



EQUALITIES & DIVERSITY PLAN 2017-2018

Author:	Jane Thomas
Date approved:	September 2017
Date for review:	October 2018

CROFTING COMMISSION EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY PLAN 2017-18

The Crofting Commission believe that no-one should be denied opportunities because of their race or ethnicity, a disability, their gender or sexual orientation, their marital or civil partnership status, their age or religion.

Both staff working for the Crofting Commission and our customers should be treated equally and fairly. For staff this commitment also extends to maternity status, working pattern, employment status, caring responsibility and trade union membership.

Under the Equality Act 2010, as a Scottish public authority, the Commission is required to have due regard to the need to eliminate unlawful discrimination, advance equality of opportunity and foster good relations. Though listed in Schedule 19 of the Act covering the general equality duties, the Commission is not subject to reporting obligations under the additional 'specific duties' regulations.

BACKGROUND

The public sector equality duty came into force on 5 April 2011. The purpose of the duty is to ensure that public authorities consider how they positively contribute to a more equal society. It requires authorities to consider equality in all their functions, including decision-making, design and delivery of services.

From 1 October 2012 the scope of the Act was extended to ban age discrimination, though this does not cover people under the age of 18.

To date, the Crofting Commission has taken guidance on Equalities issues from Scottish Government and has followed the policies adhered to by the government. This is especially relevant to our staff who are all civil servants employed by Scottish Government. In late 2015 however, the Commission undertook a Best Value Review, conducted by auditors Scott-Moncrieff. One of the outcomes of the Review was a recommendation that, although the organisation can demonstrate a range of initiatives in the area of equality and diversity, the drawing together of an overarching Equalities Plan would be of benefit.

The aim of the Equalities and Diversity Plan is to demonstrate the Crofting Commission's commitment to the Scottish Government's equalities agenda, mitigate the risk that equalities activities are not prioritised and align them with budgets and resources to cover short and medium-term objectives.

THE GENERAL EQUALITY DUTY

Under the Equality Act 2010, public authorities are required to have due regard to the need to:

1. Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other prohibited conduct
2. Advance equality of opportunity between people who share a relevant protected characteristic and those who do not
3. Foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.

This duty is often referred to as "the three needs". To comply with the duty, a public authority must have due regard to all three of these needs.

The Act explains that to meet the second need (advancing equality of opportunity), a public authority must consider the need to:

- Remove or minimise disadvantage suffered by people with certain protected characteristics, where these are different from the needs of other people
- Encourage people with certain protected characteristics to participate in public life or in other activities where their participation is disproportionately low.

The Act also sets out that:

- Meeting different needs includes (among other things) taking steps to take account of disabled people's disabilities
- Fostering good relations means tackling prejudice and promoting understanding between people from different groups
- Meeting the general equality duty may involve treating some people more favourably than others.

WHO SHOULD BE AWARE OF THE GENERAL DUTY IN THE CROFTING COMMISSION?

Board Members – because they set strategic direction, review performance and must ensure good governance of the organisation. The Convener is also appraised against a Diversity Objective for the Board.

Senior Managers – because they oversee the design, delivery, quality and effectiveness of the organisation's functions.

Equality and diversity staff – because of their role in raising awareness and building capacity about the general duty.

Communications staff – because they can help ensure relevant equality information is available and accessible.

Data Analysts – because they can help support the organisation in understanding how to measure the effect of its policies and practices on people from equality groups.

Frontline staff – because they need to be aware of how they can help to meet the needs of people from equality groups.

Procurement staff – because they need to be aware of how to build equality considerations into the organisation's supply chain.

Line Managers - because they need to ensure appropriate reference is made to HR services so that equality practices are reflected in employment policies and procedures.

KEY COMMISSION DOCUMENTS

The primary function of the Crofting Commission is to regulate crofting. In all of the Commission's key documents we recognise that regulation is one tool to help support, promote and underpin crofting and that, with no direct development role, the Commission has limited powers to deliver sustainable development. It can, however, use its functions and relationships to contribute to the Scottish Government's aims for a more equal society.

The key references are:

- The Policy Plan
- Corporate Plan 2014-2017
- Business Plan 2017-18
- Gaelic Language Plan.

Policy Plan

The Commission recognises that by working with others, such as HIE and local authorities, and utilising its regulatory functions, such as Succession, it can promote the wider community benefits of crofting, which include population retention, the retention of Gaelic culture within Gaelic-speaking communities and affordable housing solutions, to allow young people to remain in crofting communities.

Corporate Plan

The Vision set out in the Corporate Plan identifies the integral part played by crofting in population retention in rural areas, and how the Commission, through decision-making, is able to support individuals and communities. By using its powers, the Commission will regulate to encourage the active use of crofts and common grazings, which will contribute to the Scottish Government's National Outcomes and help create strong, resilient and supportive communities.

Business Plan

The Commission will improve its evidence base by utilising the new Croft Information System and the returns from the Crofting Census to strengthen its understanding of the communities it serves. This improved data will be reflected in enhanced information displayed in the Annual Report. Stronger management information will enable the Commission to consider how it can better meet the general equality duty.

WHAT WE DO – CUSTOMER FACING ACTIONS

General Equality Duty	Action	Owner
Advance equality of opportunity/ Foster good relations	Mentoring young people – participation on Boards. Exercise undertaken in 2015/16 with Commissioners/CEO and 2 young crofters. In line with SG Public Boards and Corporate Diversity aims, to improve the percentage of women and other under-represented groups in leadership roles in Scotland, to reflect the broader population by 2020.	CEO
Eliminate unlawful discrimination/ advance equality of opportunity/ Foster good relations	Revision of Code of Conduct for Assessors, with text taken from Equality and Human Rights Commission, aligned to Scottish Government policies on equal opportunities and diversity. Communicated to all Assessors and included in Induction Pack and on website.	Head of C&CS
Eliminate unlawful discrimination/ Foster good relations	Amendments to website to create clearer visual communication, addition of audio/video and social media platforms, to increase accessibility and reduce barriers to young people and people with disabilities. Best practice guidance on design also utilised for Annual Report and other publications, with the provision of alternative formats on request.	Head of C&CS
Foster good relations/ advance equality of opportunity	Improvements to application forms and guidance, refinements on Crofting Census forms, review of letters as part of CIS process, all designed to be clear and accessible.	Head of C&CS + Head of Information Systems
Foster good relations/ advance equality of opportunity	Crofting Roadshows and Election Roadshows undertaken in accessible venues, with as wide a geographic spread as possible, bi-lingual advertising in Gaelic-speaking communities.	Head of C&CS
Eliminate discrimination	'Equality check' carried out on Board papers and all publications/key documents to ensure written communication is gender neutral	Head of C&CS
Advance equality of opportunity/ eliminate discrimination	Equality clauses added to all contracts as part of tendering/procurement process and submissions measured against equality criteria.	Head of C&CS
Foster good relations	Great Glen House is an accessible building with a portable induction loop. The commission promotes such provision through its service level agreement with SNH.	Head of C&CS

WHAT WE DO TO PROMOTE EQUALITY – ACTIONS WITH STAFF

General Equality Duty	Action	Owner
Advance equality of opportunity	Engaged with SG Modern Apprenticeship programme, offering places to 2 young people, including an individual with a disability that placed him at a significant disadvantage in the job market. Both went on to secure permanent employment outside the Commission.	CEO
Foster good relations	Developed relationship with local social enterprise, using business facility for 3 x all staff training days and engaging directly with participants with disabilities. Has led to direct links between the social enterprise and staff.	CEO
Advance equality of opportunity/ Eliminate discrimination	Role of Equality & Diversity officer located within Senior Management Team, reflecting priority given to agenda and locating budget resources (Comms and Training) with relevant budget holder	Head of C&CS
Eliminate discrimination	Specific diversity training arranged for Convener in line with requirements of Public Bodies Unit.	Head of C&CS
Advance equality of opportunity/ Foster good relations	Gaelic Language Plan approved with detailed targets and commitments, with responsibility held at Senior Management level, helping to promote language and culture of particular relevance to the Commission's staff and customers.	Head of C&CS
Advance equality of opportunity/ Foster good relations	All staff are required to achieve a diversity objective as part of their annual performance appraisal	Head of C&CS
Advance equality of opportunity	In addition to the above, Commission staff have Gaelic included within the diversity objective, so all are asked to record how they engage with the Commission's commitments in the GLP.	Head of C&CS
Advance equality of opportunity/ eliminate discrimination	All staff complete diversity and equality training as part of their annual mandatory objectives. This is either delivered via a course or by completing modules for the Civil Service.	Head of C&CS
Advance equality of opportunity/ eliminate discrimination/ foster good relations	Information on Equality & Diversity is included in the Staff Handbook and forms part of the Induction for new staff.	Head of C&CS
Advance equality of opportunity/ foster good relations	Specific training sessions have been delivered to cover Autism in the workplace	Head of C&CS
Advance equality of opportunity	Adhere to SG HR policies on equality and diversity in the workplace, including work-life balance and recruitment.	Head of C&CS
Foster good relations/ eliminate discrimination	Monthly Conversations take place between staff and line managers and include specific reference to wellbeing to allow any concerns to be acted on.	Head of C&CS
Foster good relations/ eliminate discrimination	The Commission adheres to the SG Fairness at Work policy, which covers equality and diversity.	Head of C&CS
Foster good relations/ eliminate discrimination	As part of the shared service agreement with SNH, the Commission promotes best practice in making sure the office space is suitable for people with differing needs, for instance with a portable induction loop, bi-lingual signing and disabled access to the building.	Head of C&CS

Digest of Scottish Government HR policies on Equality and Diversity (adhered to by the Crofting Commission)

Induction procedures within the Commission are designed to ensure diversity issues are included and staff are aware of a range of advice, guidance and support provided by SG HR officers.

Equal Opportunities Policy Statement

All staff should be treated equally irrespective of their sex, marital/civil partnership status, maternity status, age, race, ethnic origin, sexual orientation, disability, religion or belief, working pattern, employment status, gender identity, caring responsibility or trade union membership.

Diversity Policy Statement

The Scottish Government is committed to increasing the diversity of staff within the organisation. We will develop all our staff, ignoring all irrelevant differences in their management and development. Furthermore, we will positively value the different perspectives and skills of all staff and make full use of these in our work.

Resources available on Diversity & Equality

- Diversity on eHR
- Diversity Objectives
- Diversity Training
- Line manager's diversity toolkit
- Caring for someone – advice for carers
- Work-life balance
- Flexi policy and working patterns (flexible working)
- Equality staff networks
- Prayer groups and facilities (a prayer room is available in GGH and a prayer group meets here)
- Inclusive communication
- How we can support disabled staff
- How we show we are positive about disabled people
- How staff can access the Employee Assistance Programme to support wellbeing.

FORWARD PLANNING

Active consideration of equality will help the Commission to identify ways in which to improve evidence gathering and engagement, to help improve the quality of services it provides, making them more responsive to customer and staff needs, leading to better outcomes.

Senior Managers and Commissioners have a vital role to play in giving a clear and consistent message about the importance of promoting equality and diversity. Through visible leadership the senior management team ensures that equality is reflected in performance reporting, that staff are clear the Commission adopts a zero tolerance approach to discriminatory behaviour and builds the capacity of all staff to consider and promote the equality duties.

In 2017, senior managers will work with the Convener and Commissioners to take the organisation to 2020 via a series of reviews of activity on equality and diversity. In addition to the work currently undertaken, the Commission will use the following:

- Staff satisfaction surveys – building on the twice yearly survey (reported and measured as a KPI) and the SG data gathering, to provide improved data on attitudes and issues around equality and diversity; noting that because of the size of the organisation, anonymising information from staff surveys is challenging
- Customer journey-mapping – design a mapping exercise to test whether the Crofting Census creates barriers for some people with protected characteristics and how these might be mitigated
- RoC online – using predicted improved engagement with customers to measure whether putting the RoC online reduces access barriers and reviewing the impact this has, to see whether it could lead on to further innovations
- Assessor Network – ensure equality outcomes are considered so that recruitment to the new panel of Assessors is promoted to under-represented groups as a volunteering opportunity
- Review how the Commission uses data from the Crofting and Grazings Census and the RoC to build a picture of diversity in crofting communities and how, by working with partners, the Commission can contribute to wider public benefits
- Induction training programme – ensure equality and diversity is given an appropriate profile in the early training delivered to new Board members.

EQUALITY & DIVERSITY PLAN 2017-18 ACTION PLAN

General Equality Duty	Action	Owner	Deadline
Advance equality of opportunity/ eliminate discrimination/ foster good relations	Staff satisfaction survey – use to provide data on bullying and harassment, wellbeing and opportunities. Compare data in-year and with SG People Survey. Consider adding question to survey to seek staff ideas on improving diversity.	Donna Smith	People Survey deadline 31 Oct. 2017 staff survey completed in June, next survey scheduled for February.
Eliminate discrimination/ foster good relations	Design customer journey mapping exercise to test whether present format of Crofting Census creates barriers and how these might be mitigated.	Gerry McGarry	Design feedback exercise as part of 2018 re-design of census form and as part of exercise to produce baseline on customer satisfaction, as per KPIs.
Foster good relations	Does the RoC online reduce access barriers to customers – e.g. they do not need to phone or write to us to access information?	Donna Smith	Consider analytics by end Q3 2017-18
Advance equality of opportunity/ foster good relations	Ensure recruitment to new Assessor panel is promoted as volunteering opportunity to people with protected characteristics – use volunteer networks.	Linda Gourlay	Have plan in place to coincide with Roadshows
Advance equality of opportunity	How can CC use data from Crofting Census, grazings census and RoC to build up a picture of diversity in crofting communities, while respecting DPA requirements?	Donna/GIS	Meet to scope objectives and possible outcomes by end Q3, use GIS to help build a better picture of communities
Advance equality of opportunity/ foster good relations	Equality & Diversity given high profile in Year-1 training for Commissioners and specific diversity training completed by Convener.	Jane	Met in Sept, Convener training in Nov, with Action Plan to follow, plus HoD engage with SG network
Advance equality of opportunity/ eliminate discrimination	Provide Commissioner training in Year-1 on Natural Justice & ECHR.	David Findlay	December
Foster good relations	Increase awareness of cultural importance of Gaelic to customer-base and promote learning by providing training and BnG presentation to Board.	Jane Thomas	Sept-Feb
Eliminate discrimination/ foster good relations	Ensure all venues for Roadshows are accessible and bi-lingual advertising in Gaelic-speaking areas.	Jane Thomas	November
Advance equality of opportunity	Consider Modern Apprentice programme for Corp Admin FTE vacancy	Jane Thomas	December