



Biodiversity Report 2021–23

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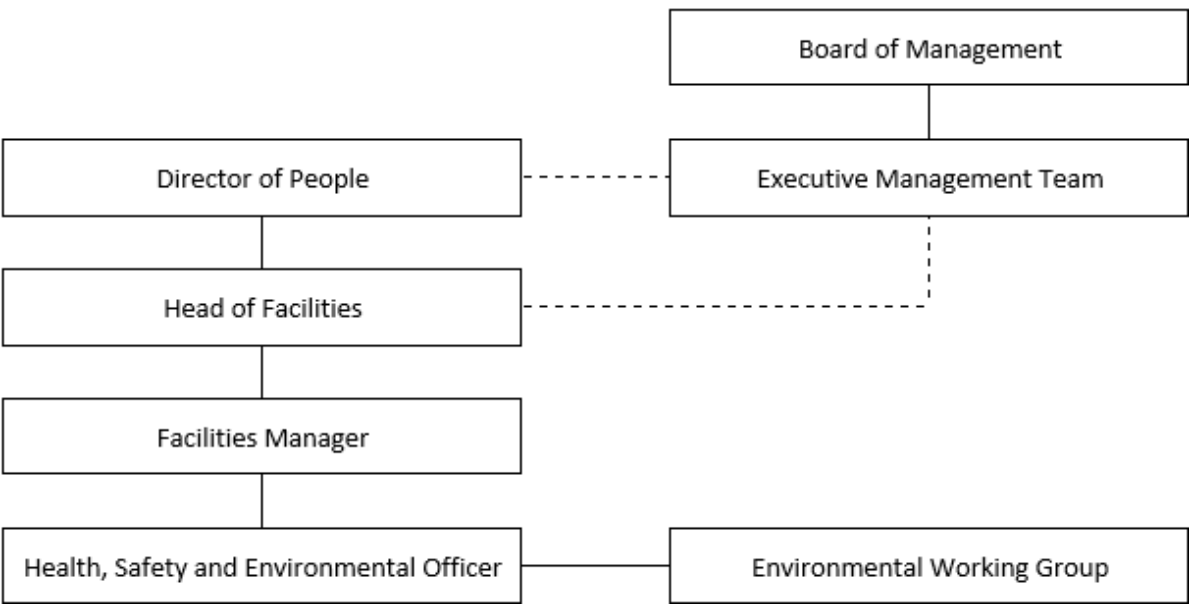
Background and context

The Scottish Qualifications Authority (SQA) is Scotland’s national body responsible for the development, accreditation, assessment and certification of qualifications other than degrees, and also operates across the UK and internationally.

The Director of People has overall responsibility for environmental management within SQA. The Head of Facilities reports (either directly, or through the Director of People) to the Executive Management Team and Board of Management on environmental matters. Reporting to the Head of Facilities, the Facilities Manager ensures that the organisation works towards its corporate environmental objectives.

Reporting to the Facilities Manager, the Health, Safety and Environmental Officer is the focal point for environmental issues, and facilitates the Environmental Working Group, which contributes to environmental projects and initiatives.

These projects and initiatives are then reported to the Scottish Government as part of our annual Public Bodies Climate Change Reporting.



Actions to protect biodiversity and connect people with nature

The Lowden site in Shawfair Business Park has a variety of hedging, shrubs and trees. These are located within the car park area and surrounding the office location.

There is also a dedicated wildlife area within the park. This includes a small loch, which is managed and maintained by the park managing agent.

Lowden window recesses are home to a colony of house martins each spring and summer. In order to protect them, communications are issued, and warnings displayed on all window nest sites to ensure the colony is not disturbed.

The Newtongrange storage facility is located within a small industrial estate which has a small wildlife garden maintained by the site management.

Through our Responsible Business team, SQA staff have volunteered on various projects where they have worked on outside green space projects.

These include:

- Glasgow Clyde Clean Ups — Several colleagues have taken part in a number of litter picks along the river Clyde within approximately 0.1 miles walk from our Optima office in Glasgow. On several occasions staff have gone out for approximately two hours to pick up litter on pavements along the river walkway. This prevents litter from entering the river and harming marine life both in the river itself and eventually once it flows out into the sea.
- Keep Porty Tidy — Several colleagues have also taken part in Keep Porty Tidy. This involves undertaking beach cleans at Portobello Beach which helps to prevent litter from entering the Firth of Forth and harming marine life there and eventually the North Sea.
- Keep Scotland Beautiful — During lockdown colleagues were encouraged to volunteer through Keep Scotland Beautiful at any projects or activities on offer in their local community.
- Great British Beach Clean — Colleagues participated in a clean-up at Fisherrow Beach in Musselburgh as part of the national Great British Beach Clean campaign. This helps clean up seas and oceans around the UK and reduces the harm litter can do to marine animals.
- Nature Scot Days — During 2023 Nature Scotland organised a number of volunteering days for education-related public bodies to help them collaborate and learn more about the Learning for Sustainability offerings through helping out at national nature reserves (NNRs)

Several colleagues also used the 21 hours allowed annually to participate in their own activities in the community to help the environment and with social inclusion.

One of our colleagues used his hours to help the South Lanarkshire branch of the National Autistic Society run a day out to the Falls of Clyde National Nature Reserve in collaboration with the Scottish Wildlife Trust. He also helped Scottish Badgers run a guided nature walk to help raise participants'

awareness of the local wildlife and promote social inclusion and peer support through meeting other children and parents.

Mainstreaming biodiversity

During the procurement contract tendering process, a percentage of the awarding score is given to sustainable practices. This percentage is reviewed periodically, and some business areas have recently been able to increase the weighting.

Nature-based solutions and climate change

Our opportunities to exert influence in this area are very limited due to the nature of our operations and properties. We currently have no opportunities to use such solutions.

Public engagement and workforce development

Several members of our Environmental Working Group have been on Green Champions training with Resource Efficient Scotland. Members of the group are encouraged to attend.

We regularly attend and contribute to Sustainable Scotland Network conferences, seminars and training events, building a network of contacts across the public sector to share knowledge and good practice.

Regular informative communications are shared and readily available on our organisation's intranet page, including seasonal, eco-friendly tips on gardening and composting, and advice on how to attract and protect native wildlife.

Research and monitoring

We carry out research to inform our guidance campaigns which seek to improve our colleagues' understanding of nature and biodiversity. For example, when promoting National Bee Day, we gathered and communicated information on local bee species, their nesting habits and preferred diet, so that we can show the best way to help their populations flourish. We also update colleagues on the movements of the house martins nesting at our Lowden site to ensure the birds are not disturbed during breeding season.

Biodiversity highlights and challenges

SQA recognises its responsibilities under the relevant Acts and its biodiversity duty, and will continue to do what it can within its area of responsibility.

The nature of our activities and locations present some constraints on making substantial contributions but we continue to seek out opportunities.