



Audit of Inequalities

2023 – 2025



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Introduction

This document is presented by Waterways Ireland to support our public consultation. It reports the outcome of the Audit of Inequalities conducted by Waterways Ireland.

Alternative Format

Copies of this document are available on Waterways Ireland website and in paper format. Documentation will be made available on request in formats such as Easy Read, Braille, audio formats, large print or minority languages to meet the needs of those for whom English is not their first language.

To request an alternative format, please contact us at:

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You can also read and / or download this document from our website. Go to www.waterwaysireland.org

Consultation on this document will commence on Tuesday 18 October 2022 and close on Tuesday 10 January 2023 at 4 pm.

We intend to also use other consultation methods to seek views and it may be that you will receive further communication from us in due course. We value the contribution of our consultees and hope that you will find time to comment on this document.

1. Background

1.1. What is Section 75

Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998 requires Waterways Ireland to comply with two statutory duties: the Equality of Opportunity Duty and the Good Relations Duty.

- (1) A public authority shall in carrying out its functions relating to Northern Ireland have due regard to the need to promote equality of opportunity:
 - (a) between persons of different religious belief, political opinion, racial group, age, marital status or sexual orientation;
 - (b) between men and women generally;
 - (c) between persons with a disability and persons without; and
 - (d) between persons with dependants and persons without
- (2) Without prejudice to its obligations under subsection (1), a public authority shall in carrying out its functions relating to Northern Ireland have regard to the desirability of promoting good relations between persons of different religious belief, political opinion or racial group.

1.2. Why is an Audit necessary?

The Equality Commission guidance on Section 75 recommends that public authorities undertake an audit of inequalities *“to inform the development of an action plan to promote equality of opportunity and good relations.”* The audit *“is intended to produce a more strategic picture of inequalities that a public authority may be in a position to influence, rather than examining inequalities on a policy-by-policy basis.”*¹

Waterways Ireland has undertaken an Audit of Inequalities to establish whether any of the above-mentioned Section 75 categories are or could be adversely affected or negatively impacted by the activities of Waterways Ireland and, where such inequalities were detected or suspected has developed an Action Plan to address them. While a lot of work has been done to promote equality and good relations, persistent inequalities will remain within our society.

1.3. The Action Plan

The guidance recommends that public authorities should *develop “an action plan which details action measures relevant to a public authority’s functions, to promote equality of opportunity and good relations and address inequalities for the Section 75 categories.”*

The Action Plan aims to reduce these inequalities through the identification and implementation of key strategic actions, so focus on prioritising key actions with the aim of outcomes improving over time.

¹ *Advice to Public Authorities: Approaching an Audit of Inequalities*, Equality Commission NI (March 2012)

The Commission also emphasises the importance of linking equality action planning to Corporate Planning cycle.² It advises that *“public authorities link the development of action plans to their corporate planning cycle, in order that equality of opportunity and good relations are incorporated and mainstreamed at a strategic level into the business of the public authority.”*

This Equality Action Plan 2023-2025 has been linked to Waterways Ireland Corporate Plan 2023-2025 planning cycle.

2. Methodology

Given the highly specialised nature of Waterways Ireland functions the extent to which relevant research literature could be drawn upon to shed light on equality issues relating to our services was limited.

A three-stage approach was taken to developing this Audit of Inequalities and our Equality Action Plan:

- 1) Review of the Equality Scheme. The Equality Scheme was approved by ECNI in April 2013. A new scheme will be reviewed, revised and submitted to ECNI for approval.
- 2) Review of evidence including:
 - a) statistical baseline data for Section 75 groups in Northern Ireland
 - b) Waterways Ireland strategies, plans, programmes, policies, complaints and research
- 3) Review of previous audits and action plans produced by Waterways Ireland, local authorities and other statutory bodies

The Audit of Inequalities will continue to be reviewed to coincide with the Waterways Ireland Corporate Planning cycle.

3. About Waterways Ireland

Waterways Ireland is one of six North-South Implementation Bodies, established under the British-Irish Agreement Act of 1999.

We are the cross-border navigational authority responsible for the management, maintenance, development, and restoration of 1,200 km of inland navigable waterways principally for recreational purposes, comprising:

- Lower Bann Navigation
- Erne System
- Shannon-Erne Waterway

² Ibid, pg29.

- Shannon Navigation
- Royal Canal
- Grand Canal
- Barrow Navigation
- Ulster Canal

In July 2007, it was agreed by the North/South Ministerial Council (NSMC) to include responsibility for the reconstruction of the Ulster Canal from Upper Lough Erne to Clones, and following restoration, its management, maintenance, and development, principally for recreational purposes to Waterways Ireland's remit.

Our Headquarters are in Enniskillen Co Fermanagh, with regional offices in Dublin, Carrick-on-Shannon, Co Leitrim, and Scarriff, Co Clare.

At an operational level, Waterways Ireland is responsible for a vast range of infrastructure assets including navigation channels, embankments, towpaths, adjoining lands, harbours, jetties, fishing stands, bridges, culverts, aqueducts, overflows, locks, sluices and lock houses along with buildings and archives.

Waterways Ireland's work programmes are critical to providing a safe and high-quality recreational environment for customers, whilst preserving the industrial and environmental heritage of the waterways for future generations.

Our Mission is to be the custodian of the inland navigations and collaborate to reimagine, maintain, develop, and promote them to sustain communities, environment, and heritage.

Our mission statement is: "Creating inspirational inland navigations and waterways experiences through conservation and sustainable development for the benefit of all."

4. Key Equality Considerations

4.1. Profile of Waterways Ireland

Waterways Ireland strives to fulfil its Section 75 obligations as an employer and as a public body delivering a service to the public. Its service to the public is to manage, maintain and promote the inland navigable waterways principally for recreational use. Waterways Ireland is therefore a provider of public space for outdoor recreation, boats as a navigation authority and a wide range of water-based sports alongside walking and cycling. Whilst Waterways Ireland's remit covers 1,200 km of waterways, just 15% of its geographical remit on the inland navigable waterways is in Northern Ireland covering the Erne System in County Fermanagh and the Lower Bann from Lough Neagh to Coleraine.

The Headquarters office is in Enniskillen and there is an operational office in Coleraine. Whilst Waterways Ireland has a total staff of 366³, its Northern Ireland staff number is 93. Organisation chart at Appendix B

4.2. Equality Considerations by Section 75 category

4.2.1. Gender

The size of the resident population in Northern Ireland in 2022 is estimated to be 1.93 million people.⁴ Just over half (50.8%) of the population are female, with 967,000 females compared to (49.2%) 936,200 males.

Gender and Employment

According to the Business Register and Employment Survey 2021 the total number of people in employment is 823,672. This employment rate can be broken down into:

- Employment: 51% female and 49% male.

NISRA Equality Statistics for the Northern Ireland Civil Service (July 2022) show that females made up 50.0% of the NICS workforce in 2022. This is the lowest proportion of female staff since 2012 when 49.8% of the NICS workforce was female. Within the most senior grades, female representation in 2022 is 41.6%.

The Waterways Ireland's workforce in Northern Ireland is 46.2% female and 53.8% male.

Economic Inactivity is defined as people (aged 16-64) who are not involved in the labour market – they are neither working or actively seeking employment. This includes students, retirees, long-term sickness and those with caring commitments⁵. The Labour Force Survey (October-December 2021) found that Economic Inactivity was 30.1% for women and 24.8% for males. The Northern Ireland (NI) economic inactivity rate has increased by 2% over the last 2 years. This may be because of the introduction of the NI non-response bias adjustment.⁶

Gender Pay Gap

The Gender Pay gap is the difference in average earnings (median or mean) between women and men in a workforce.

In 2021, the gap among full-time employees was 7.9%, up from 7.0% in 2020. This is still below the gap of 9.0% before the coronavirus (Covid-19) pandemic in 2019, and so the downward trend is returning. The gender pay gap for part-time employees

³ End of May 2022

⁴ <https://www.nisra.gov.uk/system/files/statistics/census-2021-population-and-household-estimates-for-northern-ireland-report-24-may-2022.pdf> page 9

⁵ <https://www.economicshelp.org/blog/160372/economics/economic-inactivity/>

⁶

<https://www.ons.gov.uk/employmentandlabourmarket/peopleinwork/employmentandemployeetypes/articles/impactofreweightingonlabourforcesurveykeyindicators/2022>

also reduced from negative 3.5% to negative 2.7%. The upward trend in the part-time gender pay gap, seen since 2015, is continuing.⁷

Among all employees, the gender pay gap increased to 15.4%, from 14.9% in 2020, but is still down from 17.4% in 2019. The gender pay gap is higher for all employees than it is for full-time employees or part-time employees. This is because women fill more part-time jobs, which in comparison with full-time jobs have lower hourly median pay.

NISRA Employee Earning Report notes considering all employees regardless of working pattern, females earned 5.7% less than males in NI ie for every £1 earned by men, women earned 94p. In the UK females earned 15% less than males when all employees are considered. The gender pay gap in NI is due to the higher proportion of female part-time employees than male part-time employees and the higher proportion of part-time jobs that are low paid.⁸

How does Waterways Ireland compare?

The breakdown of gender employment roles within Waterways Ireland follows traditional gender work patterns. Staff of all roles are employed in both jurisdictions.

There are disparities in the types of roles, over twice as many males in professional roles than women and similarly over twice as many females in administration roles than men.

SOC Group	Category of Role	Waterways Ireland*			Northern Ireland ⁹		
		Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total
1	Senior Management	2 (2%)	1 (1%)	3 (3%)	9%	6.3%	7.7%
2	Professional & Technical	18 (19%)	7 (8%)	25 (27%)	19.1%	25.4%	22.1%
4	Administration	13 (14%)	35 (38%)	48 (52%)	6.3%	17.3%	11.5%
8	Industrial	17 (18%)	0	17 (18%)	13.4%	2.0%	18.1%
		50	43	93			

**Staff employed in Northern Ireland at end May 2022*

⁷

<https://www.ons.gov.uk/employmentandlabourmarket/peopleinwork/earningsandworkinghours/bulletins/genderpaygapintheuk/2021>

⁸ [Employee earnings in Northern Ireland 2021 \(nisra.gov.uk\)](https://www.nisra.gov.uk/employee-earnings-in-northern-ireland-2021)

⁹ [Quarterly Labour Force Survey Tables – August 2022 | Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency \(nisra.gov.uk\)](https://www.nisra.gov.uk/quarterly-labour-force-survey-tables-august-2022)

What are the inequalities or potential inequalities?	Potential Action needed
Under-representation in traditional work roles	Positive targeting of under-represented groups through recruitment campaigns. Female interest and participation in professional and technical roles. Male interest and participation in administrative jobs.
Under-representation of females within the workplace	Encourage women to join the organisation through recruitment campaigns and open days.

Gender and Recreation / Sport

Information from the Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency (NISRA) "Experience of sport by adults in Northern Ireland - Findings from the Continuous Household Survey 2020-2021" indicates:

- *Almost three out of five adults (59%) had participated in sport at least once within the last year (excluding walking) in 2020/21. Females were less likely to have taken part in sport at least once within the last year (55%) than males (62%).¹⁰*
- *'Walking for recreation' is not included in the overall sport participation figures. Almost three-quarters of adults (74%) had walked for recreation within the previous year. In contrast to the demographic pattern seen with the overall sport participation rates, a higher proportion of females (79%) than males (69%) had walked for recreation.*
- *Over a quarter of adults (28%) had not participated in sport but had walked for recreation within the previous year. As with the previous results a higher proportion of non-sport participating females (32%) had walked for recreation than non-sport participating males (24%)*
- *Adults living in the most deprived areas in Northern Ireland were less likely to have participated in sport within the previous year (50%) than those adults living in the least deprived areas (68%). Analysis by deprivation shows that relatively fewer adults living in the most deprived areas walked for recreation (65%) compared to those living in the least deprived areas (78%). There were no significant differences in adults walking for recreation for those adults who had dependents compared to those who do not, and also for those adults living in urban areas compared to those living in rural areas.*

¹⁰ 2020/21 NISRA 'Engagement in culture, arts and sport by adults in Northern Ireland' (Sept, 2021) <https://www.communities-ni.gov.uk/system/files/publications/communities/engagement-culture-arts-and-sport-by-adults-in-northern-ireland-202021.pdf>

The Multiple Deprivation Measure 2017¹¹ (see Appendix C) shows Rankings relevant to Lough Erne and the Lower Bann. Devenish, Newtownbutler, Roslea, Belleek/Boa in Fermanagh and Omagh District Council and Ballysally and Coleraine in Causeway Coast and Glens are areas of most deprived with adjoin our waterways.

Waterways User Research commissioned by Waterways Ireland in 2017 found that walking is by far the most popular activity conducted on the waterways, with 42% of all users claiming to walk regularly along the waterway, followed by boating and angling (but to a lesser degree). Waterways users who participated in the research were predominantly male, aged 35-64 (61%). The majority were married (65%) and just 3% of users had a disability.

COVID-19 impacted all international and domestic trade with reduced visitor numbers and constrained domestic holiday-makers within Ireland. Whilst international tourist numbers visiting our navigations declined there was an upsurge in domestic users on the navigations in record numbers. Analysis of visitor counters along our towpaths/trails, combined with anecdotal evidence from Waterways Ireland and local authority staff throughout the island, evidenced extraordinary increased use of waterway environments since COVID-19. Walking and cycling volumes at 11 locations on the Shannon Navigation and Shannon-Erne Waterway from March to August 2020 versus the same period in 2019, reveals increases of between 91% and 126% in 5 locations. Overall usage of walking/cycling routes increased by 19%.

This is evidenced from the Continuous Household Survey findings:

Activity	Men	Women
Walking	69%	79%
Jogging	25%	18%
Cycling	24%	13%
Angling/Fishing	7%	1%

**Note: Results may not add up to 100% as multiple answers were accepted.*

What are the inequalities or potential inequalities?	Potential Action Needed
Low participation in recreation and leisure	<p>Ensuring in any supported recreational activity provision that participation by women is encouraged.</p> <p>Encourage participation by people residing in deprived areas</p>

¹¹ [NIMDM17- with ns.pdf \(nisra.gov.uk\)](https://www.nisra.gov.uk/nimdm17-with-ns.pdf)

4.2.2. Dependents

The 2021 Census defines "Dependent children" as those living with their parent(s) who are either aged under 16 years, or aged 16 to 18 years and who are in full-time education, excluding children aged 16 to 18 years who have a spouse, partner or child living in the household.

Dependency can also refer to anyone who depends on an individual for care. Often this can be an adult or older person with physical or cognitive disabilities.

On Census Day 2021, there were 365,200 children aged 14 or under, making up 19% of the population.¹² Currently there are 7 million carers of working age living in the UK; 4.06 million (58%) of these are women and 2.94 million (42%) are men.¹³

Within NI this figure is much more unequal with women making up 64% of carers and men making up the other 36%. There are currently 318,000 carers in NI, 11.8% of all residents. The value of care provided by carers in NI is £4,389,900,000 a year.¹⁴

Three quarters (72%) of working carers worry about continuing to juggle work and care.

Maternity

An Equality and Human Rights Commission (EHRC) survey in June 2017 found 77% of mothers said they had been subject to a negative and possibly discriminatory experience during pregnancy, maternity, or after their return from maternity leave.¹⁵

Waterways Ireland has policies in place to ensure that an employee's employment status is protected when on leave.

Older People

Providing care throughout life, particularly on a long-term basis can result in multiple disadvantages in later life - it can impact on income, pension accumulation and the development of social networks. These impacts of care giving on pensions, earnings, savings and career opportunities all multiply over time and impact substantially on middle aged women.¹⁶

People with caring responsibilities for someone who is elderly, sick or disabled are also more likely to be women aged between 50-60.¹⁷ Middle-aged women are more likely to be disadvantaged, given the fact that 13% of carers said they were at risk of

¹² <https://www.nisra.gov.uk/system/files/statistics/census-2021-population-and-household-estimates-for-northern-ireland-statistical-bulletin-24-may-2022.pdf>

¹³ <https://psnc.org.uk/lpcs-and-local/locally-commissioned-services/essential-facts-stats-and-quotes/carers-and-providing-carer-support-services/>

¹⁴ <https://carers.org/country/carers-trust-northern-ireland>

¹⁵ <https://www.peoplemanagement.co.uk/article/1756377/avoiding-pregnancy-maternity-discrimination-claims>

¹⁶ http://www.equalityni.org/ECNI/media/ECNI/Publications/Delivering%20Equality/KI2007_Health.pdf

¹⁷ <https://psnc.org.uk/lpcs-and-local/locally-commissioned-services/essential-facts-stats-and-quotes/carers-and-providing-carer-support-services/>

reducing their working hours or giving up work altogether if they didn't have Carer's Leave.¹⁸

How does Waterways Ireland compare?

In response to an organisation wide staff Monitoring Questionnaire (North and South) completed in 2021, 61% of staff indicated they had caring responsibilities. This is broken down as follows:

Category of Role	
A child or children under 18 years old:	86.54%
A disabled person or persons:	2.88%
An elderly person or persons:	15.38%
Other (primarily students over 18 living at home)	6.73%

What are the inequalities or potential inequalities?	Potential Action needed
Support services for carers and those with dependents	Continue to provide a range of workplace, work-life balance policies and flexible working for staff in the organisation.

Flexibility is offered to employees through the Waterways Ireland Flexible Working Policy. This policy provides employees with flexible working patterns, to care for children under the age of 16 or a disabled child under 18 years of age. In addition, staff are also entitled to apply for a flexible working arrangement in respect of caring responsibilities for an adult spouse, partner, civil partner, near relative, or an adult living at the same address as them.

4.2.3. Age

Children and Young People

There are 441,108 children living in Northern Ireland¹⁹ and 103,400 living in poverty in Northern Ireland.²⁰

Children who have a disability and children who live in a household with a disabled parent or sibling are most likely to experience poverty.²¹

Whilst socio-economic disadvantage is not a specified ground under the equality legislation, it is clear that the barriers and inequalities experienced by equality groups are exacerbated by poverty and social exclusion. At every stage of schooling,

¹⁸ <https://www.carersuk.org/news-and-campaigns/news/employers-more-supportive-of-caring-but-carers-still-at-risk-of-leaving-work-unless-more-measures-adopted>

¹⁹ <https://dera.ioe.ac.uk/38974/1/child-social-care-20-21.pdf>

²⁰ <https://www.niccy.org/about-us/news/latest-news/2017/october/17/social-security-cuts-likely-to-drive-more-children-into-poverty/>

²¹ http://www.ci-ni.org.uk/DatabaseDocs/nav_4786494__beneaththesurface_web.pdf Child Poverty Alliance Campaigning to eradicate child poverty. Beneath the Surface – Child Poverty in Northern Ireland 2014

Northern Ireland's poorest children are likely to do worse, and make less progress than their better-off classmates, with evidence showing that the gap has been widening²²

Young people and how they experience and value our inland waterways is hugely important to Waterways Ireland. The Waterways Ireland Education Programme aims to integrate the inland waterways with the learning environment and provide learning experiences which are meaningful, accessible, engaging and stimulating for all. The resources developed and programmes or workshops delivered feed into the curriculum and compliment what schools are doing within the classroom. They are free and accessible by all.

The NI Equality Commission's 2020 Summary of Policy Positions Relating to Poverty and Socio-economic Disadvantage notes "mentoring, targeted careers advice and wider support for those at, or approaching, school leaving age could help match career aspirations and skills to job prospects".

Older People, Pensioners

At mid-year 2021 there were 287,100 people aged 60 to 84 inclusive and 39,400, aged 85 and over. In total that is 17% of the population of Northern Ireland²³.

By 2030, the 65 and older population is projected to be over 71 million. The 75 and older population is projected to be over 33 million.

The most common form of workplace discrimination reported is age discrimination, with more than 1 in 10 adults in the UK saying that they think their age has been a factor in not getting jobs they've applied for (11%) and more than 1 in 20 (5.7%) saying that they've experienced workplace discrimination based on their age.²⁴

Older people are less likely to participate in sport but will require accessible exercise avenues which can also make it difficult for older people to use and participate in activities in, on and along the waterways.²⁵

How does Waterways Ireland compare?

NISRA report that NICS has an older age profile than that of the economically active population with 13.9% of NICS staff aged 16-34 compared with 45.2% among the economically active. 42.4% were aged 50 and above, the average age (median 47 years) of staff was eight years older than in 2000 (39 years).²⁶

Waterways Ireland recognises the importance of youth in succession planning. Waterways Ireland also facilitates individuals to work past the government retirement age guidance and can provide adjustments to an employee's job to assist them for example through reduced hours, as an individual ages.

²² [Summary of policy positions relating to poverty and socio-economic disadvantage \(equalityni.org\)](#)

²³ 2021 NISRA Mid-year Population Estimates for Northern Ireland
<https://www.nisra.gov.uk/sites/nisra.gov.uk/files/publications/MYE21-Bulletin.pdf>

²⁴ <https://www.ciphr.com/workplace-discrimination-statistics/>

²⁵ 2021 NISRA Mid-year Population Estimates for Northern Ireland
<https://www.nisra.gov.uk/sites/nisra.gov.uk/files/publications/MYE21-Bulletin.pdf>

²⁶ [Equality Statistics for the Northern Ireland Civil Service - January 2021 \(nisra.gov.uk\)](#)

(Working) Age Group	WI	NICS	NI economically active population (2011 Census)
18-34	14%	14%	45.2%
35-59	69%	74.9%	51.9%
60+	17%	11.1%	2.9%

What are the inequalities or potential inequalities?	Potential Action needed
Children living in poverty have limited access to educational programmes due to cost or disability	Continue to provide education and heritage programmes that cost the school/pupil minimal or no amount of money and that eliminate the risk of cost/disability being a barrier to access or participation.
Children living in poverty have limited access to extra-curricular activity due to cost or disability	Continue to work with local community groups, Sports Development Officers, National Governing bodies, using the waterways for recreational activity to support programmes at no or low cost, targeting children living in poverty.
Young people living in poverty are less likely to achieve educational success which affects employment prospects	Seek to offer a range of work experience opportunities for young people from a wide range of educational achievement and background.
Access to information and services Expand services to meet future projections	Ensure that services; including access to and content of information we provide suits the specific needs of older people. Continue to expand upon developing projects to ensure that the waterways will be as accessible as possible for older people, given the growth predictions.
Obstacles to participation in recreation/leisure Obstacles in employment	Work with local Sports Development Officers, National Governing bodies, local communities and other statutory bodies to support programmes providing opportunities for older people to participate in recreation/leisure.

4.2.4. Disability

Ulster University's Economic Policy Centre found in 2021 the number of disabled people in employment within Northern Ireland was 92,300. This means that within the working-age population (16-64) 11.3% have a disability.²⁷ Northern Ireland has the lowest disabled employment rate of any UK region, and the widest employment rate gap between disabled and non-disabled persons.

In the Waterways Ireland Monitoring Questionnaire of 2021, 96.7% of staff indicated that they did not consider themselves a disabled person. The remaining 3.26% indicate the nature of their impairment as follows:

Type of Disability	WI
Physical impairment, such as difficulty using your arms, or mobility issues requiring you to use a wheelchair or crutches:	0%
Sensory impairment, such as being blind or having a serious visual impairment, or being deaf or having a serious hearing impairment:	20%
Mental health condition, such as depression or schizophrenia:	20%
Learning disability or difficulty, such as Down's Syndrome or dyslexia, or Cognitive impairment, such as autistic spectrum disorder:	10%
Long standing or progressive illness or health condition, such as cancer, HIV infection, diabetes, epilepsy or chronic heart disease	50%

Accessible facilities and services

Waterways can present many challenges for visitors and particularly for visitors who have a disability. People with a range of disabilities experience difficulty in accessing waterway crafts, movement on grass, loose surfaced pathways, uneven ground and on-site facilities such as parking, WC facilities, jetties, piers, fishing stands, floating pontoons and to various waterside locations from which boating activities take place. Waterways Ireland must continue to ensure that people with disabilities can access information about our services and enjoy the facilities which we provide on and along our waterways.

Results from the Waterway Users Research Report 2017 indicated that 3% of the users responded that they had a disability.

What are the inequalities or potential inequalities?	Potential Action needed
Obstacles to participation in leisure / recreation	Apply the principles of Universal Design in the design, upgrade and development of facilities on and along our waterways to ensure these are accessible and usable for everyone.

²⁷ <https://www.disabilityaction.org/news/disabled-people-represent-only-113-of-the-ni-working-population>

What are the inequalities or potential inequalities?	Potential Action needed
Obstacles to employment	<p>Affirmative action measures to attract more applications from people with disabilities for vacancies across all areas of our organisation.</p> <p>Improved information about applicants for jobs / our staff to enable us to take appropriate action and make improvements with attracting, recruiting, retaining and progressing people with disabilities</p> <p>Actively promote a positive attitude to encourage and support staff declaring a disability.</p> <p>Successfully achieve the actions set out in our Disability Action Plan.</p>
Access to information and services	Develop an accessible information policy along with procedures to highlight the organisation's commitment to communicating effectively with everyone.

4.2.5. Religion and Political Opinion

The 2021 Census reports 42.31% of the population were Catholic, while 38.7% belonged to Protestant or other Christian background denominations.

Excluding those with a community background recorded as 'Not Determined', Protestants made up 50.2% and Catholics 49.8% of NICS staff in 2022²⁸.

How does Waterways Ireland compare?

Of the staff based within Northern Ireland, 63.2% are from Catholic community and 36.8% from Protestant community.

When compared with Northern Ireland and NI Civil Service statistics Waterways Ireland has an under representation of Protestants; however, comparison to data from Fermanagh & Omagh District Council area (where Waterways Ireland's Headquarters is based) would indicate that no significant imbalance exists.

²⁸ [Equality Statistics for the Northern Ireland Civil Service - January 2021 \(nisra.gov.uk\)](https://www.nisra.gov.uk/equality-statistics-for-the-northern-ireland-civil-service-january-2021)

Determination	WI	NI ²⁹	NI Civil Service	FODC area ³⁰
Catholic	63.2%	42.3%	49.8%	61.2%
Protestant	36.8%	38.7%	50.2%	28.8%

Potential Action needed	Source of Evidence
Affirmative action required to attract a wider applicant pool from the Protestant community.	Anecdotal – loyalist/unionist objection to North/South Implementation Bodies

4.2.6. Race and Ethnicity

NISRA Census 2021 shows 3.4% of the population belonged to an ethnic minority group. The number of people living in Northern Ireland who were born outside the United Kingdom and Ireland has grown from 81,500 people in 2011 to 124,300 people in 2021.

Over 96% of the population identifies as 'white'. In Waterways Ireland 2021 Monitoring Questionnaire, 100% of staff indicated their race, colour or ethnic or national origins as 'white'.

It is recognised that many migrants face difficulties when accessing public services, especially where English is not their first language. While some important information services may be available in a wide range of languages, this service is limited, and for many government services is provided more as a welcoming gesture. Some migrants have also faced varying degrees of racism, prejudice and hostility.

In 2015, the Northern Ireland Council for Ethnic Minorities identified a number of barriers to employment for people from ethnic minority groups, including:

- Recognition of qualifications
- Work experience and voluntary work overseas being discounted
- The importance placed on references from NI employers
- Language proficiency
- The reliance on job application forms (something that many people are unused to)
- Employment agencies have no capacity to translate documentation needed to support applications

²⁹ Census 2021

³⁰ Census 2021

What are the Inequalities or potential inequalities?	Potential Action needed
Language and communication barriers	Provide language translations of other information when asked to do so.
Under-representation in decision-making processes	Actively seek to increase engagement with organisations representing the interests of people from minority ethnic backgrounds.
Under representation in workforce	Affirmative action

4.2.7. Sexual Orientation

There are limited statistics that monitor the sexual orientation of the population in NI. The 2018 NI Life and Times Survey found that 94% of respondents identified as “heterosexual or ‘straight’”; 1% “‘gay’ or ‘lesbian’ (homosexual)”; 1% as “bisexual” and 1% as “Other” (3% declined to answer). A commonly used estimate of LGBTQ+ people in the UK, accepted by Stonewall UK, is 5-7% of the population.

Rainbow Project from 2012 report that Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender (LGB&T) people make up between 6 and 10% of the Northern Ireland population.³¹

Staff who responded to the Waterways Ireland’s Monitoring Questionnaire from 2021, (North and South) indicated their sexual orientation as follows:

Sexual Identity	WI	NI
Heterosexual/Straight	98.77%	94%
Gay/Lesbian	0.62%	1%
Bisexual	0.62%	1%
Refusal/ Didn’t Answer	*See below	3%

*12% of staff skipped this question.

Research has shown that trans people are less likely to open-up about their gender identity, which can have an impact on how people participate and sustain employment. By providing training, organisations can become allies of the LGBTQ+ community which may help increase employment. It is predicted that due to the changing attitudes of the general population to marriage in recent years, and the fact that legal unions have only recently been made available for same-sex couples, more people will ‘come out’.

³¹ <https://www.rainbow-project.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/guideline.pdf> (Northern Ireland Statistical Research Agency (NISRA). Mid-population estimates and population projections. Belfast: NISRA, 2012.)

What are the Inequalities or potential inequalities?	Potential Action needed
Obstacles to participation employment / recreation	<p>Ensure awareness of LGBTQ is part of Waterways Ireland ongoing staff equality training.</p> <p>LGBTQ+ people and their families are visible in promotional materials and information leaflets etc.</p>
Potential Discrimination/ Harassment	Raising awareness of the appropriate policies and the disciplinary procedures in place to deal effectively with actions of discrimination or harassment.

4.2.8. Marital Status

The 2011 Census advised that almost half (47.6%) of the population aged 16 and over within Northern Ireland were married, while just over a third (36%) were single. The number of individuals in civil partnerships is likely to have increased when the 2021 Census results are published.

Results from an organisation wide staff Monitoring Questionnaire (North and South) completed in 2021 indicate:

Single, never married	21.84%
Married or civil partnership	70.69%
Widowed	0.57%
Divorced	4.02%
Separated	2.87%

5. Key emerging issues for Waterways Ireland

This Audit of Inequalities has identified a range of emerging inequalities and issues.

The Waterways Ireland Equality Action Plan 2023-2025 has been developed using the findings of the Audit of Inequalities and outlines our approach to addressing the key inequalities under the themes:

1. Promote awareness of the Equality Agenda among Waterways Ireland staff.
2. Provide a working environment where employees are treated with fairness, dignity and respect.
3. Attract, recruit and retain a diverse range of employees in a culture which celebrates diversity and inclusion.
4. Deliver services that are accessible, inclusive and responsive to visitors to our property and waterways.

6. Monitoring and Review Process

The Action Plan will be monitored on an annual basis by the Senior Management Team. The Senior Management Team will review the progress in implementing previously agreed actions together with consideration of any new developments in the intervening period. Where appropriate, the Action Plan will be revised to reflect any new developments, consultations, the outcome of any new Equality Impact Assessments or any additional information not previously available.

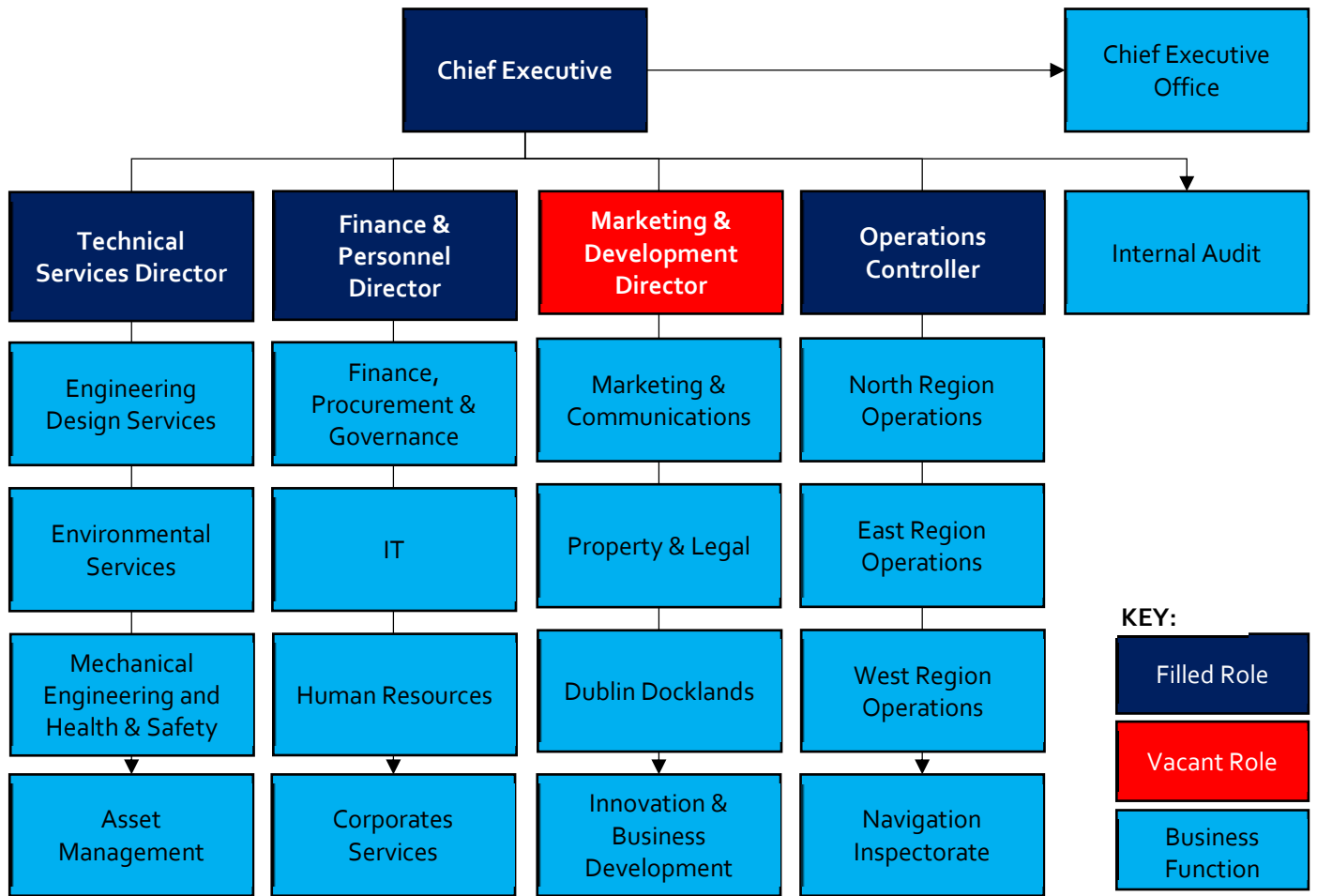
Waterways Ireland will prepare an annual report on progress made over the previous year. This report will form part of the Annual Review of Progress on Section 75 implementation which is sent to the Equality Commission.

The collation of information on progress will allow for regular and ongoing review of the initial action plan to ensure that it remains effective and relevant to Waterways Ireland functions. Any changes or amendments to the action plan will be reported to the Equality Commission.

Appendix A – Map of Waterways under our Remit



Appendix B – Organisational Chart



Appendix C - Northern Ireland Multiple Deprivation Measure 2017 (NIMDM2017)

NIMDM 2017, were informed through public consultation and Steering Group agreement, and provide a mechanism for ranking the 890 Super Output areas (SOAs) in Northern Ireland from the most deprived (rank 1) to the least deprived (rank 890).

Map 3.1 Overall Multiple Deprivation Measure 2017 by SOA

