest in the thoughts, opinions, values and needs of colleagues and views differences in these areas as both inevitable and desirable. We avoid speaking, writing, or doing other things that could be seen as disrespectful of people and we recognise and show respect for the strengths and contributions of others. Promoting awareness and understanding of neurodiversity supports this core organisational value and encourages employees to be respectful of individual needs.

Results

The growth and impact of the neuroinclusion employee support group over the past 12 months has been excellent. We have three volunteers who are 'champions' of the group, who have all taken an active role and the group is now fully employee-led. There are monthly drop-in calls, accessible to all employees which are well attended, typically 12 to 15 attending. There are currently 31 members of the group which equates to approximately 11% of our workforce and with the current UK wide statistic estimating 15% of the population is neurodiverse, our employee support group is representative of the UK wide statistic. The group has renamed themselves 'Quirky Brains' in attempt to make the group less formal and they regularly share tips and techniques on how to make the workplace less daunting.

Since our dedicated intranet site has been developed and introduced to support the webinar training and provide support for employees and line managers, there have been 263 unique interactions on the site which reflect the high degree of interest and engagement.

We have also seen positive resolution of employee relations cases related to neurodiversity through better awareness, understanding, adaptation and the use of individual assessments to establish a range of coping strategies and align individual strengths with role requirements.

We have seen a higher profile and representation from neurodivergent employees in a range of cross organisation working groups, where this was not apparent before.

Next steps

In future we plan to expand the initiative and further embed the benefits of neurodiversity into the culture at HIE. Over the coming 12 months it will be vital to maintain momentum and continue to educate and raise awareness on this area of inclusion.

A key priority over the next 12 months will be to raise awareness amongst line managers and offer a range of learning and development inputs to suit all needs. There will be training available as drop-in sessions for those who prefer in-person delivery, as well as a series of informative webinars for those who prefer to digest material in their own time. Content will be focused on understanding neurodiversity and highlighting the strengths of neurodivergent individuals to support our organisational culture. There will also be education for managers on internal processes and procedures that will help them support their team members when needed, both emotionally and in practical approaches.

Currently there are materials available on our Intranet support page in support of dyslexia, autism, ADHD and dyspraxia. These materials will be expanded not only to include greater detail on each of these conditions, but to offer details on other conditions that are known to be neurodiverse.

Our 'Quirky Brains' group has demonstrated an amazing level of positive engagement within HIE. The next step for this group is to raise their profile and encourage a wider membership. HR can support this growth by actively promoting the group and our organisational approach to neurodiversity, and equality, diversity, and inclusion more generally, as part of the induction and onboarding process for new employees. We will also look to invite representatives from the neuroinclusion support group to speak at HR events, and input to our regular HR clinics for employees and our Staff Forum. We also plan to develop case study examples to highlight our approach through social media channels as part of our external talent attraction strategy.

EMPLOYEE STORY

Kayleigh Nicolson
Development Manager

Kayleigh is a “champion” within our Neuroinclusion employee network and explains how employees have found HIE’s support in this area.

How supportive do you find HIE as an employer for neurodivergent employees?

HIE are highly supportive employers. I’ve found that even before HR began their awareness raising activities and training, and we formed the neurodiversity and inclusion group, my Line Manager has always been very patient and tolerant when reviewing my written work. They have never been patronising or condescending when addressing errors in the text, or misinterpretations of context or directions. I had not disclosed my dyslexia, dyscalculia and dyspraxia conditions at interview or following employment, as I generally have good workarounds and feel able to work well without adjustments. This really shows how supportive and constructive HIE staff are, providing this support and understanding without any formalised ask for help.

What adjustments and measures can neurodivergent staff benefit from?

In recent months, our internal support group has been able to share and highlight various tools and processes which help to manage and mitigate the impact of conditions on day-to-day work. This includes trials of software such as TextHelp (Read and Write), the flexibility to work from home which takes the pressure off attending a busy office when staff are feeling overwhelmed, help from non-neurodivergent staff with proof reading and editing, creation of a ‘safe’ environment in which staff can move about and relieve tensions/involuntary actions during long meetings or conferences. The peer-to-peer support itself is uniquely helpful, providing drop-in sessions and informal, non-judgemental space to share concerns, recommendations, information, and generally give/seek support. The closed group on Viva is there for staff to share useful information and updates, as well as thoughts and ideas in a way which can be followed up with actions and provide feedback for future improvement.

AGE

HIE's workforce is ageing with an average employee age of 47. Previously; 45 in 2015 and 2017, 47 in 2019, 48 in 2021, 47 in 2023. Employees who are 55 years old and above now make up 31% of our workforce (compared to 25% in 2019).

Developing the young workforce

We are aware that the percentage of 16-24 year olds (3%) and 25-29 year olds (4%) is only slowly increasing. Although the number of young people in the organisation is still relatively small several employees who initially started with us as graduate placements or modern apprentices have secured promoted positions and have gone on to develop their careers within HIE and now fall out with these age ranges.

To support our younger employees, we continue to provide 100% financial support for further education/professional qualifications, offer short term placements, offer employment and training of modern apprentices, continue to develop of our in-house graduate placement programme and continue our commitment in young people. We have also taken time to understand the needs of our younger employees and have gathered feedback. They said that they appreciate a wide range of support from HIE including hybrid working, flexible working, pay and benefits, wellbeing support, learning and development opportunities and the Young Scotland Programme.

Intergenerational working

Our high staff retention rates and long service (32% of employees have 20 or more years' service) along with our aging workforce means we have had to consider intergenerational working, changing expectations, succession planning and the implications these have on our workplace.

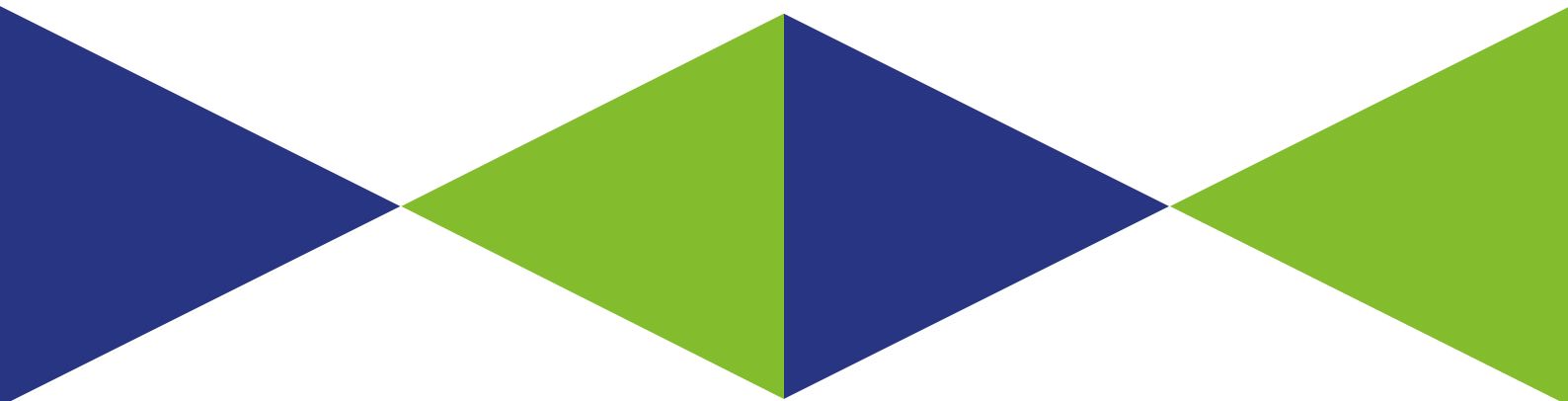
Our work with Age Scotland has focused on supporting our employees to take advantage of flexible opportunities to extend working life beyond traditional retirement ages as well as developing the young workforce through graduate placements and modern apprenticeships to grow and retain talent and provide longer term career development opportunities. We regularly hold 'planning for your future' sessions aimed at staff aged 55 and over, and financial wellbeing sessions for those in the 35-55 age group.

We are also very aware of the different needs of our older employees as they plan their eventual retirement. With an ageing workforce we need to retain key skills, knowledge and experience while also facilitating a range of flexible options and a phased approach on the run up to retirement. Having the ability to retain valuable knowledge, skills and expertise by offering a flexible approach to phased retirement and planning for succession is critical. We have explored differing work styles/expectations across inter-generational groups, and we continue to work with Age Scotland to focus on addressing the issues presented by HIE's demographics and supporting our employees with flexible opportunities to extend working life beyond traditional retirement ages.



EMPLOYEE STORIES

As an organisation HIE is committed to developing the young workforce and to use MA positions as an opportunity to attract, develop and retain talented young people both within HIE and within our geographic region.



Kata Garzo **Modern Apprentice**

“I think apprenticeships are hugely underestimated. They enable you to learn as you work and acquire the right skills for a specific job. This gives you a big advantage and creates opportunities to gain more experience and be well placed to move up the ladder. I feel like I’ve learnt more in six months as an MA than I did in a year at college. And there’s always plenty support. I’m so pleased I went down this path and would highly recommend it for everybody!”

Grace Henderson **Modern apprentice**

“I would definitely recommend to people that they think about a modern apprenticeship if they’re looking to start or even change career. I didn’t know a lot about it at first but approached it with an open mind and found it to be a great alternative to the university or college route, which would have meant leaving home. The learning has been very hands on and practical, with lots of support.”



RELIGION AND BELIEF

The types of religions declared by our employees have remained consistent since 2019. The percentage of employees who have not declared a response to whether they follow a religion or belief has however increased to 22%. Those who have declared that they prefer not to say has remained almost the same as previous years. We aim to continue to foster good relations between those with different religious beliefs and raise awareness of different backgrounds and cultures.

SEXUAL ORIENTATION

We have received feedback from employees suggesting they would like to see more promotion of LGBT+ information and support within HIE. We have therefore offered opportunities for employees to attend training and development events and aim to take advice, tips and tools suggested to help us to promote more open conversations, provide guidance and resources for employees and managers to support LGBT+ employees, and to help us to identify any barriers, challenges, or stigmas. We have also run several awareness campaigns including for LGBT history, Pride month and local Pride events.

In future we also hope to create an employee LGBT+ network to help support internal peer support.

Our employee monitoring shows an increase in declarations of LGBT employees however we have also seen an increase in those who have chosen not to make any declaration. We will aim to promote the benefits of declaring over the coming year.

GENDER IDENTITY

We attempt to gather equality and diversity statistics including gender identity. Responses to this are low and there is no evidence to suggest we have any concerns or gaps in this area however HIE recognises that individuals may be unwilling to declare their identity status therefore we have aimed to raise awareness and support for non-binary and transgender employees.

The graphic below shows an example of one of our initiatives on creating an inclusive workplace. We will continue our work in this area over the next two years to ensure we are treating individuals as they want to be.

PREGNANCY AND MATERNITY

Between 1 April 2021 and 31 March 2023, we have supported 13 employees during their pregnancy and maternity leave. All those who have taken maternity leave during this period have returned to work. HIE accommodates employee requests for different work arrangements upon return to work where possible. We continue to encourage returning mothers to use Keeping in Touch days to support their return to work where they feel this would be of benefits and allow returners to use their accrued annual leave to phase back to work if they wish to. Our peer support network for breastfeeding continues to provide support for mums to discuss any specific issues or queries and signpost to useful information.



Creating an Inclusive Workplace

HIE is an inclusive employer and seeks to support an organisational culture where everyone feels comfortable to be themselves, regardless of individual circumstances or preferences.

Language matters! Meaning, tone, sentiment can be misinterpreted or misunderstood. Avoid offending your colleagues by taking a minute to read the attached terminology table in relation to non-binary and transgender individuals.



What's in a name?.....everything! Our name makes us who we are and gives us our sense of identity and belonging. Be respectful of colleagues' wishes and ensure you address them how they wish to be referred to. Consistent use of a previous name for non-binary and transgender colleagues can cause unnecessary stress and may be construed as harassment. Be kind and be respectful of individual choices.

HIE asks that all colleagues wear appropriate business attire during working hours. Whilst we embrace individuality and respect individual choices, we ask that all colleagues, regardless of individual preferences, are respectful of all colleagues and clients and are suitably dressed to present a professional impression of HIE at all times.



Line Managers – In line with our organisational values, remember one of your core capabilities is **employee support**. You play a key role in creating and maintaining a positive workplace culture, leading by example and challenging inappropriate behaviour. Be supportive and accepting of your team to get the best out of them.

EMPLOYEE STORIES

Lydia Crow

Collaboration and Support Manager

Lydia explains how supportive she found colleagues in HIE before, during and after her maternity leave and explains “(support was) definitely evident in how HIE approaches maternity leave and supporting parents. Part of this is in feeling that this isn’t just a tick-box exercise, but there is genuine care and interest shown to individuals’ care and development, and an acknowledgement of the importance of personal and family life. This is a lot rarer than it should be! There have been a number of times when I have had a query regarding interpretation of policy etc, and I have always received a prompt and helpful response from HR.

Lydia had a number of queries in relation to her leave and entitlements and notes “throughout the whole process, my line manager was supportive and helpful which made the whole process much smoother. Due to problems emailing, my request for return from maternity leave came in later than anticipated, but my line manager and HR still managed to turn this around in time to enable me to return to work when I had hoped.”

Jem Tulloch

Development Officer

“As soon as I found out I was pregnant I informed my line manager. She was great and was very happy for me. Since Covid was still a big issue and was a huge worry for me throughout my pregnancy I worked a lot of the time from home and kept unnecessary mixing to a minimum. My line manager and the HR team were supportive of this, and I felt a lot safer as a result. I had other issues throughout my pregnancy which meant I had to attend a lot of hospital appointments both locally and in Aberdeen and HIE were very understanding of this, allowing me to attend appointments when required. The HR team kept me informed of what I had to do in terms of setting a date for my maternity leave and keeping me up to date with any paperwork required. HIE are very generous with their maternity pay and I chose to use all 10 of my keeping in touch days. I felt supported when I returned to work by my line manager and have eased back into my role very well despite being off a whole year.”

HIGHLANDS AND ISLANDS BOARD DIVERSITY

The [Equality Act \(Specific Duties\) \(Scotland\) Amendment Regulations 2016](#) came into force on 18 March 2016. This requires HIE as a listed authority to provide information on:

- The number of men and women who have been members of the board during the period covered by the report, and
- Sign-posting the action that HIE propose to take in the future to promote greater diversity of board membership.

The gender breakdown of the HIE board during the period covered by this report is as follows:

Time period	Total number of board members (Excluding the Chief Executive)	Number of males	Number of females	Number of vacancies
As at 30/04/2021	11	6	3	2
As at 31/03/2022	11	5	3	3*
As at 31/03/2023	11	6	5	0**

*As at 31 March 2022, there were three vacancies. These were filled with effect from 13 June 2022 with one male and two females appointed.

**As at 31 March 2023, two male board members came to the end of their term on the HIE Board. These positions were filled with effect from 1 April 2023 and 1 May 2023 with two males appointed.

HIE consider a balanced board where males and females reach approximately half of the declarations. As can be seen, the HIE board has remained gender balanced throughout the period of the report allowing for periods where there were vacancies to be filled. The reporting end period is 31 March 2023 and any appointments made thereafter will be fully reported in our next report.

The [Gender Representation on Public Boards \(Scotland\) Act 2018](#) and the associated guidance and regulations which came in to force on 29 May 2020 is welcomed by HIE. Under the Act, public authorities are required to publish and report on the carrying out of their functions under Sections 5 and 6 of the Act. The Act also set a gender representation objective for boards to have 50% of non-executive members who are women by 31 December 2022.

During recruitment exercises, our Chair and the panel have focused on actions aimed at encouraging more female applicants. In the last two appointment rounds progressed through the public appointments process, the activity reflected Scottish Ministers' commitment to diversity and inclusion and encouraged applications from a wide and diverse pool. Two online events were held in association with Changing the Chemistry (CtC) with a high level of participants taking part in each event. CtC is a membership charity operating as a peer support network with the aim of changing the chemistry in the boardroom so people and boards embrace diversity of thought. The vacancies were also shared widely via a news release and comms messages, business and community organisations, and partner organisations, for publication and sharing internally, on networks and on social channels.

HIE has also developed a recruitment video which is available on our website when board positions are being advertised, this has input from our Chair and two female Board members who provide their own perspectives of being a board member and being on the board of HIE.

During Covid, the board meeting format moved to virtual with all participants joining remotely. Through the course of 2022, as restrictions were lifted, the Board meetings were held physically with four per year taking place in Inverness and the other two taking place at locations across our geography (which involve engagement events with business and community organisations). Throughout the course of the year, the board are involved in virtual engagement sessions across the geographical areas covered by our area offices with attendance at each shared between board members. This makes it easier for board members to attend whilst also ensuring a good level of engagement across our whole geography. Although attendance at board meetings in person is preferred, flexibility is available for board members who can't attend every meeting in person.

Moving forward, HIE will continue to take steps to achieve equality objectives, including gender balance under section 6 of the Act, despite the requirement being removed on 31 December 2022.

MAINSTREAMING AS A SERVICE PROVIDER

During the period of the report, HIE continued to transform its approach to delivery ensuring it meets the needs of customers, partners and staff. Covid-19 continued to impact on our approach and remaining adaptable and agile was important, ensuring we were flexible to respond to the changing socio-economic conditions.

Our business transformation plan is founded on the following themes:

- simplified and streamlined processes which support efficiencies and rigorous decision making and accessibility;
- optimised use of resources using a strong evidence base and considered cost efficiencies including delivery of our workforce plan and focus on youth;
- continuing to build on the flexibility and opportunities through increased use of data and digital technology;
- ensuring that our product and service offering is fit for purpose and place, ensures added value, aligns with priorities, and maximises partnership opportunities;
- close partnership working and collaboration to ensure more cost-effective services, joined up customer experience and place-based solutions;
- flexing our approach and adjusting our intervention rates and criteria to take account of the place dimension; and
- greater transparency and continuous improvement based around insights, measurement and evaluation.

We consider it as important to mainstream equalities in how we deliver, as well as what we deliver, and this delivery framework emphasises many aspects of our approach which are pertinent, recognising the importance of place, staff, partnership, use of data and digital technology to increase access and inclusion, and a strong evidence base.

During 2021-23 we prioritised actions to:

- extend Fair Work practices, increase incomes and tackle rural disadvantage;
- build on our strong entrepreneurial culture and work with partners to encourage more young people and women to start up their own enterprises;
- evolve a community wealth building approach;
- support social enterprises to create new opportunities and develop their communities;
- capitalise on strong new market opportunities in renewable energy, blue economy, space, natural capital and transform our more traditional sectors, such as tourism and food and drink, to become more competitive and resilient and increase wages in the region;
- support the adaptation and development of a skilled workforce which can support our new market opportunities and meet the needs of existing sectors;
- support the development of appropriate enabling infrastructure and connectivity throughout the region to support growth and community sustainability, and
- stem the population decline and grow our population which has been significantly impacted by the exit from the EU and the pandemic.

HOW WE MAINSTREAM FOR DELIVERY

DUE DILIGENCE AND IMPACT ASSESSMENT

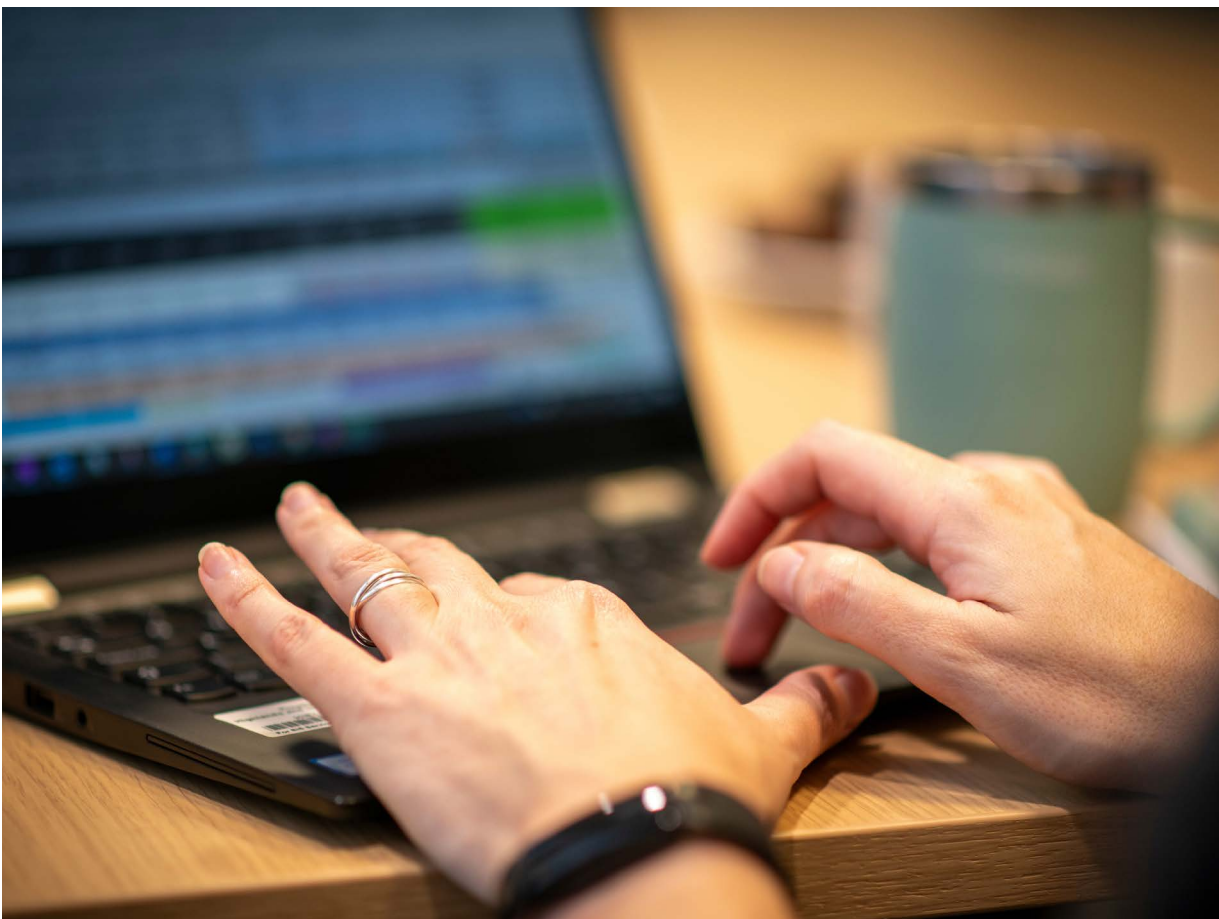
Our due diligence assessment considers equality, economic, social and environmental impact holistically. HIE has incorporated the requirements of the Fairer Scotland Duty (socio-economic considerations) in our People Impact Assessment process.

This ensures that we take socio-economic disadvantage into account when making decisions of a strategic nature. People impact assessments are an important way to continually improve the way we develop and deliver our strategic and day to day activities.

HIE's people impact assessments enable us to identify the potential impact of our interventions and plan ways in which we can maximise positive and mitigate negative impact and meet relevant duties. HIE is reviewing its approach and is a member of an equalities group as part of the Scottish Business Support Partnership. The primary purpose of the group is to share learning to improve equality knowledge and practice across the partners but also to consider the need for partnership work/joint initiatives.

Human rights assessments are undertaken to comply with Scottish Government guidance. This procedure is intended to enhance, not supersede, existing due diligence checks undertaken by HIE. By following the procedure's steps, we obtain the information required to make informed decisions prior to entering into business relationships.

Island community impact assessments ensure island needs and challenges are rightly more formally considered. For HIE, however, this has always been an integral part of our strategic, operational and investment planning and implementation. We have liaised with the Scottish Government on our approach and undertake screenings on any new significant new approaches. In the period of this report two screenings were undertaken, one for the HIE Gaelic Plan and one for the HIE strategy.



FAIR WORK IMPLEMENTATION AND CONDITIONALITY

Building on from the previous implementation of Fair Work conditionality for investments of £100k and above, HIE considered extending its approach as part of our wider fair and inclusive growth focus.

Fair Work is positive for organisations and national and international research identifies good practice within each of the five dimensions of the [Fair Work Framework](#) which lead to positive outcomes for workers, employers and for society and, together, these dimensions have significant synergies.

From 1 April 2022, Fair Work conditionality was extended to all organisations receiving financial support from HIE. We undertook analysis to understand which clients may face challenges in meeting conditionality primarily using [Business Panel](#) and our Business Values Ladder which forms part of our measurement framework and is a monitoring tool to improve research and evaluation on links between fair work practices, business growth and productivity. HIE staff supported applicants to understand the benefits of Fair Work to their organisation supporting this important policy HIE:

- actively promoted the use of the Fair Work diagnostic which was developed with support from Highlands and Islands Enterprise and other key partners, continuing to work with Scottish Enterprise, who host the tool, and other partners to monitor its use and develop the tool's functionality
- developed a Fair Work page on our website for staff and clients
- delivered internal sessions to help staff understand the policy and its implementation
- contributed to a joint agency and SG working group which has been set up to promote and monitor fair work conditionality across the public sector
- refined the Business Values Ladder which captures data relating to fair work practices and can monitor client progress and built this into our client management system
- considered Fair Work practices within procurement procedures with a requirement for contractors to provide an annual report on what has been actioned/delivered
- incorporated Fair Work into commissioned research to gain a better understanding of perceptions and issues, especially with regard to economic recovery in the region

Organisations receiving support from HIE are expected to comply with all [Fair Work First](#) criteria. Evidence is required to support the criteria and demonstrate that Fair Work is adhered to over time.

HIE has also developed and delivered a Fair Work programme to support organisations with understanding the importance of Fair Work and how it affects business. The programme provides clients with a tailored Fair Work action plan. During our initial analysis on the potential impact of Fair Work conditionality, we identified that the tourism sector were operating more zero hour contracts and a significant portion were paying below the real living wage. To support the sector, a tourism specific [Fair Work guide](#) was developed with input from tourism organisations and industry leaders. The guide includes case studies and checklists to help organisations to create action plans and identify areas for development and improvement.

PROCUREMENT

Fair Work Practices (FWPs) are addressed in HIE's procurement strategy and our award criteria and conditions of contract in our procurements where proportionate and relevant.

Through the use of people impact assessments prior to the procurement exercise we can highlight ways to address socio-economic disadvantages linked to the Fairer Scotland Duty. The degree to which equality and diversity requirements are specified and incorporated within procurement documentation will vary according to the goods, services or works being purchased and are assessed on a case by case basis. This helps to ensure that full consideration is given to the needs of, and the likely impact on, all users and others who will be affected by the contract.

HIE encourages suppliers to pay the real living wage to their employees, particularly those working on our contracts, and where proportionate and relevant we mandate the payment of the real living wage for example our facilities management related contracts. We take into account the Scottish Government policy guidance. Our procurement processes identify whether a supplier is paying the real living wage and/or has living wage accreditation and our annual reporting process with our main contractors captures an update on their position.

Our internal procurement training materials include aspects relating to the Sustainable Procurement Duty – equalities, Fair Work practices, environment and community benefits (including community wealth building), helping relevant HIE staff to be aware that we need to consider how these aspects are incorporated into our procurements. The Scottish Government prioritisation and sustainability tools have helped us identify and focus on risks and opportunities for specific procurements.

We are committed to considering the inclusion of community benefit and community wealth building aspects in our procurements – specifications, evaluation questions and terms and conditions wherever relevant and proportionate to specific contracts. This is a legal obligation for contracts valued over £4 million, however, we include community benefit requirements when they are relevant and proportionate to the nature of the requirements irrespective of the contract. Our aim is to wherever possible benefit from a direct positive impact on contract delivery, and contribution to HIE and HIE regional priorities aligned to HIE's strategy.

Our annual procurement reports include a community benefit summary with examples and case studies (where available) of community benefits delivered during that reporting period.

[HIE Procurement Strategy 2022](#)

[HIE Annual Procurement Report 2022-2023](#)

[HIE Annual Procurement Report 2021-2022](#)



EVIDENCE BASE TO SUPPORT MAINSTREAMING

In order to respond effectively, it is critical that organisations have a strong evidence base. As well as drawing from external sources, HIE has expanded our own evidence base. This included assessments, client data, evaluation and research on which to base our approach and inform our decision making.

During the period of this report, we have evolved our measurement framework and our client data capture to support our equalities work. As mentioned previously, our Business Values Ladder (BVL) forms part of our measurement framework and helps identify areas where new approaches and workplace practices could help improve business performance and provides strategic insight to allow us to respond effectively.

Our inclusive growth model was progressed significantly during this reporting period. The project is being implemented in three stages: area profiling to improve understanding of the characteristics of inclusive growth in the region, developing a weighting mechanism to help with indicative but credible quantification of variation in the 'value' of outputs as far as inclusivity is concerned for different investments in different locations, and operationalising our approach to support decision making. By April 2023 we had undertaken the area profiling and developed the weighting model and will be implementing in 2024.

Between 2021-23 we delivered significant research to deepen our understanding of disadvantage, equalities, fair work and other relevant themes. This included:

- **Rural and Regional Disadvantage in the Highlands and Islands** – an in-depth analysis of the extent and nature of disadvantage in the region, relative to Scotland and the UK.
- **My Life in the Highlands and Islands** – an extensive household survey with over 5,000 respondents to explore views of individuals on various topics including access to services and infrastructure; perceptions of life in the region; net zero; and community optimism, pride and participation.
- **Business Panels** (incorporated fair work, recruitment and training and wider workplace factors into the surveys)
- **Community Opportunities from Optimising Sequestration** – a project in Argyll and Bute to consider how communities could benefit from carbon sequestration
- **Impact of Energy Price Rises on Businesses in the Highlands and Islands** – commissioned by HIE for the Highlands and Islands Regional Economic Partnership.
- In addition, we funded the **OECD Enhancing Rural Innovation in Scotland** research with Scottish Enterprise, South of Scotland Enterprise and the Scottish Government.

The combined findings are extensive but the summary below provides an indication of key points which impact on our understanding on equalities and inclusion:

- Policy and funding decisions can be based on data, however there are access and quality issues for rural areas – samples small, some data doesn't exist and tools using the data such as Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation (SIMD), have limitations from a rural perspective. SIMD is inevitably built up from data based on concentrations of socio-economic experiences at a geographic level, it is therefore less helpful at identifying the smaller pockets of deprivation found in more rural areas and islands, compared to the larger pockets found in urban areas. These data issues combine to mask or underestimate equalities issues and impact on actions undertaken.
- There is strong evidence of a correlation between peripherality, socio-economic experiences, economic growth and wellbeing. Identifying areas 'at risk' of peripherality involves looking at poor economic potential, poor access to services and demographic depletion.
- Wages in rural areas are typically lower than average and have further to stretch with workers in rural areas in the region more likely to be employed in multiple jobs, with part-time employment also more common. This may provide flexibility and indicate diversity in employment, however lower income jobs are often not picked up in deprivation statistics which tend to be based on benefit dependency.
- Housing affordability and availability issues are exacerbated by second homes and short-term lets. 58% of data zones in the Highlands and Islands¹ are classified as being at high risk of transport poverty compared to 38% across Scotland².
- Inequality persists in terms of access to services, with those in remote rural areas particularly disadvantaged. There are significant additional costs of living, particularly transport and fuel costs. Health inequalities are particularly stark for some parts of the population.
- There is a high reliance on cars for day-to-day living, which has implications in terms of net zero targets. Few have or are planning to purchase or lease electric/hybrid vehicles, with cost, range on a single charge and lack of public charging points perceived barriers. This will impact on the just transition to net zero.

¹ Based on the following local authority areas: Highland, Comhairle an Eilean Siar, Moray and Orkney

² <https://www.transport.gov.scot/media/47211/stpr2-highlands-and-islands-case-for-change-draft-report-for-publication.pdf>

- Housing, job opportunities and local businesses/trades are the top priorities for communities to thrive. Attracting working age population is a higher priority for island and remote rural communities.
- Plurality of employment is higher in remote rural areas and is driven more by necessity than preference, particularly among those on lower incomes. Around one in eight would like to start their own business, higher amongst men and newer residents. Barriers include rising costs, lack of access to relevant tradespeople, already having multiple jobs and lack of clarity on support available.
- Job satisfaction is relatively high across the region. However, only around half reported being paid at least the real living wage or a fair wage for what they do.
- The increase in fuel and energy costs is having – and will continue to have – a disproportionate impact on businesses in the Highlands and Islands. The cost increases will be proportionally higher for these businesses, and the impact of those costs more acute, than for businesses elsewhere in the UK (research undertaken in June 2022).

We commissioned evaluations to help inform future approaches which explored the impact and wider benefits of the support and how it was delivered. These included:

- Leadership evaluation
- Support for Communities Framework
- Communities Leading in Tourism
- W Power (female entrepreneurship)
- Digital enablement grant support scheme
- Assessing the longer-term benefits from HIE investment in infrastructure

A summary of key findings from our research and evaluation evidence has indicated:

- Opportunities to network are critical in a rural region with peer-to-peer learning and enabling business-to-business working highly regarded. This would increase inclusion and potentially access to opportunity.
- Developing 'calls' targeted at solving and addressing region-wide challenges should be explored and could add more value and focus, with the OECD also highlighting this in relation to local socio-economic challenges.
- Digital delivery welcomed for some services to increase accessibility but face-to-face mentioned as pivotal for others (some aspects of entrepreneurship for example)
- Measurement of qualitative benefits of many programmes is valuable, evaluations found:
 - reduction in isolation for businesses in more rural locations;
 - increased confidence to take on projects/ implement change;
 - improved knowledge and understanding of markets;
 - new connections, and
 - enhanced understanding and reputation of the region.
- The Graduate Placement Programme evaluation concluded benefits for the companies included improving diversity, developing skills and knowledge of existing staff, bringing fresh ideas, new ways of looking at the business, and added workforce development benefits. For graduates, the benefits included transferable and meta skills gained, applying learning in a work environment, gaining sectoral experience, and boosted income. The evaluation showed how added benefits can be achieved through such support.
- Support for Communities Framework evaluation resulted in a range of economic and social benefits consistent with and supportive of HIE's strategic objectives with community organisations valuing the more practical support as opposed to more general advice provided through other channels. It was seen by stakeholders as filling a gap and the flexibility was welcomed as it enabled support to be tailored to needs and place. Overall, the level of additionality is assessed at around 97% due to the place-based approach and many beneficiaries stating projects wouldn't have proceeded, would have been significantly delayed or curtailed without the support.
- The W-Power (female entrepreneurship support) programme was deemed to provide very good value for HIE and deemed to have a number of advantages over more traditional business support programmes including providing a safe space for women, more supportive and relaxed environment, and less egocentric and hierarchical.

PROGRAMME AND PROJECT DELIVERY

In addition to taking a place-based approach to our delivery, with staff based in eight area offices across the region with strong local knowledge and experience, support for projects focused on local need, and additional grant support for more disadvantaged areas, we have also delivered programmes which focused more directly on supporting women or young people to support our equality agenda and to communities to support our community empowerment outcome.

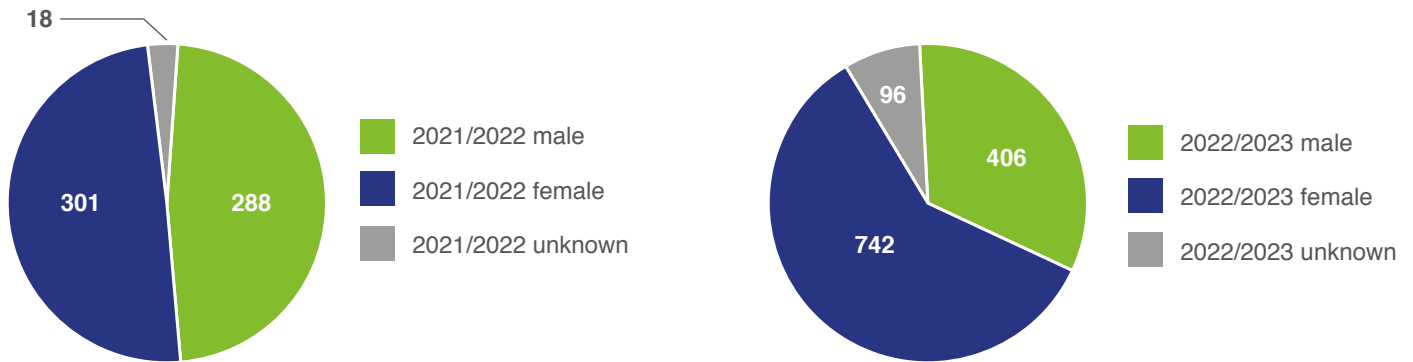
These related to entrepreneurship, leadership and innovation. Further details of relevant programmes which contributed to our equality outcomes are provided within the *Equality outcomes* section.

HIE strives to ensure that we break down any barriers that may preclude women from participating in our programmes and services. This includes ensuring that options are available for people to participate remotely using digital technology and limiting the amount of face-to-face participation at times which could make it challenging for women to participate. Our property investments are focused on places where there is market failure and so democratises access particularly in more rural areas. Our properties take cognisance of anticipated end use and requirements which would help support our wider objectives. We have adapted buildings for the hearing and visually impaired, incorporated gender-neutral bathroom facilities and multi-functional rooms which can be used for breastfeeding as some examples of wider considerations.

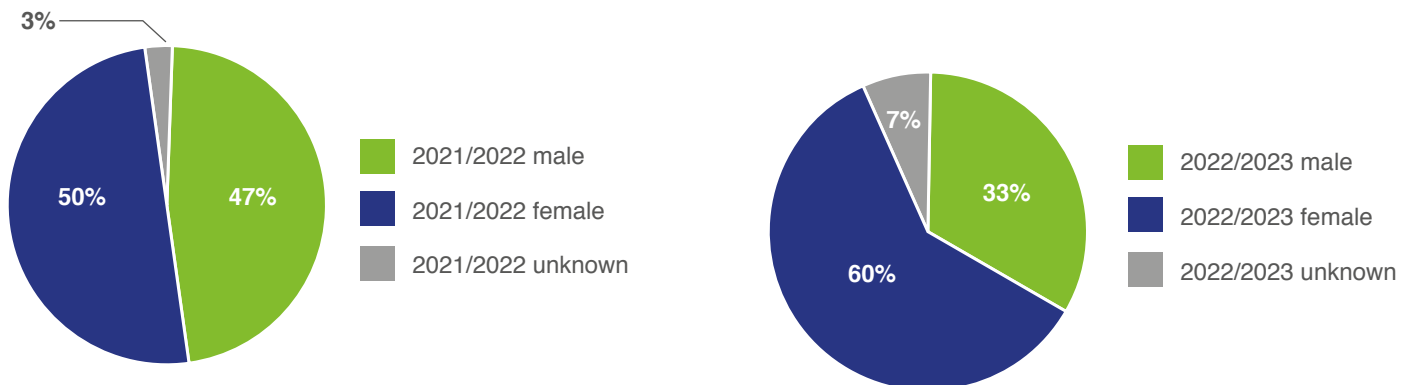
We are attracting and engaging well with both male and female clients across the region, (50% female and 47% male in 2021/22, and 60% female and 33% male in 2022/23) including programmes supporting social enterprises and community led organisations.

FIGURE 1: PROPORTIONS OF PARTICIPANTS IN HIE PROGRAMMES 2021-23 ACCORDING TO REPORTED GENDER

Reported gender of participants in HIE programmes (numbers)



Reported gender of participants in HIE programmes



* To note, the information above is taken from programme registration information

OUTCOMES FOR 2021-2023

Our key equalities outcomes and achievements are set out below:

STRATEGIC

Action

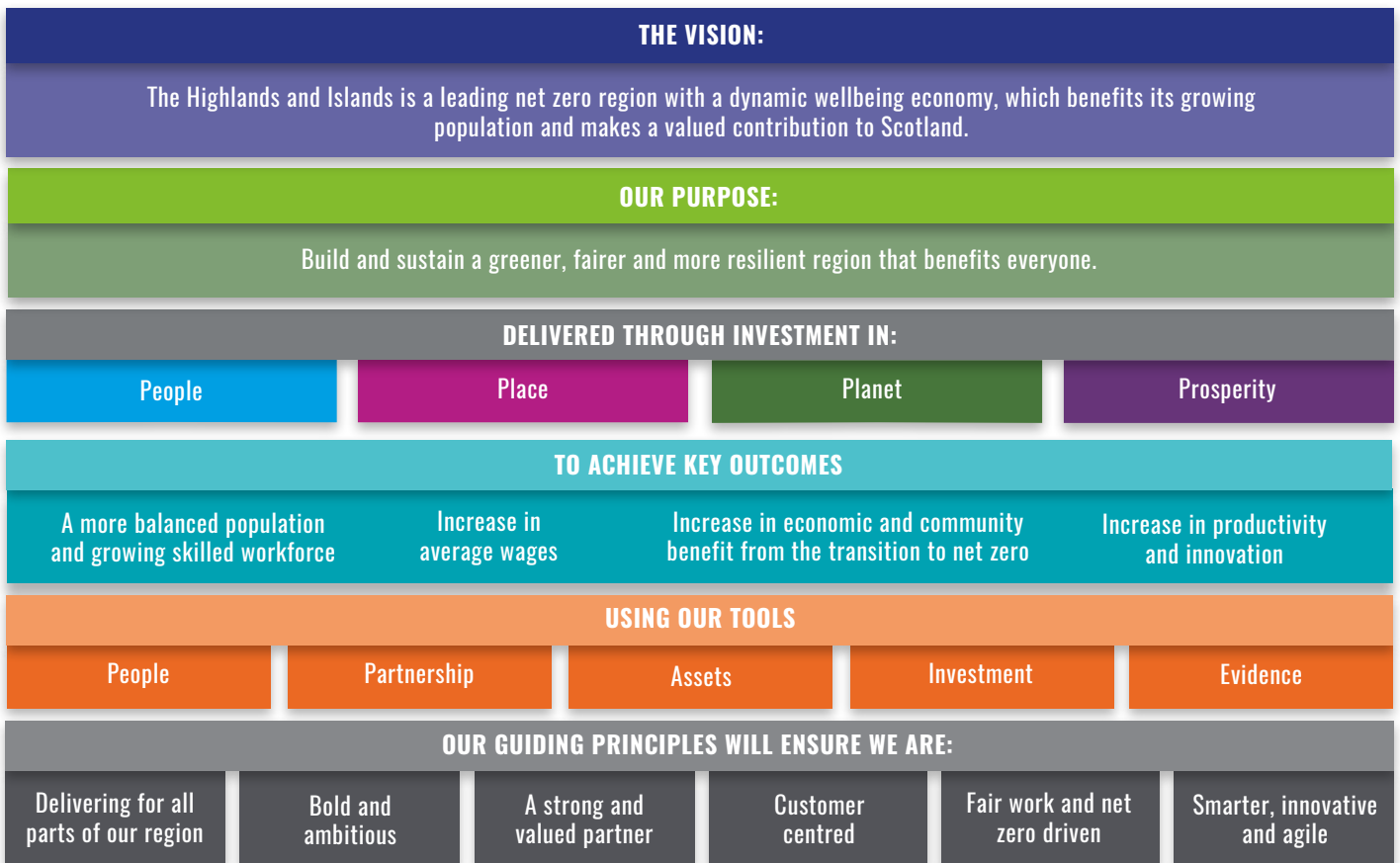
Review HIE's equality outcomes in the context of National Strategy for Economic Transformation and HIE's strategy development for 2023-28.

Outcome achieved

HIE's new [Strategy 2023-2028](#) was developed through 2022/2023 and evolved from a robust evidence base that baselined the region against NSET objectives and a detailed SWOT was generated which was tested with over 100 stakeholders, including youth, community and business representatives, through an iterative process during 2022 and early 2023.

This led to the commitments to fair and inclusive growth as a cross-cutting theme for the new strategy and a range of commitments to embed fair work and equalities to achieve the outcomes we set out. The new strategy is available on the HIE [website](#).

2023-2028 HIE Strategy – Framework



EQUALITY OUTCOME (I) THE DIVERSITY OF LEADERSHIP, ENTREPRENEURSHIP AND WORKFORCE PARTICIPATION IN THE HIGHLANDS AND ISLANDS IS INCREASED

We aimed to:

- Improve employment prospects for young people both within the businesses and communities of the Highlands and Islands and as an employer.
- Increase the contribution which women make to economic growth by developing leadership and entrepreneurship capability of the region.
- As an employer increase our own workforce diversity and meet disabled and other employees needs through better use of monitoring data.

Key actions delivered and achievements:

- The **Northern Innovation Hub (NIH)** is a suite of projects led and delivered by HIE as part of the Inverness and Highland City-Region Deal, with some projects receiving additional funding from HIE to deliver the services region-wide. This initiative supported over 850 beneficiaries in 2021/22 and a further over 400 SME beneficiaries in 2022/23 through a range of interventions across the sectors of creative industries, food and drink, life sciences, and tourism.
- This includes **IMPACT30**, a dedicated programme to develop young entrepreneurs and future business leaders. This programme has supported 66 young enterprises, 56% of which are female-led. Many participants are based in remote rural locations and 12% of enterprises supported operate in HIE's fragile areas.
- Pathfinder Accelerator provides online fast track training and mentoring for entrepreneurs looking to grow a start-up, early stage and established life science, health and technology business. Fifty-six business were supported from 2021-2023 with 43% of women participating and 14% operating in a fragile area. The online format made the programme more accessible to people with caring responsibilities and businesses based in remote and rural regions.
- We delivered the HIE Graduate Placement Programme. More detail is included under Outcome iii as this programme has multiple objectives, not only to attract and retain talent in the region but to support enterprises with growth aspirations, to increase diversity, provide entrepreneurship opportunities for young people and bring fresh ideas through a youth perspective.
- We also supported the development of leadership skills across the region through Pathfinder Accelerator, IMPACT30 and the HIE Leadership Programme (HIE Emerging Leaders, targeting young leaders in businesses) and Strategic Leaders. The HIE Leadership Programme supported 63 participants in 2021/22 of which 46% of participants were female. An independent evaluation of the programme found high satisfaction rates with participants improving leadership capabilities in strategic thinking, with evidence of progression into more senior roles for participants. There was also evidence of better or more effective leadership management, improved customer service, and improved staff/employee motivation and engagement.
- In addition to our own Leadership support, we worked in partnership with Scottish Enterprise to deliver a Rural Leadership programme.
- Of the clients we regularly engage with, 37% have identified as female-led organisations and the previous charts indicate the strong female participation in support programmes. We worked in partnership with organisations who have expertise in women's entrepreneurship and investment, such as **AccelerateHER**, to input into the delivery of our programmes. Our Pathfinder Accelerator programme delivery contractor, Skillfluence, have partnered with **Investing Women Angels**.
- We have also worked in close partnership with Business Gateway to stimulate start-ups, including targeting of young entrepreneurs, including financial support to Comhairle nan Eilean Siar, Moray Council and Shetland Islands Council for start-up schemes.

CASE STUDY



ROMA GIBB

Person Centred Solutions Limited

Roma Gibb was a UHI student nurse and busy mum of five when she came up with the idea of 'The Bed Band'. The former care worker believed there was a better solution than using pillows to try to help people with limited mobility maintain a comfortable position in bed. The Bed Band could hold someone in the correct position throughout the night, while leaving their arms free.

After winning the Create UHI Business Competition for her idea, Roma was introduced to HIE's IMPACT30 by one of the judges who was a trainer on the programme. After a year of one to one coaching Roma set up a company Person Centred Solutions Ltd, applied for a patent and developed a prototype. PCS Ltd teamed up with UHI to have the product tested, with funding support from the Inverness and Highland City-Region Deal. Roma was then accepted for HIE's Pathfinder Accelerator programme to learn the business skills to grow her business.

Roma said "IMPACT30 was absolutely unbelievable. My mentor, Claire Smith, understood that my life was hectic, so sometimes we would have calls at 9pm because that's the only time I could manage."

"Even if you feel like you don't have time, you'll be saving time in the long run by joining programmes like IMPACT30 and Pathfinder, because participating makes you more efficient, and you will be focused on the most beneficial tasks"

READ THE FULL CASE STUDY [HERE](#) AND WATCH A [PATHFINDER VIDEO](#) WHERE ROMA AND OTHER PARTICIPANTS SHARE THEIR EXPERIENCES.

EQUALITY OUTCOME (II) POSITIVE COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT AND SUPPORT HELP SUSTAIN EMPOWERED, CAPABLE AND INCLUSIVE COMMUNITIES

We aimed to:

- Support communities and social enterprises to create new opportunities and benefit from the transition to net zero and from our unique heritage and culture, including from the Gaelic language
- Enable communities to fulfil their vital role in contributing to the economic and social wellbeing of the region
- Evolve our community wealth building approach

Key actions delivered and achievements:

- We supported delivery resource in community anchor organisations to support community led development, build resilience, and increase capacity.
- Supported 121 new or enhanced community assets across the region.
- Supported 66 community leaders and 12 community organisations with governance and succession planning.
- Created 28 new social enterprises through the [Support Network for Social Entrepreneurs](#) (SUNSE) programme.
- Developed a new Community Support Framework to assist communities with developing, managing and delivering projects. An independent evaluation concluded an “unanimously positive view of the framework’s value in delivering its objectives” and that, overall, the level of additionality is assessed at around 97% due to its place-based approach and many beneficiaries stating projects wouldn’t have proceeded, would have been significantly delayed or curtailed without the support.

- Developed a new [Gaelic Plan](#). The plan is founded on three key principles: we have equal respect for Gaelic and English as official languages of Scotland; HIE staff and customers will receive an active offer of our Gaelic services; and opportunities for our staff and customers to use Gaelic will be made mainstream in how we conduct business.
- Carbon Sequestration Stakeholder Event was held at Boat of Garten Community Hall on 17 November 2022. A prospectus, produced via the Carbon Sequestration project (funded by the UKGov Community Renewal Fund and sponsored by Argyll and Bute Council) was launched.
- Delivered the Communities Leading in Tourism programme, securing funding from Scottish Government, as part of the £25 million Tourism Taskforce Recovery Plan, to run two national cohorts throughout 2021/22. Twelve days of training were delivered entirely online with a mix of independent learning, live learning as a group, webinars and one-to-one learning sessions. A total of 46 participants took part in the two cohorts, 32 of whom were from the Highlands and Islands. Twenty-two of the Highlands and Islands participants were female.
- Supported social enterprises through events aiding collaboration, networking and new market opportunities through the XpoNorth programme.

CASE STUDY



URRAS OIGHREACHD GHABHSAINN GALSON ESTATE TRUST

The community-owned [Urras Oighreachd Ghabhsainn / Galson Estate Trust](#) in the north west of Lewis is home to around 1,800 people. Within its 56,000 acres there are 860 homes, 400 local businesses, and 22 crofting townships with more than 600 crofts. The trust is one of the largest employers in north Lewis with 16 members of staff. Urras Oighreachd Ghabhsainn (UOG) bought the estate in 2007, with financial assistance from HIE and the Scottish Land Fund. Since then, the trust has managed the estate and delivered a wide range of projects from youth, tourism and energy efficiency, in consultation with, and on behalf of the local community.

Profits from three wind turbines installed by the Urras are distributed to the community through an investment fund, assisting local groups and organisations to make a difference. The fund has supported activities such as heritage, culture, sports, health and wellbeing, care and education all of which benefit local people and visitors to the area.

HIE has been working with the local community since before the community buy out. Over the years we have supported the Urras with local development in a variety of ways: with infrastructure including the business centre/office and visitor facilities at South Galson; renewable energy; and Graduate Placements over many years. Read the [full case study](#).

EQUALITY OUTCOME (III) THE WORKING AGE POPULATION GROWS IN EVERY PART OF THE HIGHLANDS AND ISLANDS

We aimed to:

- work with partners to develop new approaches to attract and retain working age population in the region, and
- develop the evidence base to more fully understand issues affecting population retention and attraction and use to influence action

Key Actions Delivered and Achievements:

- Partnership is critical to delivering this outcome and population is a key theme within the Convention of the Highlands and Islands (COHI) and Highlands and Islands Regional Economic Partnership (HIREP). The initial COHI Population Working Group is chaired and the secretariat provided by HIE. Through the work of this group and HIE's own targeted interventions, supported projects and initiatives for nine communities (identified through initial extensive analysis by HIE) experiencing serious population decline were implemented. HIE also provided input and evidence to Scottish Government to support the development of its nascent Population Action Plan.
- Working with students, schools, employers and families through a network of STEM rooms and a wide range of programmes, HIE created infrastructure and opportunity to develop core skills within the region through the [Science Skills Academy](#).
- Worked with local, regional and national partners on housing issues including support of research and papers to COHI and the HIREP. Examples of wider support include developing capacity in communities to develop local community led solutions, advanced manufacturing and innovation support for modular construction, funding the Smart Clachan Housing project in Uist, and funding community land purchases for housing on Colonsay.
- Supported the Scottish Childminding Association to create childminders in areas where there is current lack of provision. In 2021, discussions took place between the Scottish Childminding Association, Scottish Government, HIE, SoSE and SDS regarding a pilot project aimed at supporting the establishment of more rural childminders. A funded initiative commenced on April 2022 supported by HIE. By the end of March 2023, following a marketing and recruitment campaign, the Highlands and Islands had 30 new childminders in the region open for business.
- Delivered graduate placement programmes which supported graduate employment, opportunity and skills development during 2021-23 across the region to support business growth. The aim of the Graduate Support Programme 2021/22 programme was to give graduates well paid work experience placements in the key sectors across the Highlands and Islands and to provide employers with additional capacity as they recovered from Covid-19. There were 89 placements delivered in total, 49% male and 51% female. At the end of the programme, over 60% of the graduates were retained by the organisations. The Graduate Placement Programme 2022/23 has delivered 20 placements, 55% male and 45% female. This one year programme was developed to help organisations increase sustainability and capacity resulting in economic and social growth. Some placements have yet to be completed but so far 13 graduates have been retained at the end of their placement.

GRADUATE PLACEMENTS

Graduate placements are a win-win for everyone.

Our Graduate Support Programme, run to boost business recovery post pandemic, offered an injection of fresh ideas, while the graduates got real-life experience with salaries and conditions in line with fair work policies. In 2021/2, our funding of up to 75% for the employee's salary helped de-risk the appointment. An independent evaluation concluded that the scheme created significant benefits for the graduates and businesses.

On the west coast, Zoology graduate Hannah Stanger brought her wildlife experience to **Islay Sea Adventures**. In Shetland, 100% employee owned knitwear company **Laurence Odie** worked with an Orkney born textiles and design graduate on e-commerce and net zero. On the Isle of Lewis, the **Black Bay** Studio gave a sound engineer grad from Lanark the opportunity to do what he loves full time.



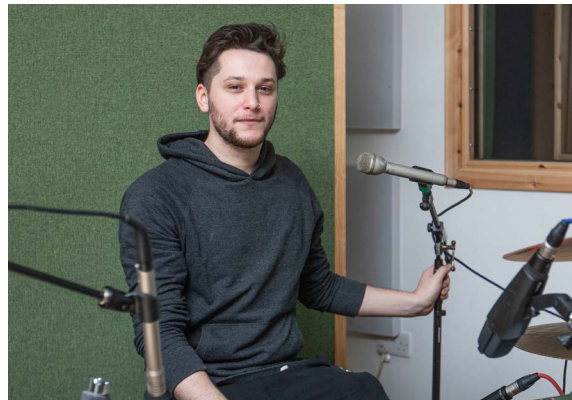
"I love the water, love the sea, and maybe one day I will get the opportunity to become a skipper, which would be great as there are not many female skippers about."

Hannah Stanger, Boat Trip Specialist,
Islay Sea Adventures



"It's great to work with people who know so much about knitwear and who are passionate about it. I've had a chance to become involved at different parts of the process and I've learned so much, it really keeps you excited to come to work each day."

Martin Turner, Digital Marketing and Branding
Graduate, Laurence Odie Knitwear



"The Graduate Support Programme has obviously been a great help for Pete (the owner) and in turn it has enabled me to do something that I would never have been able to do otherwise. It really has been great for both of us,"

Cal Roden, Assistant Studio Engineer,
Black Bay Studio

CLICK ON THE FULL CASE STUDIES

[Islay Sea Adventures](#)

[Laurence Odie Knitwear](#)

[Black Bay Studio](#)

EQUALITY OUTCOME (IV) THE PROMOTION AND SUPPORT OF FAIR WORK HELPS WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT AND BUILD MORE RESILIENT ENTERPRISES

We aimed to:

Embed and extend Fair Work practices, increase incomes and tackle rural disadvantage.

Key actions delivered and achievements:

- Extended and implemented Fair Work conditionality for financial support.
- Developed and delivered a Fair Work tourism programme to support the sector to understand the benefits of fair work and approaches to deliver and embed.
- Developed case studies for the HIE website to aid promotion and learning.
- Worked with Scottish Enterprise and partners on the roll out and development of the online [Fair Work diagnostic tool](#).
- Included Average Wage targets in our operating plan (and exceeded these targets through our investment decisions).
- We delivered a Fair Work Programme providing the opportunity for clients to attend workshops to focus on the five pillars of Fair Work and the potential business benefits from being a Fair Work employer. The introductory cohort in March 2023 saw 13 participants attended the workshop. Some 69% of attendees were female.



APPENDIX A – HIE EMPLOYEE INFORMATION - 2023

In line with our statutory duty, we measure diversity in our organisation by monitoring numbers with protected characteristics in:

- The composition of our workforce
- Recruitment and new starts
- Internal promotions
- Training and development
- Employees who have left the organisation

Where numbers are fewer than five they are marked as * to protect anonymity.

There were a small number of capability, disciplinary and grievance issues over the past year however the numbers are too small to report upon. HIE continues to monitor capability, disciplinary and grievance policies, and processes to ensure they advance equality and eliminate discrimination.

Whole workforce composition

SEX

	2019	2019	2021	2021	2023	2023
Female	195	65%	183	64%	176	63%
Male	106	35%	101	36%	102	37%
Total	301		284		278	

RACE

	2019	2019	2021	2021	2023	2023
White British	258	86%	266	94%	45	16%
White Scottish					165	59%
White English					17	6%
White Irish			*	*	*	*
Other White	9	3%	9	3%	8	3%
Prefer not to say	6	2%	5	2%	6	2%
No data held	27	9%	*	*	36	13%
Total	301		284		278	

DISABILITY

	2019	2019	2021	2021	2023	2023
Disability	*	1%	10	4%	19	7%
No disability	12	4%	50	18%	60	22%
Prefer not to say	*	1%	*	*	*	*
No data held	285	95%	222	78%	194	70%
Total	301		284		278	

AGE

	2019	2019	2021	2021	2023	2023
16-24	6	2%	*	1%	8	3%
25-29	30	10%	11	4%	12	4%
30-34			12	4%	16	6%
35-39	84	28%	26	9%	25	9%
40-44			56	20%	38	14%
45-49	106	35%	45	16%	51	18%
50-54			46	16%	41	15%
55-59	66	22%	51	18%	49	18%
60-64			24	8%	26	9%
65-69	9	3%	10	4%	9	3%
70-74					*	1%
Total	301		284		278	

RELIGION AND BELIEF

	2019	2019	2021	2021	2023	2023
Church of Scotland	99	33%	85	30%	72	26%
Other Christian	*	1%	20	7%	20	7%
Protestant	21	7%	*	*	*	*
Roman Catholic	18	6%	19	7%	17	6%
Other religion	*	1%			*	*
No religion	99	33%	107	38%	92	33%
Prefer not to say	12	4%	15	5%	13	5%
No data held	48	16%	36	13%	61	22%
Total	301		284		278	

SEXUAL ORIENTATION

	2019	2019	2021	2021	2023	2023
Heterosexual	240	80%	238	84%	206	74%
Homosexual	6	2%	*	1%	5	2%
Bisexual					*	*
Prefer not to say	*	*	*	1%	*	*
No data held	54	18%	40	14%	63	22%
Total	301		284		278	

GENDER IDENTITY

	2019	2019	2021	2021	2023	2023
Same gender as assigned at birth	238	79%	217	76%	187	67%
Prefer not to say	6	2%	5	2%	5	2%
No data held	57	19%	62	22%	86	31%
Total	301		284		278	

MARRIAGE AND CIVIL PARTNERSHIP

	2019	2019	2021	2021	2023	2023
Single	61	20%	54	19%	60	22%
Partner	27	9%	22	8%	27	10%
Married	193	64%	189	67%	176	63%
Separated	8	3%	8	3%	7	2%
Divorced	10	3%	10	4%	7	2%
Widowed	*		*		*	*
Total	301		284		278	

PREGNANCY AND MATERNITY

	2019	2019**	2021	2021**	2023	2023
Advised of pregnancy but not yet started maternity leave (as at 31/03/2023)	No data	No data	*	13%	0	0
On maternity leave (as at 31/03/2023)	5	29%	*	13%	6	46%
Returned to work – reduced hours or amended work pattern (between 01/04/2021-31/03/2023)	*	18%	5	33%	4	31%
Returned to work – same work pattern as prior to maternity leave (between 01/04/2021-31/03/2023)	9	53%	6	40%	3	23%
Did not return	0	0	0	0	0	0
Total	17	100%	15	100%	13	100%

(** % of those who are pregnant or on maternity leave)

Flexible working

There continues to be an increase in employees who work a full-time compressed pattern from 8% in 2017 to 17% in 2023.

FULL TIME AND PART-TIME EMPLOYEES

	2019	2019	2021	2021	2023	2023
Full Time – Standard full-time hours – 35 hours per week across normal business hours (Monday – Friday 9am – 5pm with local flexibility)	202	67%	187	66%	177	64%
Full-time – compressed / flexible work pattern	36	12%	41	14%	47	17%
Part-time	63	21%	56	20%	54	19%
Total	301		284		278	

In addition to our informal approach to hybrid and flexible working, between April 2021 and March 2023 there were 53 formal requests for flexible working approved. Of the 278 individuals employed at HIE, 36% work either reduced or compressed hours demonstrating the supportive culture and flexibility offered in meeting both business and personal needs. This remains consistent with previous years.

Our approach is continually monitored to ensure it is fit for purpose and continues to support service delivery in all directorates and business units. Most of our employees choose to work a blend of home and office working and the current practices, performance and feedback demonstrate that hybrid working is working effectively.

PROMOTIONS

Between 1 April 2021 and 31 March 2023, HIE had 24 employees move to promoted posts and six temporary promotions. There have also been 12 job evaluation regradings which have resulted in grade increases. Of the 42 promotions, 38 individual employees were promoted.

SEX

Female	29
Male	9
Total	38

RACE

White British	36
Prefer not to say	2
Total	38

DISABILITY

Disability	*
No disability	37
Total	38

AGE

25-29	2
30-34	4
35-39	4
40-44	5
45-49	11
50-54	3
55-59	5
60-64	4
Total	38

RELIGION AND BELIEF

Church of Scotland	8
Other Christian	*
Protestant	*
Roman Catholic	*
Other religion	*
Prefer not to say	*
No religion	18
No data held	7
Total	38

MARRIAGE AND CIVIL PARTNERSHIP

Single	9
Partner	*
Married	25
Separated	*
Total	38

SEXUAL ORIENTATION

Heterosexual	29
Homosexual	*
Bisexual	*
No data held	7
Total	38

GENDER IDENTITY

Same gender as assigned at birth	17
Prefer not to say	*
No data held	11
Total	38

Recruitment and new starts

Data within the whole workforce composition above includes new starts – those who commenced employment on or before 31 March 2023.

We are currently developing our reports within our recruitment system to be able to report fully across all protected characteristics for both internal and external applicants, candidates who were shortlisted and interviewed, and whether successful or unsuccessful for vacancies.

In order to attract a diverse range of applicants our work continues in support of the armed forces community. HIE retains its Armed Forces Covenant bronze award by the Ministry of Defence for support of the armed forces community. Specific commitments include supporting the employment of veterans, recognising military skills and qualifications in our recruitment and selection process; working with the Career Transition Partnership to support the employment of service leavers, as well as supporting our employees who are reservists and volunteer cadet leaders in granting paid/unpaid leave for training and deployment.

Training and development

We are currently working to improve our training database (waiting lists, bookings, cancellations, and attendance history) to improve reporting across all characteristics and hope to provide more detailed data within our next report.

Leavers

Between 01/04/2021 and 31/03/2023 HIE had 60 leavers.

SEX

Female	41
Male	19
Total	60

RACE

White British	54
White other	*
No data held	4
Total	60

DISABILITY

Disability	*
No disability	9
Prefer not to say	*
No data held	50
Total	60

AGE

18-24	1
25-29	1
30-34	6
35-39	5
40-44	11
45-49	9
50-54	4
55-59	6
60-64	7
65-69	6
70-74	3
75-79	1
Total	60

RELIGION AND BELIEF

Church of Scotland	16
Other Christian	4
Roman Catholic	1
No religion	23
Prefer not to say	4
No data held	12
Total	60

SEXUAL ORIENTATION

Heterosexual	45
Homosexual	*
Bisexual	*
Prefer not to say	*
No data held	14
Total	60

PREGNANCY AND MATERNITY

None of the leavers had declared to HIE they were pregnant, and none left whilst on maternity leave.



Highlands and Islands Enterprise
Iomairt na Gàidhealtachd 's nan Eilean