

Biodiversity Duty Report (2021-2023)

Boundaries Scotland

Introduction

The Nature Conservation (Scotland) Act 2004 places a duty on all public bodies to further the conservation of biodiversity in the course of carrying out their responsibilities. The Wildlife and Natural Environment (Scotland) Act 2011 places a further obligation on public bodies to provide a publicly available report, every three years, on the actions taken to comply with the biodiversity duty. This is the first report of Boundaries Scotland and covers the years 2021-2023.

Role and Purpose

Boundaries Scotland is an advisory non-departmental public body (NDPB) sponsored and funded by the Scottish Government. We are an independent and non-political body responsible for:

- reviews of local authority areas in Scotland;
- reviews of electoral arrangements for local authorities; and
- reviews of Scottish Parliament constituency and regional boundaries.

Our duties and powers pertaining to local authority areas and electoral arrangements for local authorities are detailed in the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1973 Act (the 1973 Act). Our duties and powers pertaining to the Scottish Parliament are detailed in the Scotland Act 1998.

Further details of the Boundaries Scotland's role and purpose can be found at www.boundaries.scot or by request.

Membership

The membership of Boundaries Scotland's Commission is made up of a Chair, Deputy Chair and four Commissioners. Boundaries Scotland's staff complement is as follows: Secretary to Boundaries Scotland, Review Manager, Deputy Review Manager, Review Officer, Finance and Governance Officer, IT and Database Manager and General Office Manager.

Action to Protect and Enhance Biodiversity

Boundaries Scotland does not own land, and its main statutory responsibilities are not directly linked to biodiversity. However, Boundaries Scotland is mindful of its obligations to the environment and the direct impact which policies and practices have upon biodiversity.

Boundaries Scotland operates from Thistle House, Haymarket, Edinburgh. Operational policies and actions that have been implemented by Boundaries Scotland, Scottish Government and within Thistle House to protect and enhance biodiversity include:

- Members and staff are encouraged to use active travel or public transport to commute to the office; Thistle House is well served by public transport and

close to numerous bus stops, a tram stop and Haymarket train station. Secure bike parking is available, and the allocated car park is only used on occasion. Staff members have access to shower facilities and a Cycle to Work scheme is available to all staff to support active travel.

- Hybrid work arrangements are in place to allow Commissioners and staff to undertake virtual meetings via video conferencing, where this is suitable. Commissioners and staff are encouraged to think about their travel choices for meetings and appointments during the working day, making use of active travel or public transport where possible.
- Thistle House has a centralised air conditioning and heating system. Office lighting is not sensor controlled but staff take care to ensure all lights are turned off when a room is not in use.
- Staff may keep house plants in individual work pods.
- Office waste is minimised and all paper, plastic, glass, metal and cardboard are recycled.
- All paper is purchased only from recycled sources; staff are encouraged to minimise printing but when printing is required it is mainly double-sided and in black and white only. In some situations, colour printing is required particularly in maps.

The above policies and actions allow Boundaries Scotland to (i) reduce its transport emissions which are a major component in air pollution (ii) reduce its energy consumption thus reducing harmful emissions to the atmosphere which are a major component in climate change; (iii) reduce its impact on landfill usage, deforestation and other land uses which undermine biodiversity.

Mainstreaming Biodiversity

As referred to above, Boundaries Scotland adopts hybrid work arrangements. This enables staff to work from home in line with individual and business needs, thereby reducing overall staff commuting.

Boundaries Scotland operates under the Scottish Government procurement framework which procures materials and services that encourages sustainability. Where it is feasible to do so and where Boundaries Scotland can choose, sustainable products are ordered.

Boundaries Scotland, where possible, tries to recycle or donate equipment it no longer requires.

Nature Based Solution, Climate Change and Biodiversity

Boundaries Scotland recognises that nature-based solutions can play a vital role in helping to protect and enhance biodiversity, achieve net zero targets, and improve quality of life. However, the general nature of the work of the Boundaries Scotland's work provides little opportunity to undertake processes or activities that promote nature-based solutions to climate change and biodiversity. Regardless of this, Boundaries Scotland will consider options to support biodiversity in future corporate planning.

Public Engagement and Workforce Development

Boundaries Scotland has access to Scottish Government training including Energy and Climate Change Learning and Development sessions and a Carbon Literacy session which forms part of the induction training. The Secretary to Boundaries Scotland has joined the Sustainable Scotland Network and training materials will be shared.

Scottish Government's paid wellbeing hour gives staff the opportunity to engage in a weekly activity that improves access to nature (for example walking or gardening). The reduction in weekly working hours from 37 to 35 in October 2024 will also assist in enhancing staff wellbeing.

Research and Monitoring

Boundaries Scotland monitors the following environmental related indicators (all of which have biodiversity impact):

- energy usage is recorded and the Commission will aim to monitor it on an ongoing basis with the aim of price/unit reduction.
- paper usage is recorded and the Commission will aim to monitor it on ongoing basis with the aim of usage reduction.
- transport usage in connection with Commission business is recorded and the Commission will aim to monitor with the aim of ensuring positive environmental outcomes.

Biodiversity Highlights and Challenges

Boundaries Scotland considers that its key achievements in the reporting period have been:

- Implementing and supporting arrangements for hybrid working for the Secretariat which enables the Commission to reduce overall staff commuting.
- Encouraging Secretariat staff to utilise their entitlement to a paid weekly wellbeing hour which may be used by staff for an activity that improves access to nature.

Boundaries Scotland considers that the challenges ahead are:

- Exploring and, where appropriate, moving toward paperless meetings or reducing the amount of meeting papers printed. Access to printed maps is sometimes required to ensure consistent and effective decision making by Commissioners and for ensuring materials are accessible to the public.
- Identifying fresh opportunity to further support the biodiversity aims, having regard to the Commission's purpose, size and function.
- To continue to support the biodiversity aims during a period of increased economic uncertainty which may adversely impact upon funding in all areas of the public sector.
- Encouraging more use of public transport and for annual UK Commission meetings, exploring alternatives to air travel.