

Review of Activity to Address the Lack of Diversity in the Environment Sector

A Research Report Commissioned by

Esmée Fairbairn Foundation

Produced by

Dr Samina Zahir and Pam Jarvis

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Introduction

The lack of diversity within key UK industry sectors is neither new, nor surprising. However, the Environment Sector has been found to be one of the least diverse sectors: 4.81% of environment professionals identify as Black, Asian or other racially minoritised groups compared to 12.64% in all occupations (source: [SOS-UK Racial diversity in environment professions](#)).

Esmée Fairbairn Foundation commissioned this research in June 2023 to map existing and planned initiatives aiming to address the lack of diversity in the UK Environment Sector, and to identify gaps and further opportunities to address structural inequity in the Sector – particularly where the support of a funder might be catalytic. Rather than capture all aspects of diversity, the research focuses on groups we know are currently underrepresented in the Environment sector: people experiencing racial inequity; from low socioeconomic backgrounds; disabled people and neurodivergent people; and people who may identify with more than one of these characteristics.

- 1. Entry points into the Environment Sector**
- 2. Facilitating career progression**
- 3. Removing barriers**
- 4. Accountability and evaluation**

In the final section, we suggest areas where Esmée Fairbairn Foundation might potentially focus interventions and investment for most impact and benefit.

This is not a field with simple solutions. There are decades of papers, reports and findings that outline the lack of equity experienced by those identifying with one or more of the protected characteristics and / or from different socioeconomic backgrounds – and this body of work highlights the levels of inaction to address this situation – as the saying goes ‘you are what you do’.

A note about language

The language used in this field is also wide-ranging and constantly changing. Individuals use terms interchangeably and differently. We acknowledge that language is complex and that putting people into categories can diminish individual identities, which is problematic. In this report, when describing individuals or communities, we will seek to use the term(s) they identify with. We will use ‘underrepresented communities’ as a collective term to describe people and communities currently underrepresented in the Environment Sector. When developing Equity, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) strategy and action plans, organisations need to find terminology and language they and their stakeholders feel most comfortable with.

We also use ‘community-led’ to refer to work or organisations that are led by and for their communities.

This report acknowledges this and asks that Esmée Fairbairn Foundation does not take up a deficit model approach, or one based on the medical model of disability.

A **deficit model** is a way of thinking about equality, diversity and inclusion that focuses on the perceived shortcomings of individuals and groups from underrepresented backgrounds. It assumes that these individuals and groups are lacking in skills, knowledge, or resources, and that they need to be 'fixed' in order to succeed in mainstream society.

The deficit model is problematic for many reasons: it ignores the many strengths and assets that individuals and groups from underrepresented backgrounds bring. It blames individuals and groups for their own oppression, rather than acknowledging the role of systemic racism, ableism, sexism, ageism, and other forms of discrimination. It can also lead to harmful policies and practices that further marginalise and disadvantage underrepresented groups.

In workplaces, the deficit model can lead to microaggressions and discrimination against employees from underrepresented backgrounds. In society, the deficit model can lead to negative stereotypes and assumptions about underrepresented groups.

In contrast to the deficit model, a more inclusive approach to EDI focuses on the strengths and assets of individuals and groups from all backgrounds. It recognises that systemic racism, ableism, ageism, and other forms of discrimination create barriers for underrepresented groups, and it works to dismantle these barriers. It values diversity and promotes the inclusion of all people in mainstream society.

The social model of disability is a way of understanding disability that focuses on the barriers that society places on people with disabilities, rather than the individual's impairments. This model views disability as a social construct, meaning that it is created by society, not by the individual's body or mind.

The **social model of disability** challenges the traditional view of disability as a medical condition (the medical model). The medical model looks at a person's impairment first and focuses on this as the cause of people with a disability being unable to access goods and services or being able to participate fully in society.

In contrast, the social model highlights the importance of creating an inclusive society where everyone has the same opportunities and rights, regardless of their abilities. Key principles of the social model of disability are that disability is caused by the barriers that society places on people, people with disabilities are active agents who can challenge the barriers they face, and society has a responsibility to remove the barriers that people with disabilities face.

The medical model had informed the development and structure of legislation, focusing on what a person is unable to do. The social model of disability has led to changes in policy and practice, such as the introduction of disability rights legislation and the development of inclusive education.

Research Approach

The research was carried out in three phases:

Literature review

We carried out an initial literature review that considered existing policies, papers, and research on this subject – as it relates to the Environment Sector. We used this research to build up an extensive mailing list, with over 350 organisations, networks, and individuals.

Survey

All organisations on the mailing list were emailed with the survey, which also asked if they would be willing to have a follow up conversation. Two surveys were distributed, one to NGOs, public sector, and larger organisations and the other, to individuals and small community groups.

The survey and research were published and advertised on Facebook. As expected, we received some positive comments on Facebook but many negative racist, xenophobic, and prejudiced comments. We received 72 responses to the survey; one was discounted due to the racist and xenophobic comments from a person working in the sector.

Interviews

We contacted people directly for interview and followed up those who agreed to be interviewed via the survey. We carried out 40 one-to-one interviews. We sought to ensure that we talked to people from groups currently underrepresented in the Environment Sector.

We also held a group session with three young people connected to Esmée Fairbairn Foundation's Involving Young People Collective.

It is important to recognise within this small piece of research that the Environment Sector is extensive and fragmented and covers many types and scales of organisations.

This research did not intend to identify and analyse all EDI interventions but to gain an overview of practices and initiatives across the sector and to explore EDI challenges and examples of interventions taking place to address structural inequity and contribute to a more inclusive and diverse Environment Sector.

Research Findings

1. Entry points into the Environment Sector

1.1. Sources of advice

1.1.1. Organisations delivering programmes of work to support more diverse people entering the sector

Many organisations delivering programmes to support sector diversity were unable to cite sources of support or advice, rather they built up knowledge through their experience of delivery and learning through co-creation with project partners.

Organisations saw EDI support as something that organisations needed to seek out as it is not readily available. They spoke of the difficulties accessing this knowledge – particularly in relation to best practice in recruitment. We found that smaller organisations with limited funding struggled to access specialist support and expertise which can incur significant costs.

In addition, without sufficient training, organisations struggled to implement recruitment practices. A capacity and funding gap therefore holds back progress as people feel unable to access the information and support they need - and partly due to a lack of confidence and fear of taking the wrong first step.

The situation was different in organisations with staff dedicated to EDI. Organisations, such as The Wildlife Trust and YHA, are examples of organisations with dedicated EDI Teams. The Wildlife Trust is actively producing and sharing bite size videos and developing training packages. Similarly, the YHA allocated dedicated resources to EDI in a range of ways, including training and consultancy with a focus on their workforce, and have gone on to develop a package of support and research (see more on this at page 15).

Organisational training, run as part of Groundwork’s New to Nature programme, includes resources for organisations to prepare for and help employees from underrepresented communities to feel comfortable in the workplace and support progression, including disability confidence; race awareness; micro-aggression; intersectionality.

1.1.2. Individuals working in and outside the sector: supported / unsupported by those in the sector

There was a marked difference in sources of advice referenced by larger organisations and those mentioned by individuals. Larger organisations were more likely to reference membership organisations or peers, as well as referring to their own EDI teams. Individuals were more likely to reference those working in environmental and social justice and to be inspired by and informed by the practice of individuals and organisations in these fields.

Social media, in particular Instagram, was more of an influencing feature for individuals than for organisations.

1.1.3. Partnerships beyond the Environment Sector and outreach

Partnerships beyond the sector have proven effective in broadening community engagement, and as a result, changing the demography of those who apply for roles within an organisation.

Of the survey respondents, 55% had worked with non-Environment Sector led voluntary organisations - the majority of whom worked with or consisted of members included in protected characteristics - 45% had not.

'We have existing personal relationships with a variety of organisations across Scotland. For example, with Govan Community Centre who support refugees & asylum seekers. We are a trusted organisation and people are generally keen to be involved in our projects, largely because of the co-creational and human rights approach we take.'

We don't have to run programmes because our community is diverse and interested in our roles. We have organically grown a diverse team, which represent ethnic diversity, those with disabilities, the LGBTQIA+ community and more, and we are a very small team.

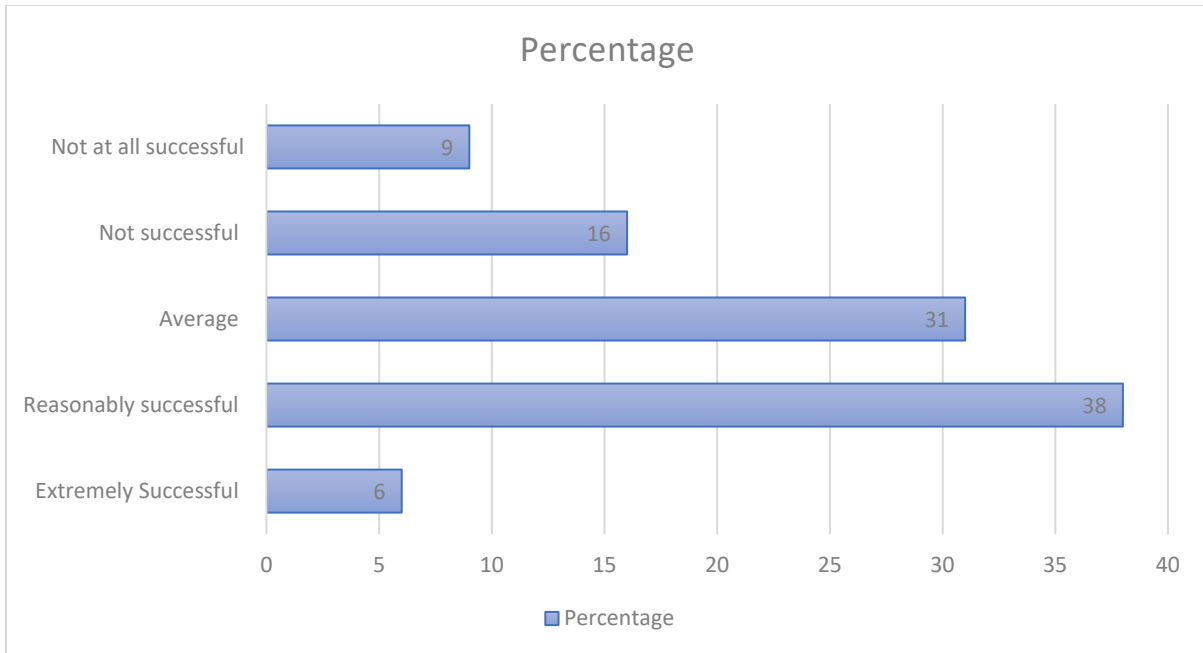
We found that less consideration was given to retention, or CPD, as opposed to recruitment, in relation to a diverse workforce, perhaps because most organisations were at the start of their EDI journey.

1.2. Existing initiatives and models

This section reviews initiatives and programmes that are actively seeking to increase the diversity of those entering the Environment Sector.

1.2.1. Accessing careers advice, placements, targeted recruitment

Targeted recruitment was found to have had mixed success rates. 44% had found this either 'extremely or reasonably successful' but 25% had found it 'not at all or not successful'.



1.2.2. ‘There is more we can do’ – the first step is recognising the need for change in the workforce

Several organisations we interviewed are recognising the need for change in their workforce so it better reflects society and increases their creativity and performance. Yet the majority of interviewees had seen minimal changes in staff composition over recent years.

We heard from interviewees who felt that the sector is characterised by organisations with workforces ‘full of white people who feel very comfortable in their environments and have been familiarised with them from an early age.’

‘We have work to do in recruitment, our workforce looks the same as it did four or five years ago. The workforce is under representative of people of colour, visible or invisible disability - or faith, sexuality – these things are not talked about, the workplace has limited accessibility – so having staff members with disability would be challenging.’

We found that organisations are assessing diversity holistically across employees, volunteers, boards, and membership from all aspects of social, economic, and organisational culture.

1.2.3. Targeted Recruitment

Although only half the survey respondents considered targeted recruitment, and less than half had already implemented such programmes, those that did use targeted recruitment methods appeared to have positive results.

1.2.4. Perceptions of environmental organisations can influence employment considerations

Interviewees noted that there is a barrier as some environmental organisations can seem *'very judgmental, militant and intimidating, and superior.'* They attribute this to the lack of any meaningful engagement with diverse communities or marginalised groups: this in turn leads to those groups feeling unrepresented.

Organisations often choose to recruit people with relevant degrees and scientific backgrounds related to the needs and nature of their work: the current high cost of higher education creates a barrier to these types of jobs for those from less privileged economic backgrounds. Addressing this will need a major change in access to education and specialist training and greater government investment in the sector's talent pipeline. This is an urgent issue for the land-based Environment Sector, which faces a national skills gap of an estimated 600,000 new entrants required over the next 10 years.¹

The issue of low pay as a barrier was raised: the sector is perceived as *'a hard sector to get into and we don't pay enough compared to the private sector and the earning potential is limited.'* Entry level jobs and apprenticeships are very poorly paid and not a living wage which excludes many people:

'People come into the conservation sector because they're passionate about the cause - not the money. We're never going to have huge amounts of people wanting to join this sector unless there is massive change in conservation or the government steps in.'

1.2.5. Interviewee Perspectives

Interviewees do feel dispirited *'the situation is bleak. Barriers are due to historical ways of communication and lack of mobility within the sector and its stipulations for specific experience, skills, and qualifications. This stops people progressing through early careers and entry level opportunities and the sector is struggling to recruit diverse people into senior level and board roles.'*

1.2.6. Change is challenging

A few organisations felt that they had done everything possible to shift recruitment patterns:

'We have bent over backwards and tried everything with recruitment, but we still get very few ethnic minorities applying to us. I'm thinking it could be because of salary and short-term contracts in the sector so I'm trying to address that.'

Some organisations are apprehensive when recruiting - *'as a White man you fear you might say the wrong thing to a person of colour.'*

¹ Source: James Hibbert , Deputy Principal, Plumpton College

There was also evidence of preconceptions about what sort of role would interest applicants with one respondent suggested that *'some sectors and posts are not what some who have Protected Characteristics want or feel it is appropriate to them.'*

1.2.7. Routes into the Environment Sector

Entry into roles working within the Environment Sector primarily revolve around volunteering and feeling at ease in natural settings. A familiarity with green and blue spaces seems to be an essential requirement: the lack of this familiarity reduces the likelihood of even recognising job prospects and understanding of the sector roles and opportunities. Unfortunately, many individuals lack the time, capacity – or the financial circumstances - to make an ongoing commitment to volunteering.

Numerous organisations consulted worried that significant portions of the population remain disengaged from environmentalism due to the sector's lack of connection with them. Positive outdoor experiences provide exposure to role models and potential job roles, like environmentalists, park rangers, or outdoor instructors, potentially stimulating consideration of career paths.

Crucially, understanding the possibilities of working in the Environment Sector is key, *'you don't go into a sector when it's an opaque mass that you can't work through.'*

SUPPORTING RESEARCH

Interviewees (found through online research) talked about their routes into the non-mainstream Environment Sector and the issues raised by their experience.

Farihah, a final year university student did a module on climate change. This ignited her passion for understanding the impact of environmental degradation on climate. With roots in Bangladesh, she pondered on the vulnerability of that nation to climate change. Observing real-time consequences and climate refugees, she recognised the potential submergence of parts of Bangladesh by 2050, leading to her family's relocation due to annual flooding.

'I don't live in Bangladesh. I wasn't born in Bangladesh, but I have deep roots to it. And I think about my parents and how they grow up and how that influenced the way we live now and thinking about what's happening to Bangladesh at the moment. I think being able to make those links is quite important. ... If you don't have personal links to them, it's not always easy to articulate the impacts that you are seeing or actually what's happening on the ground as opposed to seeing it from an outsider.'

Farihah saw how her degree has enabled her to reach this point, since *'connecting more fully with the Environment Sector is not something I want to do or is a harder thing to do, given the challenges for diverse people moving into that sector.'*

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Like others, Farihah saw multiple barriers to entry into sector employment both on and offline, for herself and others *'people aren't made aware of opportunities, I went to a state school, I didn't even know about working in the environment or careers, you don't really know about these things, unless you're part of a certain social group ... sometimes it's about people you know.'*

She did see the use of social platforms as democratising access to opportunities and used social media to grow an online community, specifically Instagram (examples included Decolonize the Garden on Instagram).

Vibhati studied Psychology due to her fascination with human behaviour: a Climate Change module ignited her interest in the Environment Sector. She subsequently enhanced her CV by completing a Cornell diploma in Climate Action communication online.

Influenced by her family's volunteering values, Vibhati supported a campaign against single-use plastics through a local NGO in her community. She also volunteered abroad to educate students on plastic pollution.

In her Environment Sector job search, Vibhati faced competition from graduates who had specialised in environment related degrees and encountered repeated rejection despite some positive feedback from interviews.

She secured a role in Curry's Sustainable Business Department and then as a senior consultant at Ernst & Young

Seeking mentorship from those with similar cultural backgrounds, she found no online community globally representing South Asian individuals. Seeing this gap, she now uses her platform to build community to talk with South Asian people across a number of different areas - including art, science, in consulting, running start-ups and business. She wanted to *'platform the great work being done showing people of colour and South Asian people who are doing some great stuff, showing that it's a viable career.'*

Vibhati recognises that at the time, six – seven years ago, *'a lot of people of colour just weren't in the space at the time.'* When mentioning associates in the sector she notes that they are frequently part-timers, sole traders, and social enterprises. Despite their dedication to change, they're often disconnected from mainstream efforts.

Alister, in contrast, had struggled to find a role within the mainstream Environment Sector. He had a late Dyslexia and Autism diagnosis, resulting in his need to manage his time very carefully in education. He gained a degree through the Open University in Environmental Studies.

He then went on to have dozens of unsuccessful job interviews and discussions with people: this was largely due to the interview process, which is inherently designed for neurotypical people; the 'proper' way of doing things is not inclusive of neurodivergent individuals and doesn't address their needs but instead expects them to adapt to neurotypical expectations of communication.

He was repeatedly told that his manner in interviews was 'odd', that he seemed uncomfortable in interviews – this was due to him being perceived through a neurotypical lens.

He felt that he had a good interview for his current role. He recognised that the people interviewing him were listening to **what** he was saying not **how** he was saying it. They had been provided with training before they interviewed him. He commented *'it wasn't a perfect interview, but they had more of a willingness to look past my autism than I've had anywhere else.'*

Alister found it hard acclimatising to the role, so he spoke to a counsellor who was provided for six months and this helped him adjust. Alister knew that he needed *'a good group of people around me, if I had that, even if things go pear shaped, I know I'm ok. I can ask for advice. I don't have that at the moment.'*

Alister stressed the benefits of mentoring and support at both an individual level *'she would happily sit there and go over tasks again and again, which is how I learned'* and team level *'the whole team trained me'*.

He appreciated the approach taken by one environmental sector professional *'she was straight with me. She didn't dodge, she was direct. I can handle that because I'm autistic – so I knew what I needed to do and would do that from then on. They [the team] also knew it was best to talk to me – written stuff can be mistranslated – that works well for me.'*

He stressed that employers need to learn that much of what they consider to be professional ways of running their world are not professional – that it is discrimination against people who, given the opportunity, can do a lot more and better and in a less stressful way.

1.2.8. Organisations leading change

We found many instances of organisations making changes to this process through more inclusive and accessible recruitment. However, far more was being done by organisations outside the mainstream Environment Sector. Our research highlighted organisations and individuals who were leading on change because they were plotting their own path. They were unconstrained by existing frameworks and ways of operating and were therefore able to deliver in a way that few of the established organisations we found could. Examples include Faith for the Climate (see page 21), Energise and @easypeasysustainability (see below).

SUPPORTING RESEARCH

[Easypeasysustainability](#) is active in sustainable fashion, noting its connection to Bangladesh's garment production – the founder has Bangladeshi heritage. The industry is primarily reliant on Bangladeshi women and presents the paradox of a major export but unsustainable sector.

The Founder is interested in championing South Asian voices in the environment movement. Stewarding the earth is part of the Islamic faith *'Islam promotes stewardship, and it promotes not being wasteful ...*

the onus is so strong in our religion, around stewardship and taking care of the earth, I find it amazing that we've gotten to a point where so many people are just not doing that.'

South Asians for Sustainability is a small organisation focused on highlighting organisations doing 'great work for both the environment but also social impact side of things because often I feel they're in silos. Environmental work is seen very separately. But climate justice and human rights is huge, and it's all connected.'

The Founder wanted to talk about 'sustainability in a culturally relevant way ... there's huge language barriers, and understanding what climate change is, what sustainable issues are just framed so differently.'

Of crucial importance for her is 'how can we pass on sustainable solutions that are already inherent to South Asian culture from our ancestors down?' She highlighted the convergence of environmental and social concerns in practical reporting. Student-led sustainability efforts are driving change, impacting charities and fuelling campaign activism. Yet, greenwashing remains a significant concern.

She is actively engaged in advisory roles, such as with the RACE Report (a joint transparency initiative led by SOS-UK – see page 24), [The RACE Report | SOS-UK](#) is tackling the diversity gap in the sector and has observed a small but positive shift in the diversity of those who attend events – perhaps reflecting market dynamics as South Asian communities become more visible and present in sustainability and environmental spaces.

Some mainstream organisations are stripping away standard processes with actions including:

- **Engaging with community partners:** reaching out to local community organisations to promote work opportunities has been a valuable tool for recruitment.

'Local people understood what we want to represent. It has opened up this project to people who might not otherwise have thought of applying and allows them to see if they are a good fit for the project.'

- **Greater direct engagement with their target groups:**

'Our success came from already having a very active and engaged diverse audience, who understood that we 'get it'. We did not have to advertise through any third-party channels.'

- **Investing in partnerships:** for example, [Diverse Jobs Matter](#), and consulting with trusts on attracting underrepresented groups:

'We work with our partnerships to profile our roles. They support us with our recruitment campaigns such as helping us write adverts, promote on the right advertising channels to attract underrepresented groups. We also do community activity across the right networks, and we do a lot of profiling of our brand on social media.'

- **Thinking creatively about messaging and communications:**

'Using different platforms and media to promote jobs: e.g., social media platforms rather than The Guardian to reach underrepresented audiences and protected characteristics: 'Large increase in diverse applicants and hires compared to our traditional approach.'

- **Reaching out to potential applicants at events:** for example, one organisation benefited from an outreach sub-group of its EDI committee being actively engaged in leading sessions with potential future applicants through careers fairs, webinars etc at target universities.

- **Making their position on EDI more visible on websites and comms:**

'Applicants and staff told us that they can see from the way we communicate what we are doing and the actions we are taking that we are being pro-active on the statements we make in relation to EDI.'

- **Including a clear statement of intent:**

'We promote job vacancies on diversity jobs boards, wherever possible we ensure there is a POC on the recruitment team and interview panel with gender balance too.'

- **Changing the optics:** some organisations are changing the diversity of people in promotional images so that diverse people can imagine themselves in those roles. However, if the image does not reflect the organisation this can prove disturbing for new staff as the workforce may not be what they were led to think. See more on this on page 49.

'What you end up with is people coming in to find that they're [staff] all White and having a bad experience and it's really traumatising.'

- **Adopting new recruitment processes:** anonymous/blind recruitment with diversity questions (although this was not always carried through into the selection process). For example, using the [Beapplied](#) platform to alter the process. This offers the ability for applicants to participate in scenario-based interview questions, enabling them to focus on their abilities rather than their educational qualifications.

- **Guaranteeing interviews** to those who meet essential criteria and are underrepresented in workforce demographics:

'We practice and state that we offer positive recruitment for underrepresented groups. We state that where we are underrepresented that we offer an opt-in approach to guarantee interviews for any applicants who meet all essential criteria in their written application.'

'We have publicised a guaranteed interview scheme for individuals from ethnic minority backgrounds or with disabilities who meet minimum criteria for the role.'

- **Reviewing the use of language and careful consideration of the requirements for roles:**

'We spent a lot of time reviewing the requirements of the roles, we worked hard on the language of job adverts, we removed any unnecessary requirements, we advertised in community-specific

publications, we used networks to reach outside 'the usual suspects', we offer true flexible working, we offered informal conversations to potential applicants'.

- **Reducing the power dynamics of interviews:** for example, through more relaxed settings for interviews – a walk, a conversation – so people feel comfortable.

YHA's work on inclusive recruitment is producing positive results, *'we've got more people applying to us and more people getting jobs from us.'* From reviewing the CV's / applications they are seeing relevant themes and they are better understanding what is needed to shift the make-up of applications. Applicants are individuals who are *'active outdoors [who] enjoy outdoor spaces, enjoy nature, have volunteered in it. You can start to see that exposure to the outdoors.'*

YHA acknowledge that what they don't know is *'whether this is cause or effect, whether they had chosen their career before engaging with the outdoors – it's likely a bit of both.'*

SUPPORTING RESEARCH

Youth Hostel Association

The YHA funded a post within their HR team to review EDI: this work spanned three years. As a result, a revised recruitment process led to an increase in applications from a more diverse range of candidates.

The post and process required additional resourcing and was required to be fully internally funded, in addition to broader training and upskilling for the HR team.

Actions included:

- Promoting roles across new and wide-ranging jobs boards and sites, alongside traditional recruitment
- Setting specific diversity targets
- Analysing data, *'it costs money to do the data analysis, whether it's longitudinal studies, whether it's comparative data, it costs and none of us can afford it.'*
- Sense-checking language used in job descriptions and adverts – they compared the language used to the average reading age (10)
- Reviewed whether the role really needed higher education qualifications
- Reviewed the need for a driving license

Trustees: YHA considered how they recruited Trustees. They moved away from expecting people to have had previous board experience. They revised existing trustee biographies on the website, prioritising lived experience first and followed by their career histories.

Consultation/ Engagement: YHA considered how they engaged people in consultation and who advised them. They now pay people from protected characteristics groups and those underrepresented or on low incomes to attend or take part in conferences (£250) and when engaging in consultation.

They set up a Youth Advisory Team, this works well but requires on-going resource to sustain and motivate.

Programmes: YHA reviewed what they could offer the sector more broadly and spent two years building up a Community of Practice, which launched in 2022 as **Outdoor Citizens**. They asked whether there was an interest in visiting outdoor spaces, and then followed this up to better understand the barriers.

Building on this, they developed a grants programme for people to, for example, access hostels, develop their (green) skills, or explain the environment to groups outdoors.

Generation Green

'Generation Green' offers progressive learning for community groups and leaders. It spans micro-volunteering, day trips, residencies, apprenticeships, and employment. 15 organisations, including AONB, National Trusts, and green-focused entities, are involved. The initiative fosters employability via micro grants, promoting diverse learning experiences.

The programme recognises the need for varied skills and collaborates with individuals possessing project delivery, fundraising, and business skills.

The inaugural cohort, evaluated 18 months after completion, demonstrated career advancements and programme effectiveness.

Other endeavours include Historic Royal Palaces' Horticulture Apprenticeship Programme; students gain work experience with Access Aspiration; work experience with young people with autism from charity Outside In Pathways; Future Gardeners with a Bankside Open Spaces Trust (BOST) initiative.

Many of the range of programmes featured a mid-to long- term placement, volunteer, or traineeship opportunities. Young people were also involved in Advisory Groups, Youth and Shadow Boards as well as through collaborative, sometimes co-creation projects. Examples include:

- **National Trust:** internship and Race Equity network with a dedicated full-time lead, including participation in careers fairs.
- **Feedback Global:** Their Eco Talent programme established forty-one placements to support young people from marginalised backgrounds in the sustainable food sector, with 50% being people of colour.
- **Community Supported Agriculture Network:** They have a Food and Racial Justice Project, which aims to create ten fellowships for people of colour to foster innovative collaborations between White and Black & People of Colour (BPOC) food systems organisations.
- **Green Alliance:** a graduate scheme with the goal of diversifying the workforce pipeline, offering 2 to 4 positions annually. Efforts are being made to reach candidates from underrepresented communities.
- **Recruitment of a degree apprentice from Queen Mary University London**, working primarily at Hubbub while pursuing a Chartered Manager Degree.
- **The Woodland Trust** has a team of 3 dedicated to youth engagement.
- **Institute of Chartered Foresters** delivered Marketing campaigns such as 'Women in Forestry, look like a forester campaign'.

- **The Froglife Trust:** Their Transforming Lives programme offering traineeships within major programmes is a three-year programme to support disadvantaged young people to gain skills and work experience to take their first steps in the conservation sector. Three trainees from the first year all gained full time roles, a further 6 recruited.

1.2.9. Cultural change needs to start at board level with trustees and Senior Management Teams

To address systemic problems, work needs to be done to tackle racism within boards and senior leadership teams in the Environment Sector. Boards need to take the lead - as an interviewee stressed, they should not see this as *'a problem that's too big for them to solve.'*

One interviewee reflected that a major shift is needed: *'many boards are not challenging themselves on their diversity and not understanding what that means for the board; then staff reflect that lack of diversity because the board isn't behind it, because that culture is already present – the comfort zone. [It's] important to chip away at Board level to make real change.'*

This need for change at board level was shared by many interviewees who acknowledged *'Our board is not diverse, is unaware of EDI and bias - and too remote to influence action – [they're] more focused on compliance and legal issues - so the organisation is trying to recruit new trustees from representatives of the global communities they work with - and young people.'*

The lack of diversity in voices at a senior level appeared to be shared across the sector and had emerged in previous research *'from our EDI survey- our board is 100% White. At an NGO leaders meeting every single one of them had exactly the same challenge.'*

This picture is echoed across the Environment Sector, with low levels of board and visitor diversity in many areas. Campaign for National Parks offer an example of the problem: of 1 million visitors, 7% are from underrepresented communities (not defined); and board representation of people from Black, Asian and minority ethnic backgrounds is less than 1%.

There are many ways that board diversity can be increased, and we found some organisations were making steps in this area, but more could be done, examples included:

- Northumberland Wildlife Trust networked with NHS contacts working on environmental health and social prescribing to help in recruiting new trustees to support organisational diversity, on the basis that this sector shared their organisational purpose.
- Moving away from 'must have board experience' to prioritise personal lived experience: for example, Parent Teacher Association experience or community volunteering.
- Rainforest Foundation created a new recruitment pack with diverse imagery and stories to promote board membership via community specific newsletters/ networks/ publications like the Asian Times, to reach people who might not otherwise see ads. Offering informal chats before the recruitment process. This attracted different ethnicities, people from LGBTQI+ communities, young and older applicants. The

Board of eight now includes two women, two people from global majority backgrounds and a range of ages.

1.2.10. Initiatives to diversify board members that failed

Where the process of change has been uneven, organisations have stepped back from implementing – or continuing to implement – change.

One interviewee noted that their board prioritised skills in nature and landscape policy over lived experience: that bias prevented them recruiting someone who didn't have higher education and was from a different background to them. This was despite the fact that this board had had presentations to encourage greater diversity and the CEO is a strong advocate for change in representation. This has created concern and tension between staff and board that is further preventing diversity goals being achieved.

Although one recruitment panel for new board members included two people of colour the team's assumption that a person of colour would value lived experience was misplaced and did not influence recruitment choices. Neither did the Board act on suggestions to recruit young trustees.

1.3. Organisations interested in developing work in the future

This research has primarily focused on organisations that are eager to share their insights, programmes, and resources to enhance sectoral and organisational growth – as they possess valuable frameworks and ideas for development which the Esmée Fairbairn Foundation could draw upon.

From a strategic perspective, there are a number of member-led organisations developing work around EDI, those most mentioned by survey respondents were the Wildlife & Countryside Link and SOS UK's RACE Report.

A variable is organisations who traditionally play an advisory role but lack extensive EDI expertise. Their role is more complex as they're at various stages of their own EDI journey. We encountered this frequently, organisations who were working to change the sector, delivering programmes of work with a focus on EDI, but were not internally addressing the lack of diversity in their own workforce.

This is a disturbing paradox – programmes may bring in funding to deliver external projects– but genuine change requires organisations to look **both** internally and externally. It was outside the research framework to review this but it's an important question for Esmée Fairbairn Foundation to consider.

1.3.1. Current initiatives to address workforce diversity

A key element of work being delivered in this area are programmes that offer training, work experience and skills development. A number of organisations currently offer these programmes, we have focused on initiatives led by Groundwork, SOS-UK, YHA and UpRising here. These programmes target those at an early stage in their career – for more on this see below.

Programmes being delivered by **Groundwork** and **UpRising** could contribute towards the Environment Sector's workforce pipeline. Each clearly has its strengths. We have not done any impact comparisons of these programmes – nor of the Race for Nature's Recovery programme.

Groundwork's programme sought to engage a wide range of partners, with placements across 95 organisations. The roles are early career placements, with a range of positions available, offering 'on the job' training. Similarly, the Race for Nature's Recovery programme delivered 130 placements across the Environment Sector and offered a range of placement positions as part of the government's Kickstart programme.

One African Caribbean intern funded by Groundwork described how this had been a life changing experience, enabling them to have some stability and an income which had not been previously possible. He felt valued as part of a team and was receiving training and hands-on experience which he thought would set him up for a job in the Environment Sector.

The programmes delivered by UpRising are more training based, with a focus on course learning, followed by the development of a group project. Participants learn about their local area – as courses are more place based and focused on participants learning about and growing in their leadership journey.

SUPPORTING RESEARCH

New to Nature is led by **Groundwork** and is funded by the National Lottery Heritage Fund. It is supported by the Princes Trust, Mission Diverse, Youth Environment Service and Disability Rights UK. The programme has three priority areas: disability, ethnicity, and socioeconomics – and aims to address diversity gaps in the natural Environment Sector through 95 paid placements.

Groundwork's current focus is on entry level opportunities. This is partly driven by their work being with people with largely low educational attainment, they offer both soft and practical skills.

- **Organisations:** To recruit the organisations, Groundwork produced an Expression of Interest. They received 250 applications for 70 places. A key element was wanting organisations to learn to/ ensure an accessible role. They didn't offer management costs as they wanted organisations to invest in the young person. They held online events, both to encourage engagement and to stress the level of commitment required. They were seeking a high bar and looking for high quality. They rejected Job Descriptions produced by organisations that weren't wholly accessible.

They were ready to accept that not everybody who applied to host an Apprentice would be selected. They wanted a diversity of opportunity and looked across the Environment Sector. They were interested in both practical and academic elements.

- **Trainees:** Groundwork also produced an Expression of Interest for trainees, to hold as much information centrally as possible. They wanted to ensure an accessible process, to focus on motivation rather than skills.

They had 2500 applicants for the 70 placements, demonstrating need and interest and in July 2023 they completed recruitment of 95 young people.

A fundraising trainee was successfully recruited through Groundworks New to Nature initiative.

Generation Green, through the YHA, drew together 15 organisations with a mission to connect young people to nature and to cultivate a sense of care for the natural environment. They delivered more than 115,000 positive life-impacting opportunities. 39,476 young people experienced a facilitated day or residential trip, or self-led experience in nature.

The detailed evaluation/ impact report reviews some of the programme's findings and sets out future developments – as well as recommending future programme iterations.

Race for Nature's Recovery is a Kickstart gateway consortium operated by Students Organising for Sustainability UK, Action for Conservation, Voyage Youth and Generation Success) partnered with over 30 environmental organisations across the UK, The programme delivered 130 placements in the Environment Sector via the Government's Kickstarter programme and paid them the Real Living Wage and provided training and mentoring.

SOS-UK recognised that many young people on these programmes don't progress, they stay at entry level – which asks the point about impact and levels of investment?

UpRising's Environmental Leadership Programme has so far supported over 500 emerging young environmental leaders since 2016. UpRising itself (founded in 2008) delivers a range of leadership, mentoring and employability programmes that help leaders better reflect and represent the communities they serve. So far, they have been based in Birmingham, Cardiff, Bedford, London and Manchester.

They work with young people aged 18 – 25, working class, Black, Asian and minority ethnic and White people, and have worked with 4893 young people in the past 15 years.

They are currently running a second Environmental Leadership programme (see <https://www.elp2.uk/>)

UpRising see similar barriers facing emerging leaders. These are:

- Not knowing where the opportunities are
- Not understanding who to ask
- Not feeling confident to ask
- Not having a network of people around them – to support, motivate and ground them

The model UpRising builds therefore seeks to address these barriers. They build knowledge, skills, competence, understanding and networks for participants.

UpRising were one of the few organisations we found who had a strong evaluation framework and critical partners to review impact and data. They had worked with Demos and IFF to review the impact of their work.

Findings regarding participant demography included:

- 62% of young people on our programmes are female
- 61% of Black, Asian or minority ethnic
- 59% belong to a faith
- 14% are on free school meals, or identified as the first in their family to go to university
- Of the third of alumni for whom UpRising has the data, 40.3% were either on free school meals, or identified as the first in their family to go to university.

UpRising anticipated that participants on the environment programme would resemble those of other programmes. However, the composition of the first cohort was different. Whilst their past leadership projects had a visibly diverse demographic of 65-70%, and their outreach remained unchanged, those interested in the environmental program tended to be White and middle class, often taking gap years.

In response, UpRising engaged more with core communities and gatekeepers to emphasise the importance of the Environmental Leadership Program. This was especially important for marginalised groups experiencing greater environmental impacts. This effort gradually moulded the participant group.

Other opportunities for routes to increase diversity in the workforce are by **working with organisations who are community based**, with a strong links to communities. Organisations such as **Faith for the Climate** have strong connections with four target communities.

They are interested in scaling up to engage more communities, to see more voices – and a broader range of voices - present in current debates. They are interested in acknowledging, for example, ancestral homelands, sacred places under threat, and the countries most affected by climate change. They also see the voices of marginalised communities as vital to ensuring action has legitimacy and democratic accountability.

They recognise that many of the people living with poor environmental standards are from minority backgrounds. More could be done with and for these communities.

They would be interested in an intelligence hub of some sort, as a space/ hub through which to build up connections.

Changing the narrative by identifying and magnifying new and different voices also needs to improve as does external messaging from the Environment Sector. We found a small number of organisations who were leading thoughtful work on this.

SUPPORTING RESEARCH

CIEEM is interested in running a two-year Communications campaign, particularly targeting young people from lower socio-economic areas, people of colour and young people who are differently abled or disabled. They've taken on a communications partner with specialist experience in this area, and set up a steering group made up of organisations who can reach the target audience, for example, the Prince's Trust, UK Youth for nature, All the Elements, Aspire, Lexxic.

They envisage that much of the communication will be digital. One of their targets is to recruit environmental champions who are people not working in the Environment Sector but with an interest in the environment, or who have big social media followings amongst the target audiences. They may then contribute some social media content to signpost towards their [Green Jobs for Nature](#) website.

Staff at **UpRising** stressed the need to be clear on definitions, 'green jobs' and 'environmental sector' are very broad terms. They are currently exploring, through funding from the Youth Futures Foundation 'young people's perceptions and experiences of so-called green jobs and the environmental economy'.

Compassion in World Farming, on a smaller scale, set up a bi-monthly newsletter which covers a range of resources. It has a high read rate – out of 145 members, 80 to 90 people read it. They would be interested in developing this resource further recognising that the more people ask about EDI, the more people realise how important it is that they're actively engaged. Similarly, UpRising circulates an opportunities email (to circa 2250 young people) every 4 – 6 weeks.

Local Storytelling Exchange - storytelling through media roots

The Local Storytelling Exchange (LSE) is a communication initiative which has been operating for 18 months, has six team members and looks to address the diversity gap in climate change and net-zero transition narratives. It counters the dominance of national and global media by focusing on localised perspectives, making the transition relatable.

Working with storytellers and journalists in different English regions, LSE currently engages storytellers in Cornwall, North-East, West Midlands, and Yorkshire and Humber. They spotlight proactive individuals and communities toward Net Zero/green transition, whilst cultivating ties with local and regional media platforms.

LSE amplifies change stories in previously untapped local areas, employing a realistic and positive approach with actionable narratives. Their strategy aligns with public concerns and national discussions to portray local progress effectively. LSE acknowledges a perceived powerlessness among individuals regarding the climate's future, which doesn't mean disinterest; climate and environmental concerns remain crucial.

LSE actively seeks diverse stories from varied communities, exploring climate change's impact across socio-economic groups. Nearly 300 stories have been published in local media since LSE's inception.

Effective LSE storytelling demands skills beyond journalism, encompassing communication, being relevant to the concerns and issues of different areas; relationship-building, perspective investigation, and engaging local media in content creation. In Cornwall, the focus is on poverty, while in the West Midlands, collaborations with Muslim communities include mosque eco initiatives for Ramadan. The goal is to amplify climate ownership beyond White, middle-class voices.

LSE now possesses a roster of around 70 spokespersons nationwide. Recognising media underrepresentation, LSE prioritises voices from beyond metropolitan centres. They are interested in how

they might collaborate with new younger storytellers and how they might build strong teams across all regions.

In their own EDI, LSE works across all aspects of Gender, Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (GDEI). Staff are given three-month objectives, in part because the media cycle is very fast, but all staff now have a distinct objective around GDEI. They have revised their story monitoring process, incorporating indicators to identify stories targeting or amplifying specific communities.

LSE is in the early phases of integrating data collection and diversity awareness throughout the organisation, aiming to establish benchmarks. LSE aims to compile the gathered data, collaborating with an advisory board for diverse expertise. This recognizes that the current staff lacks diversity in lived experiences to draw from.

Whilst LSE has used a specialist recruitment agency, it has not found that this enabled them to diversify the team. For LSE, the pool of people (the intersectional skills of a storyteller and journalist) to whom they have access is limited – this causes problems in who they can appoint.

LSE is not only interested in how they build greater representation, telling stories of people they work with, but also how they might grow environmental journalism with a GDEI lens – particularly given that journalism is quite exclusive, due to its precarious nature.

1.4. Key Gaps in provision

50% of survey respondents had not delivered targeted recruitment to underrepresented communities and 59% hadn't run any programmes to diversify the make-up of their staff.

1.4.1. Getting the Core right

Interviewees stressed that impact was not generated solely by innovative or new fresh ideas and programmes, rather it's establishing good practice within HR teams. For example, ensuring that HR teams can use data to drive performance and change.

1.4.2. Effective use of data as a resource

To effectively use data as a resource, organisations would benefit from having a better understanding of the kind of data that they could usefully collect. There is currently a lack of knowledge on the data that is needed, for example on the diversity of their staff and/or communities with which they're engaging, as well as how, once findings are gathered, they might best use this information.

Data is also not being used in decision making. The RACE Report has been positive in driving people to collect EDI data and more could be done to build on this, in terms of better understanding data at each of the recruitment stages (application, short-listing, interview, appointment) as well as retention and career development.

SUPPORTING RESEARCH

The RACE Report

The RACE Report was referenced by eight organisations (13%) consulted. There were four founding partners - Hindu Climate Action, Nature Youth Connection and Education, South Asians for Sustainability and SOS-UK (the accountable organisation).

It is notable that 27% of organisations did not disclose data: this could be for a number of reasons, including small data sets that can't ensure anonymity, a reluctance to being labelled, a lack of trust, fear of sharing data, lack of understanding why data matters – amongst many other possible reasons. The Race Report will continue until at least 2027. It will deliver aggregated findings and individual cards for organisations. SOS would be interested in funding to support longitudinal research.

The RACE Report is partly shaped / influenced by [Green 2.0](#) - a US organisation that defines itself as 'watchdogs for inequality in the Environment Sector', that people of colour are the most impacted by environmental problems and the least represented in positions of power. They comment 'We believe that in the 21st century, the success of environmental causes will be based on our ability to transform them into more just, inclusive, and relevant organizations and movements.'

1.4.3. Peer Networks/ Support

The UK Environment Links supports a peer support network for ethnically diverse people called the Raven Network. This recognises that due to the low levels of ethnic diversity, there may just be one person in an organisation who identifies as ethnically diverse. This can be a lonely, and isolating experience since there's no one to talk to about shared experience or feel a sense of solidarity.

'When this work started, we set up a peer support network, separate from Link. It's run by a dedicated Chair. We crowd sourced funds from members to pay the Chair on a part time basis, one day a week. It's been running for just over two years. It was set up by a couple of people who are volunteering. We then gave space for it and help with some of the admin.'

SUPPORTING RESEARCH

CASE STUDY: The Raven Network

The Raven Network is a collective 70 people of colour working in the Environment Sector of who have encountered racism and are committed to addressing racial disparities within that sector. They explore and articulate what meaningful change in EDI might look like within their field.

The Network is concerned with the crisis in nature: the loss of species; limited access to natural areas through restrictions resulting from private ownership; pollution, and environmental damage. They see these problems as interconnected with social justice issues and believe that environmental organisations often fail to address this intersection.

The Network coordinator summarised Members' perspectives on EDI concerns and challenges they faced:

- Communication challenges with White colleagues: a person of colour can find it challenging to convince White colleagues of the importance of racial diversity within the sector.
- Job Insecurity: several members have short-term contracts, which diminishes their job security.
- Pressure to conform - fear of being perceived as 'different' can lead members to withhold their authentic selves and opinions. They may avoid addressing issues with a White manager due to uncertainty over response and potential denial of experiences and to avoid being labelled as 'difficult.'
- Continuing to face everyday racism and the presence of White supremacy, alongside widespread stereotyping.
- The sector's focus on environmental issues often overshadows the need to address EDI. This deepens feelings of being distinct and/ or problematic to White colleagues.
- EDI efforts in the sector can appear tokenistic, confined to specific departments whilst the rest of the organisation remains unaffected. This, in turn, contributes to perceptions that EDI is not genuinely valued or addressed. Many members feel exploited, for example - being asked to be photographed for use on external communications.
- Lack of Systemic Change: members argue that current EDI work does not bring about systemic change as it lacks radicality, visibility, boldness, and compassion. The systems and behaviours perpetuating racism and environmental exploitation remain intact.
- The need for a more nurturing and empowering environment for people of colour in White-led spaces.
- Working hours in the sector are excessive, driven by the expectation of extra commitment to environmental protection goals. Whilst choosing to work longer hours can imply agency, it can also magnify the sense of exploitation when such dedication is expected. They link this to the exploitation of working-class individuals and people of colour.

Overall, these points reflect the frustration and urgency of the Raven Network's mission to address racial disparities and inequities within the Environment Sector. The comments highlight the significant challenges faced in convincing others, overcoming systemic barriers and a call for a more radical and compassionate approach to EDI within the sector.

1.4.4. Increase awareness of opportunities in the Environment Sector

Many organisations felt that more needed to be done to raise awareness with younger people to enable them to understand the breadth of environmental sector job opportunities and careers available. Currently, many young people don't know who to ask about the opportunities available and who might be able to support them.

Educational systems, as well as career and job advisors, are not presenting the available options. It is therefore not surprising that interviewees outlined how, in primary and early secondary schools', activities around nature drop off at GCSE level. Career advisors and teachers are generally unaware of the breadth of jobs in the Environment Sector and are unable to provide informed advice.

Whilst this report does not consider the part played by the education system in determining those who access careers in the Environment Sector, it is useful to reflect what role Esmée Fairbairn Foundation might

play in broadening access. Without increased access, people from underrepresented communities may feel that working in this sector isn't 'the place for me', they may not see, as one interviewee commented that '*I don't think people understand that you can have passion for the environment and make money from it as a day job.*'

Historic England was beginning to address this lack of awareness by attending career fairs and working with the Open University to review their approach. It finds that placements are effective in attracting people from underrepresented groups who have finished college and are deciding what they want to do in their career by giving insight into the heritage sector so that they can go on to other organisations in the sector. This also addresses the lack of entry level opportunities for young people.

1.4.5. Narratives and assumptions

Starting with simple community engagement, interviewees considered it crucial that '*the narratives around environmentalism need to change. There needs to be a lot more training in community work going right up to senior leadership. I've been in situations where I'm just getting gaslit constantly because senior leaders don't understand how to do community work.*'

This didn't just impact individuals as they entered the sector, it also affected their desire to stay and ultimately their development and growth '*the promises that were made in terms of the attempts of bringing people into established environmental institutions and then being met with institutional racism, all behind a very nice friendly exterior.*' For more on this see the Raven Network case study.

Seeking to address this, the YHA began research and consultation to explore the widely held assumption that Black, disadvantaged, and disabled individuals don't participate in outdoor activities. They found this to be incorrect. Rather, '*they're not as confident in going for job roles and accessing public services resources. They don't feel welcome and that's in part because we tell them they're less welcome.*'

This viewpoint was shared by diverse led environmental organisations working in the sector, challenging the idea that ethnically diverse communities lack interest in the environment. They highlighted the unfamiliarity of mainstream organisations with grassroots needs and operations, reflecting a lack of recognition and respect for grassroots skills and lived experience.

The importance of engaging with grassroots networks and groups was also stressed by Esmé Fairbairn's [Involving Young People Collective](#), who stressed the need for the Foundation to do more to engage and support genuinely community rooted organisations – particularly those driving genuine change in this area.

The findings of the NUS report [Career progression in environmental organisations of people with racially/ethnically diverse backgrounds - Research | SOS-UK \(nus.org.uk\)](#) are also insightful in this regard. Since, after being provided with a brief definition of the Environment Sector (see Section Four), respondents were asked how appealing a career in the sector was to them. Significantly fewer White British respondents said a career in the sector was appealing (44%) compared to those identifying as Black, Asian or from other

minority ethnic groups (57% Black, Asian or minority ethnic group (including white-other), and 54% Black, Asian or minority ethnic group (excluding white other).

One co-founder of a community organisation led by people from underrepresented communities commented that many community-led and community-engaged groups aren't labelling themselves as environmental groups but as community-focused groups that are strongly tied to the relationship between nature and people. One interviewee noted, *'that's the way around it has to be - because the so called mainstream environmental sector is lacking that [people] focus.'* The ability and capacity of such organisations to deeply engage individuals and communities with nature and the environment is an asset – and has the potential for great impact.

Organisations needed to acknowledge *'race' is a key factor'* and address institutional racism. Ignoring racism and xenophobia hindered engagement for individuals entering the sector and organisations building community bridges. Individuals we talked to criticised climate outreach for omitting racial dynamics and oppressive structures and considered *'a lot of the climate outreach type style of messaging of how to approach different communities totally leaves out race, leaves out oppressive structures.'*

1.4.6. 'I think we could do better with recruitment': changing culture and perceptions

One interviewee attributed the lack of diversity in the sector as a result of biased recruitment processes that favoured *'a young White middle-class person who volunteered at 14, spent a lot of time outdoors with family, cares about nature and loves wildlife'*. They considered that *'interview panels will still favour recruiting people who are copies of themselves - same old same old story and thinking that inclusion means being really nice to everybody.'*

Another interviewee noted that *'employers within the green sector don't really understand how to access marginalised groups – [they] tend to go for 'the low hanging fruit' - people who are easy to employ.'* Organisations need to be more proactive and individualistic in dealing with this issue and work on internal cultures and processes to ensure these are genuinely inclusive.

Several community-led organisations saw the so-called mainstream Environment Sector as being rigid in their approach to engaging and recruiting from diverse communities, *'they're not able to come out of that mode of thinking, they're not able to get into communities to do engagement work, so that point of initial contact isn't being made. Communities don't see themselves reflected in any way in those institutions.'*

A key issue was seen as a lack of understanding of the communities and groups, organisations were trying to connect with. Although the case for engaging communities more broadly was felt to have been made, the work required, the skills needed and the degree of resource necessary were all however still lacking. One interviewee felt that the case for diversity had been made, but other than as a moral case, we didn't find evidence of this (See the Case for Diversity, page 34) *'I think for a lot of environmental organisations, that*

case has been made, that they need to do diversity work, but then when you start getting into what's involved, there's still queries around cost.'

1.4.7. Perception is matched by the challenges to engage

One Founder of a small environmental organisation talked about perceptions around environmentalism, that it wasn't for everyone. They'd heard from Bangladeshi friends that it's *'just middle-aged White people'* who are involved. This perception reflects the lack of diversity in the voices being presented:

'I always find it amazing that we can exclude those [indigenous, women, South Asian] voices, despite the fact that they're the communities [who] are the ones that are going to be most affected by climate change.'

This is compounded by the challenges faced to engaging people from underrepresented communities. The Founder further commented *'I think there are still barriers to participating. I go to influencer events, and I don't think influencer events are always catered to people of colour or people from the Muslim community.'*

Similarly, another Founder noted that London-centric networking events create challenges for those far from the city due to travel expenses.

1.4.8. Rural / Urban

One barrier to engaging ethnically diverse communities was the fact that 96% of people from minority ethnic backgrounds live in urban areas (this figure was provided by an interviewee and has not been confirmed with ONS data). Organisations recognised that geographic location was complicated, organisations weren't always accessible *'if you're in the Northeast for example, how accessible is a Millbank based organisation? What is the potential for hybrid working?'*

1.4.9. Re-connections – to the natural world

Interviewees from community-led organisations that had a deeper grasp of diversity and intricate relationships with the natural world acknowledged that Western concepts of nature conservation are rooted in Colonialism, ownership, and specific notions of environmental care.

For communities with recent ties to food production or small-scale farming, engagement in the Environment Sector is perceived as a calling, rather than a profession *'being on the farm, that was just something that you did, you were cultivating your own food, you were helping with the animals, as children - that was their life and they enjoyed it.'*

Diversity-focused organisations prioritise reconnection with nature, recognising the impact of urbanisation on distancing communities from nature. One such organisation emphasises the significance of these reconnections; *'what we are actually doing is triggering memories, that reconnection back to the natural environment. That disconnect happens because they come in and they're in a very urban environment. We*

start where the individual is, we start with that shared and collective memory and they're sharing that, then that awakens something and then they're sharing that with their children. Those memories are so powerful.'

2. Facilitating career progression

2.1. Sources of advice

Numerous organisations praised The Wildlife Trusts for valuable support and resources. Their Strategic Lead for Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion shared substantial resources during NGO meetings.

The Wildlife Trusts' commitment to dedicated resources, in-house training, and aiding smaller organisations lacking staffing resources in this realm was acknowledged, as was their emphasis on fostering an inclusive and welcoming work environment.

Organisations recognised the work that Groundwork was doing in organisations taking part in the New to Nature programme. This comprised providing resources for effectively engaging diverse young trainees and interns to facilitate their integration into the project.

2.2. Map existing initiatives and models

2.2.1. Talent pipeline for sector development

As with other sectors, there is a strong case for the Environment Sector to consider a sector-wide focus on strategic and effective talent pipeline development.

Organisations need to collectively engage, support and advocate to increase the diversity of the sector workforce. To do this, they need to recognise the value of investing in and cultivating the talent of a diverse workforce in their own organisations and to acknowledge that the people they invest in may progress to other jobs in the sector. This requires shared commitment and practical initiatives to build up the talent pipeline and address short and long-term needs. Work to address this should be sector wide, strategic and working towards sector wide success. There needs to be a holistic approach to develop a skilled and fit-for-purpose workforce.

2.2.2. Skills development

The project-driven culture of much of the Environment Sector can make it harder to recruit and train people on a longer-term basis, and to take this more holistic approach to a talent pipeline. Our research found that, usually, organisations look for people who already have the skills to deliver projects.

Many of the roles within the sector are 'gig based' through funded projects which require individuals to have a portfolio career and specific skills and qualifications. To try to address this, the YHA has deliberately been adding to the skill sets of individuals in this position to broaden the potential roles they can deliver.

2.2.3. Early-stage career support is prioritised

Our research findings suggest that most career support targets those at an early stage of their career development – often not yet in the workforce – with 20% of programmes targeted at those at an early stage in their career. Early career support also extends to Special Projects and One-Off Initiatives (both at 15%), indicating attention to unique endeavours, often temporary roles.

Survey respondents prioritised securing entry-level positions for marginalised individuals in the environmental sector: however, their efforts and programmes notably diminished for mid-career or leadership roles.

We see the focus of investment on entry level reflected in many areas of career development and support, including networking, mentoring, sponsorship, volunteering, fellowships, leadership programmes, careers advice, targeted recruitment, placements, and secondment².

Though an emphasis on early-career aid seems impactful, there is a lack of evidence of sustained influence due to limited evaluations and data on placement impact and longitudinal career progression within the Environment Sector. UpRising was one of the few organisations that talked about thorough research and evaluations carried out by established organisations. Data on their overall programmes highlighted that 68% of participants gained employment through the programme; 17% went on to set-up a social enterprises or businesses and 52% taking on a role of leadership since completing one of the programmes.

While beneficial for entry and career exploration, this approach may not holistically influence the workforce. Those at an early stage of their career are still honing skills and are likely to underestimate their impact and perhaps have far less authority than is required to effect EDI change.

- 8% of networking opportunities are provided to those at an early stage of their careers, with 6% for those at Mid-Career and 5% for Leaders.
- Mentoring opportunities are provided to Early Career 6% of the time, to Mid-Career 5% and to Leaders 3%.
- Sponsorship opportunities are provided to Early Career 2% of the time, to Mid-Career 1% and to Leaders less than 0.25% – yet the targeted support and direct development of an individual would, with mentoring, be of most benefit in securing diverse leaders for organisations – ready to apply for and take up positions of authority, with power and resources to effect change.
- Volunteering opportunities are provided to those at an early stage of their career 8% of the time, and to those within the sector at Mid-Career 4% and to Leaders less than 3%.

² <https://www.sos-uk.org/research/understanding-experiences-of-career-progression>

- Fellowship opportunities are provided to Early Career less than 0.25% of the time, to Mid-Career less than 1% and to Leaders less than 0.5%. Offering Fellowships would provide those at Leadership level opportunities to network and understand the subtle interplay of power dynamics and engage in conversations with existing leaders who may be decision makers in multiple ways.
- Leadership programmes were provided to Early Career 2% of the time, to Mid-Career 4% and to Leaders 3%.
- Understandably organisations targeted Job platforms at those Early Career (3%), mid-career and leaders were targeted far less (both 2%).
- Placements were offered primarily to those at early career (7%), this dropped significantly for those at mid-careers (2%) or Leaders (less than 1%). Far fewer secondments were offered, 3% to those early career or mid-career and 2% to Leaders. Both placements and secondments could provide routes to progression for the existing diverse workforce.

Careers advice was offered by organisations to those early in their career 5% of the time, those mid-career 2% and leaders less than 1%.

Targeted recruitment focused on early career 7%, mid-career 4% and 3% to leaders.

2.2.4. Networks and Peer Support

Several interviewees voiced the need for networks and peer support for those working in the sector at different stages of their careers. Some referred to setting up communities of practice but acknowledged that these will depend on resourcing if they are to succeed. *'Networks of support are really important if you want change agents in organisations. You need to give people support and you need to make sure they can network with other people.'*

The need to support people who are change-makers and innovators and those who speak out on difficult issues was stressed. People who take on the role find it challenging as they may face racism, misogyny, and xenophobia. Organisations are sometimes delivering work in challenging terrains that may profile them, push them into contentious and unsafe spaces on and offline. *'Me coming in and being a disruptive influence – saying what can be changed and what isn't good enough – I'm not being challenging to be a pain – but to improve things.'* This can lead to change-makers feeling *'tired, exhausted'* interviewees asked how they might *'reward and celebrate those groups?'* Interviewees stressed the need for larger organisations to act, become allies, and call out racism, misogyny, and xenophobia.

2.2.5. Why diversity is good for the environment sector

Few organisations evaluate their workforce's composition comprehensively or grasp the value of diversity's impact at all levels of the organisation. As highlighted in this report, organisations often appoint individuals who align with their values, education, traits, and life path. Typically, these are white men and organisations dominated by white men can prove challenging and excluding to people of colour.

We noted throughout the research that whilst there is acknowledgement of the moral need for equity and the role that diversity and inclusion plays within this, what is less recognised is how the case for diversity can impact, not as a deficit model of racism, but as a positive force that can bring value and innovative outlooks to organisations and therefore the sector: *'If they adapted to what people need – productivity would fly through the roof.'*

The advantages of a management team that is diverse in 'race', gender, sexual orientation, geography, and thought are also overlooked. This inevitably brings fresh perspectives that challenges established thinking and processes. Interviewees noted the lack of diversity in leadership or senior roles within the Environment Sector, causing leadership teams to fail to be representative of entry-level staff and stakeholder communities but rarely saw the impact in terms of delivering to their mission or vision.

SUPPORTING RESEARCH

The importance of providing such a perspective was identified for the arts and creative industries by the Arts Council England (ACE) in the early 2000s. They started to develop **The Creative Case for Diversity** – their approach to diversity and equality. The Creative Case provided a framework as a way of exploring how organisations and artists can enrich the work that they do by embracing a wide range of influences and practices. Through the Creative Case, ACE invited the arts and cultural sector to engage with a new and different approach to diversity, equality and inclusion in the arts – moving deliberately away from the deficit model.

Crucially, the Creative Case gave the cultural sector policy and guidelines on the importance of EDI and how an arts and culture driven concept of diversity as an opportunity represents a shift in perspective – from seeing diversity as a moral, prescriptive aspect of equality legislation to understanding its creative potential and what it can bring in terms of engaging people with mission driven work - whilst also building up organisational resilience.

Arts Council England began both research and consultation in the field, choosing then to produce a framework they termed 'the creative case for diversity in the arts'. This was further developed by a series of think papers, conversations, and round tables, led by high profile artists, producers, curators and by ACE's Diversity Team. ACE stressed the importance of the Creative Case when allocating funding. All regularly funded organisations needed to demonstrate how they were meeting this objective and those applying for project funding were also asked how they would meet this objective.

The Arts Council was not the only sector to consider this, McKinsey has now delivered three reports investigating the business case for diversity. 'Diversity Wins' (2020) followed 'Why diversity matters' (2015) and 'Delivering through diversity' (2018). The latest report showed not only that the business case remains robust but also that the relationship between diversity on executive teams and the likelihood of financial outperformance has strengthened over time.

McKinsey's research encompassed 15 countries and more than 1,000 large companies. They found that where there was slow growth in diversity, there was also a growing polarisation among those organisations. In contrast, diversity winners, as McKinsey defines them, are adopting systematic, business-led approaches to inclusion and diversity.

Their latest analysis reaffirmed the strong business case for both gender diversity and ethnic and cultural diversity in corporate leadership—and showed that the business case continues to strengthen. The most diverse companies are now more likely than ever to outperform less diverse peers on profitability.

Their 2019 analysis found that companies in the top quartile for gender diversity on executive teams were 25% more likely to have above-average profitability than companies in the fourth quartile—up from 21% in 2017 and 15% in 2014.

A report by CIEEM [Promoting Diversity and Inclusion | CIEEM](#) was one of the few to touch on the value or the ‘environmental case for diversity’. The report proposed that if actions are taken to better address EDI, businesses will be more profitable and scientific outputs will be stronger.

2.3. Organisations interested in developing work in the future

2.3.1. Future Support

Organisations were particularly interested in understanding what success looked like for those of a similar size and in similar locations, which shaped positive responses to identifying collaborators and partners leading in this area and establishing communities of practice.

Increased access to collaborators and partners who are leading in this area	21%
Establishing communities of practice	18%
Access to good practice webinars	15%
Access to good practice case studies	14%
Increased networks	12%
Training for HR professionals	9%
Consultancy	5%
Podcasts on the subject	5%

It is worth noting that for consultees, reducing barriers was recognised as not being the same as increasing opportunities. One is a neutralising action and the other a positive, proactive, action - something to consider when reflecting on where to invest for impact. Young people from the Foundation’s Involving Young People Collective stressed that the general approach was a reactive, rather than a proactive, one – they wanted this to shift, so that individuals leading change received more focused support.

2.3.2. Programmes and focus – mid career and leadership

The RACE Report recognised the need for transparency on the number of people of colour at all organisational levels *‘from governance to leadership.’*

- **Mid-career development support**

Some organisations offered generic assistance such as support calls, capacity-building events, and mentorship schemes. Whilst positive, the impact of these interventions is hard to quantify, as isolated initiatives rarely generate substantial development unless followed up by further support or training.

Survey respondents also mentioned organisation-wide thematic efforts such as *'disability confident'*, *'menopause and the workplace'* and various inclusion training. These initiatives focus on addressing barriers rather than creating opportunities or addressing developmental gaps.

A few organisations were particularly thoughtful, offering mid-career employee's opportunities to *'try alternative roles and responsibilities, especially those which make positive use of their individual skills and knowledge, including gained by having a Protected Characteristic.'* One organisation was delivering a scheme aimed at Global Majority communities, another exploring disability advancement programmes.

Access to placements and career support dropped for those at mid-career: 9% of survey respondents offering placements/ programmes for one off initiatives, 10% for main programmes and 11% on special projects to those who were mid-career.

As one organisation experienced in delivering programmes of placements outlined *'we only ever tell them about entry level. If we do talk to them about it, we talk about entry level jobs and shadowing programmes.'*

The YHA offered one of the few programmes seeking to address this, providing staff with opportunities to *'shadow CEOs, to come in and do high level internships.'* The programme was also rare in recognising that *'we tell them how to behave and we teach them but actually some are more qualified than us, better qualified than us - where do our programmes offer them something more senior?'*

- **Advanced career development support**

Organisations offering support to senior management, leaders, or those at an advanced stage in their career were even rarer. Fewer than 7% of main programmes and one-off initiatives were targeted at this group and Special Projects – which might have given those in leadership positions experience and skills development to succeed - were at just 6%.

Whilst there was mention of leadership programmes that included coaching, mentoring, secondment, and empowerment programmes, many development opportunities were the same as those targeted at mid-career. and organisationally generic rather than focused on developing effective leadership skills and practices that support aspiring, experienced leaders.

2.4. Key Gaps in provision

The YHA found that further research – and testing – needs to be done to assess at what points is the talent pipeline not working. If individuals are seeing roles, why are they not seeing themselves in those roles? If the barriers to applying are too high, what are the barriers and how might this be addressed?

Placements

There are mixed opinions on where placement support is most needed. Organisations that deliver placement opportunities stress that one of the areas funders could be most helpful is in *‘helping people who are at an entry level in their careers. Reducing the barriers to entry, increasing the opportunities.’*

One community-led organisation stressed *‘engagement needs to be sustained, one off apprenticeships are not going to succeed – for the individual or the organisation. Individuals need time to progress.’*

2.4.1. Hubs/ Collectors of Good Practice³

Some interviewees talked about the value of a *‘collector of good practice’* – *‘you’ve plotted a path, tested things, you’ve trialled ... move something from being a case study best practice into a system you know.’*

2.4.2. Progression support for mid- and established career development

There is a significant gap in provision for the career and skills development of management in the sector.

3. Removing barriers

3.1. Sources of advice

Prominent sources of advice, in relation to removing barriers, were The Wildlife Trusts (22%) and the Wildlife and Countryside Link (18%). The latter offers a Route Map for increased ethnic diversity and accessible advice. The Wildlife Trusts have an Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion Strategic Lead open to sharing, beneficial for smaller organisations lacking dedicated resources.

Those at an early diversity journey found value in the RACE Report and Wildlife & Countryside Link’s Route Map.

‘I went to look at the RACE Report and found a lot of really helpful websites.’

‘I’ve looked at it and I shared the link with the senior manager here who’s responsible for people and culture workstreams and is one of our trustees. ... It’s his responsibility and he’s really interested in EDI

³ <https://www.platforma.org.uk/about/>

and how we work with that. And both of them came back to me and said, 'Wow, that is really interesting'. I think there's a lot of really valuable stuff in there'

Some organisations had hoped that structures in place for data reporting might also offer additional support but found that there wasn't capacity for *'conversations, despite this being requested, it's just fill out the survey. I was hoping they could be the organisation that 'cracked open a door for us' but I just seem to hit a brick wall with it.'*

A small number of consultancies were also consistently mentioned.

A few organisations found it hard to access high quality training in EDI *'We also had EDI training for all staff last year from an organisation, but it was a bit rubbish. I found it really hard to find good quality EDI training and it was really expensive.'*

One campaigning organisation questioned whether training was really equipping organisations to continue the work once the trainer had 'left the building'. They stressed that

'Diversity training shouldn't stand alone - it should sit within a larger piece of work for organisations – when the trainer leaves the room are we sufficiently knowledgeable and empowered to continue this work?'

Part of achieving such organisational growth was ensuring that the lead-up to training included questions about work delivered so far; why they wanted to do the work, and what they hoped the impact would be.

The point about impact is important because it was something that organisations had both less clarity on and less data in evaluating and knowing what success looked like.

Training organisations stressed that organisations should be left with a set of actions that felt achievable at individual level and not expect external trainers to come in and deliver all the work.

SUPPORTING RESEARCH

Culture & Behaviour: Towards Greater Ethnic Diversity in the Environment Sector

The Wildlife and Countryside Link [Home - Wildlife and Countryside Link \(wcl.org.uk\)](https://www.wcl.org.uk) is an environmental and coalition organisation. They are a small group of 12 staff and a membership body of circa 75 environmental organisations. They are the largest wildlife coalition in England.

Link has worked with Natural England and Full Colour on a two-year research initiative addressing the lack of ethnic diversity in the Environment Sector, with the objective of understanding the sector's struggles in this regard.

The [Route Map Towards Greater Ethnic Diversity](#) sets concrete milestones towards long-term change and guidance on how to achieve them. Along with the accompanying [guidebook](#), the route map gives direction and advice to help environmental organisations take meaningful action on improving ethnic

diversity, and to overcome the barriers they face. It is also a statement of intent, with [over 45 organisations so far](#) (including non-Link members) pledging to commit to and deliver the route map aims over the next five years.

The roadmap provides a clear foundation for progress, but its execution and accessibility to resources will dictate the extent of change. Link is dedicated to the roadmap due to its potential for organizational and sector-wide advancement.

Route Map progress so far includes:

- Setting up three working sub-groups of our [Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Working Group](#) to bring together communities of practice to collaborate on interventions around core themes in the Route Map:
 - A **Data & Reporting sub-group** that is developing best practice guidance for the sector on EDI data and reporting, from consent and GDPR, through to survey design and encouraging participation, and analysis and using data.
 - A **Training sub-group** that is completing a gap analysis of training provision and needs across the sector, with a view to then collaborating on commissioning and delivering training across organisations according to shared needs.
 - A **Peer Support, Inclusion and Culture sub-group** that is collating thinking on how to create inclusive cultures and embed an actively anti-racist approach within organisations and developing proposals for a coaching programme to support and empower people of colour (POC) colleagues across the sector.
- Securing a paid Chair for a Link-hosted peer support group, the [Peer Support Network](#), to join-up and support POC colleagues across the sector.
- Following in-depth qualitative and quantitative [research](#) in 2021 on barriers to greater ethnic diversity, we are now annually benchmarking progress towards the route map milestones. This research identifies progress, barriers and lays out recommendations for targeting support and resources. It is also used to provide tailored feedback to individual organisations on their progress compared to that across the sector.
- Setting up a shared online space via Microsoft OneDrive to collate and share resources amongst the sector – for example, templates for EDI policies and plans, terminology guidelines, and recommended consultancy, training and recruitment contacts.
- Delivering webinars and presentations from external expert speakers and initiatives, for example on inclusive recruitment.
- Working with the consultancy Mayvin to create spaces for sharing learning and experiences, for example through Action Learning Sets.
- Working with colleagues at the University of Exeter RENEW programme to explore systemic approaches to improving diversity, and to share learning and experience across the environmental and academic sectors.

Upscaling the Route Map

Route map partners have committed to take on and embed the recommendations and actions, investing time, resource, and effort to identify and deliver the change needed for their organisation, alongside contributing to sector-wide collaborative efforts.

Link's new 2023 benchmarking has revealed these efforts have borne fruit, with a range of action to date across the sector, from tentative first steps to great strides for change.

- **Action Plans:** More than half (53.4%) of organisations are now developing or have developed an ethnic diversity action plan, up from just 15% in 2021.
- **Increased reporting:** 50% of organisations are regularly reporting internally on progress and 70% say they will be participating in the Race Report this autumn/winter.
- **Enhanced recruitment:** more than half (56.7%) of NGOs have made recruitment policy, training, and practical changes.

Despite the positives that the benchmarking demonstrates, it reveals major gaps in action, particularly in culture change, anti-racism and equity and empowerment. There is a clear confidence, knowledge, and resource gap, particularly for smaller organisations. Although the Route Map provides excellent written guidance, greater resources would more effectively put ambition into practice and embed change. The fact that recruitment and reporting have seen such positive changes as a result of major sector-wide projects to aid delivery demonstrates the effectiveness well-resourced support measures can have.

There is potential to upscale Link's Route Map work to provide more in-depth and broader support to further empower and equip the sector the sector around the sticking-points that are preventing change. The needs of the sector will evolve as the Route Map progresses, and as such what this upscaling will look like will change over time.

Support for smaller NGOs: Greater resource is also needed to develop and deliver a support package for smaller organisations who are struggling to get off the starting blocks on ethnic diversity. This should include tailored organisational advice, guidance with 1-2-1s available, and training in core areas. Centralised support and training could be delivered more cost effectively and rapidly than for each organisation individually.

In 2025/26 focus would shift to leadership and training:

Enabling leaders as agents of change: Senior leader buy-in and action is critical to achieving the Route Map aims. Through roundtable meeting(s) and leadership networking we can best identify barriers to change and deliver a range of targeted actions and appropriate measures, these would be likely to include:

- A leaders' section in the online portal with specific guidance on core issues
- Tailored training/webinars/learning circles focused on overcoming identified barriers and areas where change is more challenging.
- Sharing of best practice and example materials via the online portal and joint sessions to best facilitate knowledge-sharing and reduce reproduction of effort.

Bridging training and empowerment gaps: Upscaling would mean a dedicated budget for commissioning and collaborating on sector-wide EDI training, according to gaps and need. Utilising the benchmarking, it is possible to identify the areas where organisations are struggling the most and tailor training to where it will be most effective. This would also help overcome barriers to ambitious sector-led projects, for example the development of a coaching and empowerment programme for POC colleagues, which is currently held back by a lack of access to coaching and mentoring training.

Looking towards 2027, the needs of the sector will depend on the progress that has been made. Link will need to continue to hold space for this work beyond 2027, as new organisations continue to sign-up to the Route Map. Upscaling will likely include the delivery of further sector-wide training, and full roll-out of ambitious joint projects such as a coaching and empowerment programme for POC colleagues. A permanent paid Chair role for the Raven Network should also be secured.

Anticipated impact

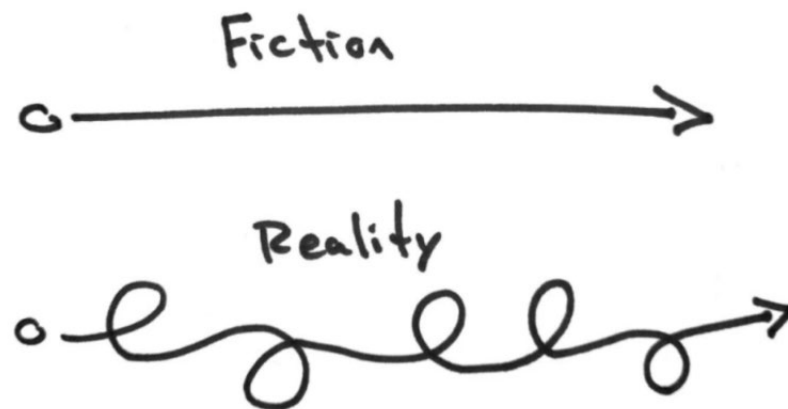
Upscaling the Route Map, and increasing central capacity, would better equip and empower the sector to take action and drive meaningful progress to improve ethnic diversity. Measures such as improving resource sharing would provide much needed direction and save valuable time, making better use of the expertise and outputs we know already exist, rather than duplicating effort. And targeted training and guidance would provide the upskilling, confidence and direction needed. Meaningful progress on EDI will be apparent across the whole sector, and those organisations who are struggling most will benefit from the expertise, insight and experiences of those further along the journey.

3.1.1. Confidence/ fear of getting it wrong

Lack of confidence and fear of mistakes in EDI led to stasis. Interviewees referred to not knowing what was needed to drive meaningful progress– and spoke of the fear of getting it wrong. *‘There’s reputational risk around doing things and them not working out.’* They recognised this paralysis *‘in some ways, I think we’re a tiny little bit paralysed by what the right thing is to do.’*

This fear was also reflected in sharing data *‘Take the RACE Report, if you participate in that one year and then the next year your numbers actually go down, what does that mean in terms of reputation with people being wary of putting themselves out there and publishing that.’*

This illustration highlights how this way of thinking, whilst understandable, should not hold people back:



3.1.2. Stasis and struggle

Smaller organisations saw themselves as being *'quite far behind.'* One struggled to see how they might start *'as an organisation, we've observed the lack of diversity both within our own organisation and the culture of the sector as a whole, but it feels a little bit of a loss as to how practically we can address that.'*

In some cases, this wasn't because there wasn't adequate information and resources available, it was a fear of engagement with uncertain/ unknown sensitivities *'there's some sensitivities around 'race' and targeting different sections of the population for certain things. It almost feels like, if you do one thing, then you're stepping on one person's toes and if you do something else, you're stepping on another person's toes and so it feels horribly complex.'*

The degree to which individuals were questioning themselves was also causing stasis. One example of this over- thinking during our interviews was *'do we need to do that? We probably don't need to do that. Can we ask that someone's got some demonstratable interest? Is that enough?'*

When making the first move and discovering that all the questioning and 'navel gazing' isn't helpful or necessary, organisations found *'and then there's the frustration of it really is this simple. Why wasn't I doing this years ago? Like, why haven't I done it? I mean, I'll be honest, I was sort of not looking forward to this conversation because I am a little bit embarrassed about our lack of kind of doing stuff.'*

3.2. Map existing Initiatives and models

82% of survey respondents had made changes to their strategies or action plans because of reviewing EDI. These varied from launching their action plan, bringing in consultants to embed EDI, reviewing their

approach to EDI, running staff surveys, employing staff to focus on EDI, engaging with new partners, monitoring activity, setting up working groups and re-assessing recruitment.

3.2.1. Addressing the barriers that people from Protected Characteristics experience when entering and progressing within the sector

Unsurprisingly, the perspectives of organisations differed considerably. Some acknowledged that they were at the start of addressing barriers, other responses were overly simplistic in their perspectives: for example *'consider each individual.'* Organisations at the discovery stage were *'participating in networks to understand what the barriers are.'*

A lack of understanding of the barriers was often causing stasis *'I don't believe the barriers have been fully understood and that is key to being able to address them'*. Other's saw the problems as being *'out there'* *'it's often barriers they experience outside of our organisation or before they come to us, which can prejudice how they see us or the careers we provide.'*

In one case, the barrier was seen to be a lack of understanding of how EDI in the sector works: individuals would therefore benefit from being connected to organisations *'that we know are committed to becoming more diverse because we have spoken to them. We are transparent about the challenges and realistic about the expectations.'*

3.2.2. The need for a multi-faceted approach

Within sector wide EDI support, organisations were considering *'actions and milestones'* in several areas including *'recruitment, organisational culture, the roles of HR managers and senior leaders in driving change.'*

CIEEM was *'using the findings from our Breaking Down the Barriers research to inform our action plan, raising awareness amongst employers through webinars, articles and blogs, promoting allyship and cultural awareness, developing the Green Jobs for Nature website and about to start targeted programme of outreach to underrepresented sectors, working collaboratively with partners.'*

Organisations that recognised both an internal and external need for development were better able to adjust their practice *'inside training, external diverse recruitment, setting KPIs for most PCs, inclusive recruitment, manager training. It is also part of our organisational objectives to act and work inclusively and we are measured against this in end of year reviews.'*

Some organisations were *'doing our best to embed equity and inclusion in all of our processes from recruitment to onboarding to our core work. We are also trying to reach out to underrepresented groups through both our work and internal processes.'*

Organisations recognised the need to share information and resources, in some cases employing an EDI Officer who was gathering materials, resources and training specifically for managers on *'race'* equity,

disability, LGBTQI+ networks, sponsorship, language guides, allyship training, speak-up (a tool to report poor behaviour).

A smaller number of organisations acknowledged the need to *‘work with other organisations to make them more interesting, inclusive, and relevant to young people from diverse backgrounds.’*

One organisation threaded EDI across the organisation by de-biasing recruitment processes, and then ensuring new employees feel that they belong and can work authentically within the organisational culture. To support this, they have delivered inclusion and neuro-diversity training. They had not run any programmes that explicitly targeted people with Protected Characteristics.

Other organisations had internal closed networks to support staff who were from different protected characteristics, providing *‘a space to communicate feedback and views on the organisation’s practices etc from a collective rather than from an individual.’*

SUPPORTING RESEARCH

All the Elements is a founder and community-led organisation, running for three years, a non-profit network for anyone creating change on diversity in the UK outdoors. Members work on different areas of access and representation, work in a variety of activities, in nature, conservation and environment.

The community is broad and so feeds peer to peer learning. All the Elements provides upskilling and capacity building events. As with the Founder of All the Elements, members are unlikely to have found what they needed within the mainstream sector, and they built it themselves.

A typical member is somebody who is driven to create change on diversity in the outdoors, who wants to serve the community first. Some saw the benefits of the outdoors during the pandemic. They then decided that it was something that they wanted their broader community to experience. Some members are experienced outdoor enthusiasts or leaders, who have never seen people like them around them. They wanted to share their experience with other people who had similar lived experience.

The Founder sees members as people coming together to work out how to do things better. It’s not a network where you are stuck in negative loops, it’s constructive and solutions focused.

All the Elements offers one to one support calls where they explore potential connections. They have conducted 400 support calls, and have an Instagram community of about 2500 people, with a smaller number on their mailing list.

If All the Elements were to grow however, they would require significant organisational support and development. The Board is currently small, and staffing is freelance and project based.

They are very community focused and see what the community wants now as being very different to what they wanted a year ago - measuring impact is therefore difficult. They need to determine their KPIs and they see this as hard when serving an amorphous community.

We found that often, the organisations that were radically removing barriers were smaller organisations, founder led, building communities and membership from the ground up. It is unsurprising that these community-led organisations did not operate in the same way as larger, established organisations. We know from the business sector that smaller companies tend to be more agile, more able to adapt and change and innovate – we found those working in the environment echoed this. One Founder recognised that *'it's much easier to be values driven at the start-up phase, and it's much easier to be entirely transparent. But in the scaling up process, you can lose some of that.'*

Larger organisations could learn from the practices and approach adopted by smaller organisations. Yet, there tends to be a reticence to do so. One community-led organisation noted that they're asked to do more projects than they can take on at one time – often with large organisations who may not offer them funding for their work. They have found that there are often gaps between what larger organisations want to deliver and the interests and needs of smaller organisations or communities.

SUPPORTING RESEARCH

ELEVATE - Arts Council England's Elevate programme saw a multi-million-pound investment in arts organisations, often founder led, who were looking to make a significant contribution to the Creative Case for Diversity.

The programme aims to strengthen the resilience and capacity of arts organisations that are led by and/or reflect the diversity of the communities they serve. The programme was launched in 2016 in response to the Arts Council's equality analysis, which found that the arts sector was not fully representative of the population as a whole.

The key aims of the Elevate programme are to:

- Increase the diversity of the Arts Council's National Portfolio
- Support diverse-led arts organisations to become more resilient and adaptive
- Enable diverse-led arts organisations to develop new partnerships
- To increase levels of contributed and earned income

Elevate was designed to support diverse led organisations to increase their resilience. They had struggled to pay for core costs and development time, training up boards, investing in staff roles and nurturing partnerships.

The first strategic funding programme was for those not in receipt of regular funding from the Arts Council. Arts Council England received applications for Elevate funding from organisations that they didn't know – reaching communities who they hadn't previously engaged.

They received 200 Expressions of Interest and 90 applications. They supported 40 organisations in the first round and over 40 in the second round. Due to high quality applications, the total funding available in the first round to support organisations was increased from £2 million to just over £5 million.

The Elevate programme has been successful in achieving its aims with new Black and minority and disability led joining ACE portfolio.

The programme has also helped to strengthen the resilience and capacity of diverse-led arts organisations. A 2020 evaluation of the programme found that 93% of Elevate-funded organisations reported that the programme had helped them to become more resilient, and 88% reported that it had helped them to develop new partnerships.

CHANGE MAKERS – funded and managed by Arts Council England, delivered twenty senior leadership training and development placements. Organisations (Hosts) and Change Makers came from a variety of artistic disciplines, locations and perspectives.

The Change Makers programme was designed to develop 12 month placement opportunities for future leaders from Black, minority ethnic and/or disabled backgrounds in the arts and cultural sector. The programme is designed to give participants the skills, experience and confidence they need to progress into senior leadership roles.

The key aims of the Change Makers Leadership programme were to:

- Increase the diversity of senior leadership in the arts and cultural sector
- Develop a cohort of Black, minority ethnic and/or disabled potential leaders
- Build the confidence and leadership skills of participants
- Increase the visibility and networks of participants

ACE wanted organisations who were in their national portfolio to work in partnership with the named leaders. There was a challenge to both the named leaders and to the host organisations – that they commit to a programme of culture change. Change Makers were asked to think about the organisational culture. It was an opportunity for Change Makers to fill a gap in their CV, to move from working in diverse led and/ or smaller organisations and gain experience in larger institutions.

The programme helped raise awareness of the importance of diversity and inclusion in the arts, and encouraged other arts organisations to adopt more inclusive practices.

Key findings of the Change Makers Leadership programme evaluation:

- Prior to participation, 63% of Change Makers ready for a senior leadership position, and after taking 75% considered themselves ready, an increase of 19%.
- 94% of programmes developed through Change Makers were said to be continuing by host organisations.
- 88% of Change Makers took part in the programme because they wanting to grow their networks.
- 71% of organisations took part in the programme because it provided them with the opportunity to have a diverse employee working within the organisation.

ON PURPOSE

On Purpose offers a year-long leadership development programme to help people transition into purpose-driven careers. The programme is paid, and Associates receive two six-month work placements in purpose-driven organisations, as well as weekly training and regular 1:1 coaching and mentoring.

The programme is designed to help Associates develop the skills, experience, and network they need to become leaders of transformational change. The training covers a wide range of topics, including:

- Purpose-driven leadership
- Social innovation
- Systems thinking
- Change management
- Communication and influencing
- Personal development

Associates can work on real-world projects with their placement organisations, and to learn from a network of experienced mentors and coaches.

COMMON PURPOSE

Common Purpose is a global leadership development programme that helps people to cross cultural, social, and institutional boundaries. It is designed to help people become more effective and purposeful leaders, both in their work and in their communities.

The programme is typically delivered over three to six months, it involves a combination of classroom learning, experiential exercises, and field visits. Participants learn from and work with people from a diverse range of backgrounds and sectors, and develop the skills and knowledge they need to lead in a complex and interconnected world.

The Common Purpose Programme is open to people at all levels of their careers, and it is particularly well-suited to those who are looking to develop their leadership skills and to make a more positive impact on the world.

UNLTD, FOUNDATION FOR SOCIAL ENTREPRENEURS, STAR PROGRAMME

Unltd's STAR programme supported people engaging in delivering social action in their local area. The programme utilised principles learned in delivering community-based engagement and social change through social enterprise.

Unltd wanted to investigate how they might support local authorities in exploring potential delivery models and reviewing how stakeholders could work closely with communities to solve local issues and improve services.

The programme recognised the importance of supporting people and place – focusing on the interaction between these two areas.

STAR people were individuals who were given a small amount of funding (£500) who lived in Big Local areas and had a 'can do' attitude, knew their local area, had a great idea that responded to an issue or opportunity in their local area and were passionate about making a difference.

STAR Partners were organisations or groups with strong links to the local area who could demonstrate that they have developed the trust of their local community members. UnLtd worked with STAR Partners to support the delivery of funding and support products.

A range of tools were used to identify STAR people and partners. This included elements such as narrated observation walks which described significant places in the local area, namely where people met; the main resources and facilities; main areas of tension; operational areas of existing social enterprises; areas of benefit and businesses social enterprises traded with; general atmosphere of the area and places they believed to represent the area's identity.

The STAR People programme galvanised strong networks of community activity. This led to communities taking social action and residents engaging in community entrepreneurship. Some geographic areas in particular successfully engaged beyond the so called 'usual suspects'.

The STAR programme demonstrated how small, local, investments can deliver results that impact positively on people and place.

3.2.3. Higher Education

Most people working in the Environment Sector hold relevant degrees. This promotes a culture specific to those who can access higher education and creates a barrier in understanding between team members who do not have similar advantages. It also makes those looking to join the Environment Sector feel less comfortable if they do not meet these same standards.

Work habits such as socialising after work can also feel excluding for certain groups. Work environments need to make room to meet the needs of people who have disabilities, or who are neurodivergent, as many organisations have limited understanding of disability or neurodivergence and are unwilling to take what they perceive as a risk on someone who has a disability or health condition or who seems 'different'.

SUPPORTING RESEARCH

The **Green Alliance** recognised that as a UK wide organisation they could do more to reflect the national demography within their workforce. As a learning organisation they consistently try new approaches.

One approach was to diversify their Graduate Scheme. Whilst not a large organisation (circa 40 staff) they have run a Graduate Scheme since 2015 focused on finding mentors for Graduates, helping participants understand how the organisation, and Environment Sector operates, to enable them to engage with policy development.

Due to their think tank nature and research-focused culture, Green Alliance seeks university experienced staff with skills in high-level writing, communication, data analysis, and argument construction - qualities essential for a policy advisor - they therefore see having a degree as essential.

In the past, their programme received over 1000 applicants, but the group lacked diversity. To address this, they adopted the Beapplied platform.

The job description outlines target groups and the kind of contribution that would be required. Green Alliance aims to demystify what a think tank does. To achieve this, they created a brief video featuring present and past graduates sharing their experiences on the scheme.

To use new platforms and to engage with more diverse communities they had to redistribute their budget to other sources - dropping some of the existing platforms that they were using, such as The Guardian. Although this caused an overall decrease in applications to circa 200, the diversity of the applications improved.

Those who were the first graduates in their family from 29% to 31%; applicants with a disability from 8% to 10% and those who were eligible for free school meals when children increased from 9% to 13%. Applicants are typically under 25 but also include career changers.

CVs are only assessed during interviews and academic achievement isn't the main criterion; graduates from non-Russell Group applicants are actively sought out. They ask how applicants have overcome university barriers, helping them gauge inclusivity.

Green alliance adjusted the selection process to involve four focused scenario-based questions that don't solely depend on direct work experience, encouraging applicants to relate their relevant experience to each scenario.

The scheme costs £40 – 50k per year. Applicants typically go on to early career assistant/ policy assistant posts.

3.3. Organisations interested in developing work in the future

Other areas where support would be welcomed included 'training beyond HR' since many organisations don't have dedicated HR teams.

3.3.1. Facilitating sector wide conversations

We interviewed organisations at different stages of their EDI journey.

Membership organisations considered the level of thinking and knowledge about EDI across the sector to be low – particularly 'on the ground' in terms of delivery. Some were, themselves, at the start of their journey but were interested in the role they might play facilitating a sector wide conversation.

Consideration was given by some as to how they might support the Link's Route Map, building further on this – *see below*.

In some cases, whilst the desire to facilitate EDI was present, internally there was a lack of representation and externally there weren't the skills, or awareness of the impact and reality of lived experience, to lead dynamic conversations.

One organisation that was keen to play a role recognised that *‘we need the confidence in having these discussions and I think that when I talk to everybody [members], they are so worried about putting their size 10 work boots in it, in reference to the language that we use around this, that it puts them off from having the discussion at all.’*

They stressed the need to do *‘something within the sector that gives them the skills and resources to feel confident about having that conversation, then moving on to a strategy of who do we need to be talking to organisationally about how we speak with confidence.’*

Our research revealed an assumption that leading on EDI work was a matter of confidence, rather than knowledge or skills. Simply because someone is well-meaning and wishes to engage doesn’t mean that they are qualified to do so. This assumption would not be made for any other specialist area.

SUPPORTING RESEARCH

The **Forestry Skills Forum (FSF)** is a collaboration of forestry organisations that includes third sector and membership bodies representing both public and private sectors. It aims to ensure that the forestry sector has the people and skills required to meet the challenging demands placed upon it by the climate and biodiversity crises. At the most recent meeting in June 2023, it was agreed to set up a working group to look at the equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI) crisis faced by the forestry sector.

Work is ongoing and has met with some success around gender and age diversity: work is being undertaken by the Institute of Chartered Foresters in recognising that the sector is likely to attract increasing numbers of neurodivergent people and ensuring relevant CPD is accessible. However, very little work has been done on racial diversity.

This identified the need for a toolkit that will give the confidence to have the necessary conversations to devise a strategy that creates a culture and policy that welcomes and supports people with different identities – one that is more representative of the people that use our woodlands. We need to tackle unconscious bias and the practical issues of attracting more diversity to a mainly rural-based occupation.

This issue is much bigger than just one organisation. The Institute of Chartered Forester includes EDI in its current five-year strategy, but believes a collaborative approach would be more beneficial. This is why it feels that a project supporting the work of the FSF would have more impactful and far-reaching results. It is aware of the Wildlife & Countryside Link and their work – Route map towards greater ethnic diversity: Creating conditions for minority ethnic people to join and thrive in the Environment Sector (October 2022) – and would like to explore how it might learn from their journey and do something similar.

Through the FSF, it would like to hire a dedicated consultant/organisation to give an unbiased and practical assessment of how the forestry sector can improve EDI, followed by suitable training that can be rolled out to the sector to reduce unconscious bias and help people in our sector feel more confident about having EDI discussions.

3.4. Key Gaps in provision

3.4.1. Changing the culture: organisational cultures need to be fit for purpose for a diverse workforce

Organisational culture and optics

Many consultees noted a disconnect between the desire of organisations to have the right optics for diversity recruitment with their ability to communicate, engage, and retain the diverse communities shown on webpages, in publicity or in job packs.

One membership organisation noted *'you don't want to mislead and pretend using imagery or resources that don't paint a true picture but at the same time, if you keep using pictures where everybody's White it's not going to change people within.'*

As one Black-led organisation stressed, there's *'no point taking somebody into the institution when the institution is fundamentally a challenging space for them.'*

More could be done to ensure that organisations are able to internally develop their practice, changing *'the way that you as an organisation are inclusive in your practice or in your delivery'* as one community-led organisation commented, *'what you're showing is performative activism or performative representation but you're not changing the culture and the ethos within the organisation itself.'*

This leads to employees from underrepresented communities finding that *'when they get there, they're faced with institutional and structural racism'* because *'we're setting them up to fail.'*

For another interviewee, *'if an organisation is very White, very middle class, lots of organisations are still very male-led, if they're using messaging that doesn't really speak to diverse communities or marginalised communities then why would they be able to draw them in? It requires someone at a strategic level, being able to say, that the job description should say this ... because it shows that we are thinking about it and that we have an interest in marginalised communities.'*

It can be hard to identify and change an organisational culture: for example, how can organisations be supported to build an inclusive welcoming culture? If people don't feel welcome, organisations will struggle to retain staff from underrepresented communities. New staff are unlikely to stay if they don't have opportunities for promotion or progression. If staff with protected characteristics are on fixed, or short term, contracts, they will ultimately leave. This requires a better understanding of people's needs and the adjustments required to meet those needs.

As an example, The National Trust (NT) intends to increase the diversity of its workforce to achieve greater representation of the working age population. Its Everyone Welcome plan includes an Our People strand, a comprehensive plan and workstream for creating an inclusive culture conducive to workforce development. This included a review of the life cycle of an NT employee; scrutinizing the insights of colleagues from its networks to share their experience in the organisation and what this means to them. NT is seeing an

increase in blog posts and more staff engaging in initiatives such as the months for LGBTQI+; disability; Black History, and an Increase in colleagues stepping forward as allies for staff from underrepresented communities to adopt consciously inclusive behaviours.

The NT is now seeing a small incremental increase in staff from across the protected characteristics – including a higher proportion of LGBTQI+ employees than the national working age population.

EDI needs to be owned at Director/ SMT levels but there is a significant lack of diversity across the mainly White, middle income, and middle-class sector leadership which impacts on organisational culture. A person of colour in an organisation reflected that *'it can be threatening for a person of colour to be in a room of white men of a certain age.'*

Interviewees consistently reiterated the impact of racism on employees. Understanding and being willing to discuss racism and institutional racism was non-negotiable to many interviewees. The effort itself was seen as indicative of an organisation that truly cares about its members.

Interviewees consistently reiterated the impact of racism on an employee or a prospective employee. Both understanding and being willing to discuss the impact of 'race', and institutional racism is non-negotiable for multiple interviewees who are mainly White, as the effort itself is perceived as being indicative of an organisation which truly cares about its members.

By clearly acknowledging barriers from the perspective of marginalised groups, particularly ethnic minorities, working-class people, and neurodivergent people, interviewees hoped that underrepresented groups will feel more confident about expressing their needs and concerns on how they feel about working in that organisation and this will support their integration - *'you don't really know about these things, unless your part of a certain social group ... sometimes it's about people you know.'*

Whilst some organisations are seen to be setting goals *'Natural England, I work with them quite a lot in my day job, I know that strategically, they've got lots of goals around diversity and inclusion'* others were seen as exclusive, some *'are still overwhelmingly not diverse, there's something around the types of people they attract and the message they send out that maybe doesn't really appeal to people of colour.'*

Organisations themselves commented that they *'constantly try new initiatives and sometimes it works sometimes it doesn't ... Where we are unsuccessful it could be due to a mix of [the] UK's link to traditional environmentalism (i.e., the lack of diversity is not attractive to potential candidates) and a mix of disproportionate numbers of candidates from marginalised backgrounds due to the pathways into this sector not being inclusive. And so, we do invest funding and resources to help youth empowerment and education organisations who focus on getting more young people into the sector. The false belief is that there aren't any candidates, but this of course isn't true! The organisations need to do better at becoming inclusive and prioritising anti-oppressive values, cultures, and campaigning.'*

One interviewee asked, *'I wonder if there's a sense of 'oh this isn't for me', this is a very White way of looking at environmentalism and not wanting to engage with that.'*

One individual, who had established their own organisation considered whether more could be done with *'equality impact assessments, they're [a] pretty rigid tool, but the idea of an equality impact assessment is you can see if a project will harm or will have a negative impact on marginalised communities.'*

4. Accountability and evaluation

4.1. Sources of advice

There are many reports and documents that have been produced on this topic, both organisationally specific and generally.

We saw in our survey that 30% of organisations do not have an EDI strategy – and this demonstrates the low levels of engagement and understanding of what an EDI strategy is for and why it matters. As the saying goes, *'you are what you do'* and for many organisations this isn't a priority, people may know they should be doing it but they don't fully appreciate the potential benefits.

We have consistently seen that a deficit focused approach (i.e. one solely rooted in the problem that needs to be addressed) fails to deliver change. Instead, highlighting the positive additions that genuine inclusion can bring can better enable markers of success, motivate senior managers and support staff to effect genuine change (see section on the case for diversity, page 33 – 34). We need to identify what success looks like and why it matters, rather than solely focusing on barriers and exclusion.

Key organisations leading work in this area, SOS-UK and the Wildlife and Countryside Link do not have EDI strategies - although this is in development for the Link core team and a Diversity and anti-racism statement has been produced. Since SOS-UK was spun off from the NUS in 2019, and they remain a part of the NUS family of organisations, their existing Memorandum of Understanding ends at the start of 2024 and until that time the benefit from free HR provision. They plan to develop their own strategy autumn 2023.

Other organisations either with a sector wide interest, or specific memberships didn't have EDI strategies. Organisations that were diverse led, didn't have a specific strategy – perhaps because they saw their mission as centering this – so a focused strategy was therefore unnecessary.

SUPPORTING RESEARCH

The Landscape

The diversity report by the Policy Exchange in March 2017 found that the top two least diverse occupations were farming (diversity 0.03) and environment professions (diversity 0.06), Gardeners and landscape gardeners also scored low (diversity 0.11).

This report also noted that the least diverse jobs all tend to be tied to animals or the outdoors or skilled crafts.

Understanding experiences of career progression

An additional report by SOS-UK considers the experiences of career progression in environmental sector organisations of people with racially/ ethnically diverse backgrounds. It focuses on the experiences of young people in the early stages of their careers. The young people had all undertaken a Kickstarter placement through the Race for Nature's Recovery scheme.

Existing support that enabled career progression included:

- Accessing knowledge or skills-focused training, often through their employers
- Participating in mentoring programmes
- Accessing traineeships
- Receiving personal support from previous managers
- Joining ethnicity focused networks

The Route Map/ Wildlife and Countryside Link - Changing the world from within

The Route Map was referenced by five organisations (8%) that we consulted.

The research seeks to understand what is helping and hindering minority ethnic people from becoming a greater part of the Environment Sector.

The consultation was extensive, with 2004 people taking part in an online survey followed up 36 qualitative interviews.

Key findings of The Route Map were that most leaders who responded felt that increasing ethnic diversity should be a top or high priority for the Environment Sector.

22% of leaders felt increasing ethnic diversity currently already is a priority for the sector.

62% of leaders from the survey felt increasing ethnic diversity should be a higher priority than it currently is.

70% of leaders said that increasing ethnic diversity would have either a 'strong positive impact' (30%) or a 'positive impact' (40%). However, when asked to define this, responses lacked detail or specificity – suggesting that whilst, in theory, leaders believe increasing ethnic diversity to be (morally?) right, they do not fully understand why this is important or what it might look like.

When asked about actions organisations had taken, there was no consensus (even between those in the same organisation), the report suggests that this could be due to a lack of common understanding about the actions being taken.

It is notable that many trustees and leaders said that they were confident about talking about issues around ethnicity and taking action on these issues. The report found this surprising given that when asked

about the extent to which learning on EDI issues was prioritised, this question received the lowest scores compared with other behaviours associated with inclusive organisations. This certainly matched with our findings – with many organisations lacking confidence in how to move this subject forward.

The Route Map provides a short summary of reflections that are highly relevant to this piece of work, we suggest the following in particular:

- The importance of working with clear definitions around marginalised groups/ priority groups within the protected characteristics, it is unlikely that this will be agreed by everyone but Esmée Fairbairn Foundation would benefit from being clear on what/ who they wish to prioritise/ work with.
- The report stressed the need for individual and sector wide change – this is partly stymied by the lack of a shared definition of the problem that the sector is trying to solve – and the lack of understanding for why this matters and what change (success) would actually look like. Leaders need to coalesce around a shared understanding of what success looks like.
- The lack of clarity in regard to the benefits of increased ethnic diversity could be preventing action – how can the incentive to take action be built on a more complete understanding of the value of diversity (see ACE’s creative case, and the work by McKinsey on the relative performance of diverse organisations).
- There are high levels of confidence talking about and planning action on ethnic diversity. However, learning on EDI was rated lowest when organisations’ listed behaviours related to inclusivity, better understanding of why this is the case could increase impact and action.
- There is also a disparity in the levels of organisational confidence around recruitment and low levels of approaches to EDI.
- There appear to be expectations on people from underrepresented communities to be change agents – the responsibility should not rest solely with them. There are multiple tensions here, in terms of who holds power, positions of vulnerability, organisational and individual willingness to change.
- The complexity of the issues surrounding EDI generally and ethnicity specifically, was one of the consistent explanations given for the slow rate of change on ethnic diversity. Given that managing complexity is what leaders do, it will be important to establish why leaders are finding it more difficult to deal with the complexity involved in becoming more ethnically diverse than they find managing other forms of complexity.
- The report found that there is plenty of action but how much of this is actually having an impact is questionable – with little detailed evaluation or longitudinal research.

It is questionable whether it is possible to create a base level of expertise on this issue in the sector to equip people to develop effective organisational plans - one of the report’s reflections.

The most important question is does the sector truly want change? The theoretical benefits are not contested. However, the reality of what it takes to achieve greater ethnic diversity will involve challenging and changing long held ways of thinking and working. Organisations will need to change themselves, their culture, their ways of doing things and their mindsets first, before they can hope to attract ethnic diversity at the scale the sector says it wants.

Natural England has produced several papers on inclusion and engaging underrepresented groups.

These include:

Included outside: Evidence synthesis for engaging underrepresented groups in nature, Summary Report (September 2022). This report considered some of the barriers, including cultural, to accessing nature and natural environments.

The report recognised that there is a relative lack of ‘publicly-available data and evaluation of what works and the successes or failures of policy interventions.’

The paper included the following actions amongst others:

- Tackle common assumptions and biases in relation to underrepresented groups and nature engagement, consider how to embed this in ‘normal’ messaging.
- Promote co-production and co-participation through partnering cross-sectorially.
- Support peer-led initiatives where people from underrepresented groups lead interventions and activities.
- Recognise that leisure activities that engage with nature can take many forms.
- Communicate creatively via appropriate, diverse, channels, including social media, to get information out to different community networks and underrepresented communities.

Another evidence briefing by Natural England is Included Outside: Engaging people from ethnic minority backgrounds in nature (September 2022).

One of the areas considered by this report were reasons that might limit opportunities for people from ethnic minority backgrounds to enjoy nature. Experiences of unwelcome visibility and racism when spending time in nature, people from ethnic minority backgrounds can be made to feel ‘out of place’ in the natural environment - where other visitors and/or residents are predominantly White.

The sense of heightened visibility as well as experiences of racism can increase feelings of exclusion and vulnerability in nature spaces and lead to concerns about racial harassment in the natural environment. The report cited data on racism and race hate crime in greenspaces that show how pressing these concerns are.

Being perceived as ‘out-of-place’ to the extent of being targeted as a criminal is echoed by many stories across different national contexts where people from ethnic minority backgrounds are assumed not to be legitimate nature enthusiasts or users of natural environments.

The report found that ‘underlying concerns about ‘fitting in’ are complex. For more recent migrants, it might relate to feeling a need to understand more about expectations about ways of behaving in greenspace and rural areas, knowing how to interpret ‘the rules,’ or concerns about doing something wrong by mistake ... it may be about clothing, what to wear in more ‘adventurous’ locations or wearing clothes different to other people. Women and girls who wear scarves sometimes feel judged, stereotyped or harassed for this.’

Colonial legacies and historic understandings of a less diverse ‘national identity’ have shaped perceptions and experiences of the English countryside - these themes are not often openly discussed.

The NUS, with The Equality Trust and IEMA produced a scoping study (2018) which sought insight into the perceptions of the sector amongst future potential employees, to understand where different experiences and views exist according to ethnicity.

Their review of existing data sets found that 3.1% of environment professionals identify as minorities with 0.6% identifying as non-white minorities. 9% of UK students in higher education studying direct feeder subjects to environment professions identify as non-white minorities.

One table in this report particularly stands out, outlining the six top ‘feeder’ degrees into the Environment Sector . Whilst 77% of the student population as a whole is categorised as White, in these six feeder degrees, 90% are. The figures for Black students are 5% lower, for Asian students, 7% lower.

To look comprehensively at the sector, national data collected by the Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA) was reviewed in order to provide insight into the racial and ethnic diversity of students studying feeder subjects for careers in the environment sector. A data access request was issued for the six subjects with the greatest number of students taking courses classified as sitting within these subjects. The table below demonstrates the percentage of White, Black, Asian and other students, and compares these figures with national figures for students studying in Higher Education.

Specified subject	White	Black	Asian	Other (including mixed)	Unknown	Total number of students
Environmental conservation	94%	1%	2%	3%	2%	925
Environmental sciences	91%	2%	2%	4%	1%	4,700
Physical geographical sciences	91%	2%	3%	3%	1%	10,350
Environmental geography	93%	2%	1%	3%	1%	1,355
Physical geography	94%	1%	2%	3%	1%	1,430
Human & social geography	89%	2%	5%	4%	1%	10,610
Average across all feeder subjects	90%	2%	3%	4%	1%	29370
UK Higher Education student population (UK domicile)	77%	7%	10%	5%	1%	2,317,880

All figures relate only to students of UK domesticity, this data is not collected from international students and relates to 2016-17 academic year, the latest available data.

The paper found that organisations largely didn’t collect data on trustees/ board members; those who did reported that all board members were White.

In Government and agencies, the NUS data found that 2017 data on the Department of the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs includes 16% of staff who identify as an ethnic minority. As fewer than 5 members of the senior civil service identified as from an ethnic minority group, the figures for the department have been suppressed.

The report accessed available data from Natural England, in 2016-17, 67.09% of staff declared a white background, and 1.81% declared as Black, Asian and other minority ethnic groups. There has been an increase in the proportion of staff who do not declare their race or ethnicity which is sought from employees on an optional, self-declared basis.

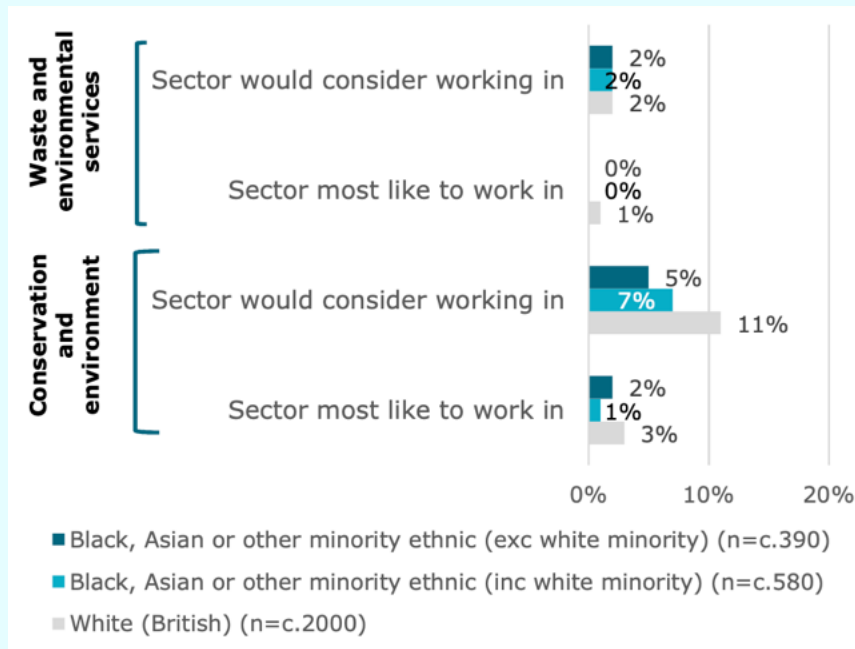
Natural England also publish data on recruitment, in 2016-17, 5.16% of applicants declared as Black, Asian or other minority ethnic group, 7.4% of BAME applicants were successful in being appointed to roles, compared with 16.49% of white applicants.

One of the findings in the NUS report is particularly striking:

When provided with a brief definition of the Environment Sector (below), respondents were asked how appealing a career in the sector was to them. Significantly fewer white British respondents said a career in the sector was appealing (44%) compared to those identifying as Black, Asian or other ethnic minority groups (57% Black, Asian or minority ethnic group (including white-other), 54% Black, Asian or minority ethnic group (excluding white other)).

'The Environment Sector covers a wide range of jobs, include roles that work directly on tackling climate change, protecting nature and wildlife, and improving air or water quality. Organisations, including businesses and charities, that work specifically on these issues will also have more general roles, for example communications, campaigns, education, finance and HR. Roles also include environmental consultancy which could encompass all of the issues mentioned above, and more. Many business employers will also now have environmental managers and departments to reduce the environmental impact of the business, covering things such as energy efficiency and waste management.'

See also the table below:



Respondents were asked to describe their perceptions of working in the Environment Sector in three words.



The report found that three factors revealed significant differences between respondents of different race or ethnicity:

1. I don't think I can use the skills I've developed
2. It's not relevant to my course / subject
3. I don't want to live in the countryside

Leaking Talent, How People of Colour are pushed out of environmental organisations, Green 2.0/ Diverse Green

In 2018, Green 2.0 asked the 40 largest NGOs and environmental foundations in the USA to report the ethnic diversity of their staff. Among these, 20% of staff and 21% of senior staff identified as People of Color. Environmental foundations revealed similar numbers, with 25% of staff and 4% of senior staff identifying as People of Color (by comparison, more than 40% of staff and 17% of executives in the tech sector are People of Color).

It is notable that Green 2.0 discusses four categories D.E.I.J – Diversity, Equity, Inclusion and Social Justice.

DEIJ Practices were listed as:

- Use unconscious bias training
- Increase pay transparency
- Improve promotion practices
- Communicate promotion criteria using written documentation, ensure procedures are followed, and advertise internally

- Increase employee development, ensuring equal access to all
- Create a diversity committee
- Create long-term DEIJ goals
- Develop metrics around DEIJ

Key CEO Actions were listed as:

- Include DEIJ in the strategic planning process
- Include DEIJ in the mission, vision, values of the organization
- Increase focus on equity and inclusion

This report is one of the few that considers why diversity matters in the Environment Sector.

4.1.1. Evaluation of workforce diversity and inclusivity

Many organisations across different sectors are now increasing their focus on evaluating the impact of increasing the diversity and inclusion of their workforces and adopting new processes and initiatives in recognition of the positive impact this can have on organisational culture, profile, and performance.

GEOGRAPHIC FOCUS

Wales

There are very few Wales-wide organisations and the interviews held with those organisations tended to mirror the concerns and issues reflected in this report.

Many EDI initiatives in Wales are focused more on increasing and evaluating community engagement in the Environment Sector rather than addressing workforce diversity.

As a result of these initiatives, the diversity of the volunteering base is increasing as food growing projects appeal to non-White communities. Although volunteering is a core part within many diverse communities – it tends to be informal, rather than structured and formal.

However, some organisations monitor workforce diversity through the Wildlife Trust's diversity survey and internal monitoring procedures. While workforce evaluation isn't a central national focus, there's growing recognition of the need for a sector-wide approach to address workforce challenges – specifically the diversity of that workforce.

This aligns with the 'Changing the [World](#) from Within' report by Wildlife and Countryside Link, which raises concerns such as senior managers struggling to define 'ethnic minority' and a lack of shared understanding about the importance of ethnic diversity in organisational mission.

Instances where organisations EDI survey results have been discussed at board and staff level to think through the implications of the findings include recognition of the importance of having a plan for increasing

diversity and inclusion that can be tracked, and against which progress can be measured *'as opposed to just having a policy - it's great having a policy but how do you actually live and breathe inclusion.'*

Most of the boards of environmental organisations are all White – *'representation is an easy thing to say. But not seeing people like themselves in the sector makes it more difficult for people who are not white middle class to imagine themselves in those roles.'*

Some organisations are revising recruitment processes to be more open and inclusive and working at hyperlocal community level to attract people from different backgrounds into the workforce – and are seeing that this approach is working.

Northern Ireland

Northern Ireland Environment Link involves 66 non statutory organisations for the natural environment. Evaluation of workforce diversity in Northern Ireland is focused less on protected characteristics and more on monitoring the sectarian divide of Catholic /Protestant. Northern Ireland has a 3% global majority population, a small Environment Sector and relatively small private sector: there is minimal diversity in senior positions. Some organisations are trying to address this issue and develop policies to encourage diverse groups or even to recognise the need to monitor these issues.

'there's a recognition that it is an important issue but people weren't necessarily sure what to do, or didn't have clear plans or strategies. Northern Ireland's environment is in poor condition and decline as environment/ nature is not a priority – mainly due to lack of government administration since 2016, and competition between conservation and environmental protection v land development – Northern Ireland has no independent environmental protection agency. Strategically the overall situation is declining. Strong political leadership in the Environment Sector is essential - when those structures are not in place, you get a very different outcome from what you would get if they were in place.'

Scotland

Scottish Environment Link run a member survey each year, based on this they put together a funding bid to support a training and knowledge building and sharing platform for members (see [Scottish Environment Link's Nature for All](#)). They were engaging with CEMVO Scotland via the Ethic Minority Environmental Network. They have also employed an EDI Officer who is putting together materials, resources, and training for members.

They are in the first year of a three year project, which will be evaluated, to better identify the longer-term support needs of members. They will also be looking at a resource hub for members, and how they can sustain and evolve this – something they would be happy to share and would be interested in building contacts with other networks and organisations.

Nourish Scotland has existing personal relationships with a variety of organisations across Scotland, for example Govan Community Project who support refugees & asylum seekers. They consider themselves a trusted organisation, largely because of their co-creational and human rights approach. They are currently running a 'meaningful participation panel' of experts by experience, to advise decision makers on how to do diverse, equitably and inclusive participation in upcoming food policy. They are interested in how the Esmée Fairbairn Foundation might support projects that are co-creational in nature; provide support to see how projects are supporting EDI and hearing from others about how they're improving their EDI.

Whilst the Scottish Wildlife Trust were delivering targeted recruitment to underrepresented communities, they hadn't run any programmes to diversify the make-up of their staff. They had however, made changes to recruitment practices such as providing questions in advance, targeting underrepresented groups although these had a focus on entry level posts.

Crichton Carbon Centre commented that it would be useful to see how other organisations their size (small) are operating in regard to their equality policies and recruitment.

Through further research we found that Venture Scotland was delivering non-curricular (i.e. not school-based) initiatives in outdoor settings for young adults aged 16 - 30 who had limited opportunities due to personal, social and financial circumstances. Fundamental to the project is raising awareness and understanding through action in a natural environment. The programme uses an array of methods of engagement including group games, substantial problem-solving exercises, icebreakers, name games and group dynamics games, as well as conservation activities like tree planting.

4.1.2. Developing monitoring and evaluation practice

The evaluation of impact guided the creation of a social enterprise company focused on generating employment opportunities in green recycling for marginalised older and disabled individuals. These findings from staff surveys and discussion groups enabled them to reframe how they think and talk about their company and its people to better reflect their ethos and vision: *'we're going to become a talent factory to support people on the margins told that they're no good or bullied in the workforce - inclusive talent v excluded talent - and help them to get their confidence up and into jobs.'*

Assessing EDI survey results to look for areas for improvement developed thinking about providing greater environmental benefit to community groups, including urban greening; creating community gardens for access to nature; recycling schemes, and use of sustainable travel to improve the environment.

The National Trust's 'Everyone Welcome' initiative introduced an engagement survey to assess inclusivity. Progress is being gauged through staff inclusion scores, annual surveys, and member feedback. The National Trust intends to publish a report on the gender pay gap, and aims to expand reporting to include ethnicity, disability, and sexual identity, bolstering transparency and accountability.

SUPPORTING RESEARCH

The Wildlife Trusts' intention to ensure diverse and inclusive leadership is at the centre of the organisation is assessed through measuring the extent of the representation of minority groups in staff and trustees so that its workforce reflects the diversity of local communities. The organisation also measures the impact of taking an actively anti-racist position, and of EDI training for trustees and staff to ensure everyone recognises their responsibility.

Evaluating progress on EDI work with Trustees on governance, reviewing the extent to which EDI is led from the top by the CEO working with Trustees, and the extent to which it is embedded into strategy as core to all elements of an organisation's work.

Linking monitoring surveys to strategy, ensuring staff understand the purpose of the diversity survey and are given the option to take part: feeding findings into organisational strategy. Using survey findings to assess gaps: for example, greater recognition of the needs of neurodiverse staff.

Early career stage evaluation: for example, mapping the pipeline of people at an early career stage, including information from supervisors. Surveys with inclusion questions - response to opportunities, working relationships and overall impacts. End of placement surveys to assess the organisational interface; The findings showed the organisation that it needs to be doing more community work to reach out to underrepresented groups in different ways.

Evaluation and monitoring accountability: regular EDI meetings require staff to log their action against the EDI wider strategy elements. This gives consistent knowledge of the work being done across the whole organisation. This process is helped by 100% buy in from the senior leadership team and board.

Informal evaluation sessions that put knowledge into practice to improve organisational process and offer; exploring barriers led to using interpreters with refugee/migrant groups; use of inclusive and non-gendered language that avoids jargon; skills development opportunities; running activities accessible by train; talks regarding the project legacy.

4.2. Map existing initiatives and models

4.2.1. Evaluation of workforce diversity and inclusivity

In the environmental sector, evaluation and monitoring processes and reporting often prioritise assessing funded programmes such as volunteer and audience diversity, engagement, and contribution, rather than assessing workforce, which tends to be core funded and therefore evaluation is rarely a grant requirement. Providing evaluation and monitoring data is often part of funding agreements and is produced to meet funder priorities and requirements – rather than for any internal learning, development, or change.

Many organisations consulted during this research conduct diversity monitoring surveys. Often the organisational surveys are limited to monitoring the demographic diversity of the workforce. They rarely gather evaluation feedback on inclusivity as a tool to review behaviours in leadership and accountability.

Nor do they consider impact on goals, strategies, business plans or indicated action regarding resources and training or on workforce policy development.

EDI evaluation and monitoring is dependent on the capacity made available within an organisation's staff resources and whether there are team members for whom this is a designated responsibility. We found cases where EDI fell under the finance department's purview.

In some instances, the focus of evaluation is specific or very limited: for example, evaluation of the effectiveness of recruitment processes; mentoring schemes; evaluations of National Lottery Heritage Foundation projects such as the development of career and leadership opportunities for young people from diverse backgrounds; tracking tangible impacts on audience reach to schools and communities from less privileged backgrounds.

A range of different actions were detailed by organisations, with the aim of improving staff diversity, including:

- Mandatory unconscious bias training for all staff in managerial positions
- Development of a network for staff who identify as Black, Asian or other minority ethnic groups
- Diversity and Inclusion Toolkit to support integration of diversity issues at a project level
- Review and development of recruitment processes and materials, including wording of adverts, recruitment consultancies used, composition of interview panels
- Development of a paid internship scheme, with targeted recruitment to reach 'underprivileged and ethnically diverse candidates'
- Further data collection to understand diversity and inclusion in more detail e.g. pay gap analysis

SUPPORTING RESEARCH

CIEEM: Breaking down barriers to inclusion was produced in partnership with Dialogue Matters. It aimed to find solutions to the lack of ethnic diversity and representation within environmental and ecological professions. The process included discussion around actions that can be taken with particular attention being given to identifying what CIEEM can do within its remit to catalyse change.

Out of the discussions, the two issues most needing to be resolved to create impact were a genuine commitment to action from those with the power to create change and that small groups of people of colour should not carry this burden alone.

A commitment to action should tackle low wages, financial barriers to voluntary opportunities, poor career progression and the unrealistic skills and qualifications required for early-career positions.

People from underrepresented communities should have greater awareness of and access to environmental career opportunities. Nature could be more accessible to people from underrepresented communities through better transport, play areas, green spaces, school initiatives and parental support.

The poor representation of people of colour within the workforce should be tackled especially within senior positions across all sectors, these people should be visible as role models to show young people of colour what they can achieve.

Suggested solutions to achieve this were:

- Providing people of colour with financial support to help them with their careers (grants, sponsorship, affordable training courses, increased wages).
- Reviewing job application process – provide training on how to make a strong application.
- Applications need to be clear about requirements and avoid using tokenistic language.
- Can people of colour be more visible (safe space – risks of this) - greater representation in the media - make use of genuine footage or photographs of people ‘on site’ not just stock images.
- Create a community through support groups.
- CIEEM members performing visits to schools and diverse communities would increase young people’s awareness of the career path.
- Those with power should act themselves, not just influence others – for example through internal training on diversity issues or by creating specific committees to tackle the issue.
- Efforts and improvements should be made available by publishing transparency reports.

This report outlined possible measures of success, such as:

- More people of colour applying for and securing roles – evident in workforce demographic data
- People progress through non-traditional pathways (practical skills not just written)
- More people are trained in [and understand] equality and inclusion
- People of colour have a community of allies around them speaking up about issues
- People of colour visible throughout the sector at all career stages – especially in senior positions

The CIEEM report included a thorough action plan.

The [Diverse Sustainability Initiative](#) is a new collaborative programme of work with the vision to transform diversity within the sustainability profession and wider Environment Sector . The overall goal is to build a profession and sector that, over time, is reflective of modern Britain by using education, connection, and transparency.

The DSI cites the statistic (these are no longer the most up to date figures) that 3.1% of environment professionals identify as minorities compared to 19.9% in all occupations (figure taken from a report by the NUS, IEMA and The Equality Trust).

Green and Black Report/ A report on Ujima Radio’s initiative to involve Black Minority Ethnic communities in the Green agenda during Bristol European Green Capital 2015

The Green and Black report reviewed existing activity within Bristol. It considered barriers to participation, the following of which are particularly relevant:

- Use of environmental language needs to be simpler. It baffles people. What does it mean? An example discussed was the term ‘sustainability’.

- Smaller community organisations work in silos and are not networked with larger or leading organisations. As a result, they struggle to put in quality bids, they do not have professional fundraisers or those with fundraising experience, they are not connected within the ‘system’ and unaware of the ‘rules of the game’.
- More diverse boards and groups are required to make better informed decisions.
- ‘Them and Us’ – the Green Agenda is perceived as elitist.
- Community Organisations are listened to, but not understood.
- No space to talk about race and inequality within the Green Agenda.
- ‘Black people aren’t green’. It’s an excuse, a point of view, and not a fact.
- The way that BAME people are being involved and asked to engage is a barrier. It’s not on their terms and they are asked to solve problems without resources.

Jumping Fences, land, food and racial justice in British farming

Jumping Fences was commissioned by Ecological Land Cooperative (ELC), Land In Our Names (LION) and Landworkers’ Alliance (LWA), as part of the Jumping Fences Project. It aimed to provide an evidence base from which to build strategy and act to address barriers to farming for people of colour in Britain.

The report made recommendations that covered both perceived problems and transformative solutions.

It recognised that some of the barriers faced by ‘Black, Indigenous & People of Colour (BIPOC) are similar to those faced by non-BIPOC, including finding paid farm work, access to land, being given roles with little learning or development potential. BIPOC trainees also face isolation, micro-aggressions and being treated as incompetent.

The report considered six main categories - narratives, culture, support strategy, spaces, networks and land.

The role played by **narratives** defines behaviours and societal norms that the report comments *‘perpetuate reinforcing cycles of oppression.’*

- Solutions included augmenting media presence with a diversity of farming role models to shift the image of who belongs in farming and rural Britain.

The report acknowledges that changed narratives should not be tokenistic, this causes more harm, producing a surface level impression of change, whilst doing little at a deeper more transformative level. The report notes that this ‘can act to sustain racial inequity, by presenting a semblance of change, whilst maintaining the status quo of the same old power imbalances.’

Culture is interlinked with narratives; the report stresses the need to promote anti-oppressive workplace cultures through training and policy. Micro-aggressions should be addressed.

- The report stresses that whilst diversity scholarships and programmes are encouraged, these must be accompanied by appropriate training for staff, to ensure that students from different backgrounds enter a safe and supportive environment.

Within support strategies, the report stressed the need to support emerging role models who are willing to share their skills, as well as continuing support for new entrants.

- Hubs were seen as an important means of support, offering spaces for on-going support. Established spaces such as these offer supportive platforms for workshops and events.

The need for Networks – both regional and thematic - to connect people, can have a ripple out effect, with people forming support groups, with less dependence upon organisational support.

4.3. Organisations interested in developing work in the future

We didn't speak to all of the departments/ organisations who had produced research reports, evaluations, and impact studies, so it isn't possible to say which of these would be interested in working with Esmée Fairbairn Foundation in the future. A number of membership organisations, and those focused on programme delivery were interested.

These included CIEEM, Institute of Chartered Foresters, SOS-UK, UpRising, Wildlife and Countryside Link, YHA. National Trust

4.4. Key Gaps in provision

A key gap, as mentioned above, is the lack of a clear, coherent case for diversity in the Environment Sector and the value this would bring, providing a framework around which leaders could galvanise.

SUPPORTING RESEARCH

As part of their EDI work, the Paul Hamlyn Foundation applied the [Fundors for Race Equality Alliance](#) racial justice audit tool to their UK grant-making in 2020/21. They analysed their portfolios in terms of the proportion of grants and funds awarded in support of Black or minoritised-led organisations and projects. The tool gave them a new perspective on their grant-making and will inform shifts in their practice towards their commitments to Diversity, Equity and Inclusion.

They subsequently started to follow up expressions of interest from grant applications with a request for further detail on how organisations are addressing EDI – specifically how they are being both allies and having an anti-racist organisational approach. The information they receive guides their funding decisions.

Recommendations for Esmée Fairbairn Foundation: opportunities and actions

Throughout this report, we have referenced case studies and cited examples of potential programmes. In this section, we identify suggestions for possible directions and programmes/ organisations that Esmée Fairbairn Foundation might wish to consider.

Unsurprisingly in all our conversations, everyone wanted to work with Esmée Fairbairn Foundation. The key question is, whilst everyone wants to work with the Esmée Fairbairn Foundation, where would the Foundation make the greatest impact? How can the Foundation push the sector towards better EDI and representation and change the narratives around environmentalism and community engagement?

Taking on the different motivations of consultee responses, we have focused on organisations that appear to want support to address EDI within their organisation and that need resources to facilitate this.

Esmée Fairbairn Foundation could build on this positive aspect by selecting a sample of the organisations in this study to support their practice, perhaps based on an exploratory expression of interest for a deeper understanding of their current position and their ideas for pioneering future practice.

Change is overdue

This report highlights that change in EDI is long overdue in the Environment Sector workforce and there is an urgent need to create a more diverse and inclusive sector (EDI).

Esmée Fairbairn Foundation is well positioned to lead the way in promoting diversity and inclusivity and could support both incremental and significant change. Esmée can demonstrate that it is committed to seeing change through its own practices and resourcing and allowing EDI to influence where funding is committed and the impact that Esmée expects to see

'There's momentum building up, there's a funder who has somehow managed to bring other funders on board to see this as a collective piece, that they don't go alone, but they go with other funders and supporters, that they advocate to other colleagues within foundations and trusts.'

'Investing in and improving access routes into nature related roles is crucial, and I think we've got a real opportunity to do it. What I worry about is that nobody's got the time or resource to do it and do it well.'

Many organisations would welcome and benefit from a clear, coherent case for diversity and support and guidance to increase their EDI competencies and improve their understanding and standards.

The value of promoting diversity of people and perspectives and an adaptive and inclusive culture in a workforce needs to be clearly articulated. In 'Rebel Ideas'⁴ Matthew Syed writes about the risks associated with 'homophily', when teams, whilst exceptional and smart, experience 'group think' and fail to see possibilities – as well as gaps and dangers and the need and benefits of diverse perspectives.

Find the energy: strength in numbers

There is a strong case for aligning with organisations to mobilise a sector-wide focus on strategic and effective talent pipeline development and to promote the benefits of investing in and cultivating the talent of a diverse workforce. This could be accompanied by working with schools and career advice to raise awareness and signpost young people to work opportunities in the Environment Sector.

Young people from diverse backgrounds trying to gain work in the Environment Sector face numerous barriers. These range from a lack of awareness of opportunities, limited access to advice, perception of all roles being low paid, inaccessible sites and lack of qualifications and skills. Developing diverse talent needs to be part of a structured transformational programme joined by the whole sector - *'then you've got strength in numbers'* to tackle a skills shortage and an increase in sector diversity.

A strong theme throughout our consultation was the need to galvanise environmental organisations who are committed to changes in EDI. The strong commitment and reputation of Esmée Fairbairn Foundation makes it well-placed to bring together sector leaders to steer conversations that will stimulate change. *'I think there will be a pool of people who will absolutely actively want to engage that will tend to be the third sector – get all of those organisations around the table because they're already'*. Collaboration is essential.

Alert to trends

As a result of the RACE report, we may see increased action by excluded communities claiming their place in the sector, highlighting the need for community-led initiatives *'we are seeing underrepresented communities saying we want to be out in this environment - We've got every right to be here. They don't feel welcomed. And there are organisations coming forward from communities themselves - You guys are not doing the job for us so we'll have to do it ourselves'*.

Grow the talent

There is a strong case for promoting the benefits of investing in and cultivating the talent of a diverse workforce. Barriers faced by young people from diverse backgrounds to gain work in the Environment Sector need to be addressed: lack of awareness of opportunities, limited access to advice, perception of jobs being low paid, inaccessible sites and lack of qualifications and skills.

⁴ Rebel ideas: The power of diverse thinking, Matthew Syed, 2019

Talent development strategies also need to address the significant gap to support career progression and leadership development for mid-career and senior leaders as this is currently a significant gap in the Environment Sector.

Developing diverse talent needs to be part of a structured transformational programme joined by the whole sector to tackle a skills shortage and increase sector diversity.

Celebrate diversity

Platforming successful work by people from underrepresented communities to demonstrate viable careers in the sector is essential to dispelling perceptions that this sector isn't 'the place for me'.

Interviewees suggested accelerator programmes for people from underrepresented communities wishing to work in the Environment Sector.

Communities of Practice

Coordinating communities of practice with a shared sense of purpose can encourage collaboration, knowledge-sharing, and benchmarking. This can lead to more inclusive practices and evidence-based solutions to increase diversity and develop approaches to EDI - to learn from and apply best practice, share challenges, opportunities, and solutions – and importantly stimulate opportunities for collaboration raising confidence to make meaningful change from the inside out.

This would support many organisations and lead to greater inclusion of underrepresented groups as more organisations benefit from increased expertise. This also opens up potential for commissioning shared research and external perspectives and guidance to provide evidence-based solutions.

Knowledge Sharing, Resources and Networks

Cumulatively, there is growing knowledge across the Environment Sector regarding enhancing EDI and workforce diversity. Harnessing and disseminating this valuable resource could significantly benefit organisations striving to diversify their workforce, boost engagement and representation, and enhance their understanding of best practice.

Respondents highlighted the value and effectiveness of sharing information and strategies, particularly for organisations of similar size and resources. One suggestion was the establishment of cross-organisational mentorship programmes.

Creating mechanisms for sharing knowledge about ongoing EDI efforts and capturing lessons learned can save time and resources. An online hub would enhance accessibility to these resources and facilitate the exchange of ideas and outcomes. This would benefit smaller organisations lacking internal EDI expertise and capacity. The hub could encompass practical resources and best practice guidelines and highlight opportunities collaboration and joint efforts.

Other suggested knowledge-sharing methods include webinars, videos, fact sheets, seminars, action learning sets, and discussion groups.

Evaluation as a learning resource

While numerous EDI initiatives are in progress, organisations often struggle to evaluate their effectiveness, impact, and sustainability. This challenge extends to assessing changes in EDI strategies or policies over time, especially since many initiatives are short-term and aimed at early career stages. Longer-term evaluation is needed to assess the outcomes of such opportunities.

To address this, there's a critical need to improve evaluation practices to focus on measuring the influence of EDI on organisational culture, behaviour, governance, and decision-making.

Supporting sector transformation

The current environmental sector lacks diversity. Esmée Fairbairn Foundation's work has supported organisations who are taking steps in effecting change. Alongside this, it's crucial to also back organisations specialising in significant sector transformation.

Focusing solely on dominant players, who claim to promote change but show little evidence neglects smaller, often more effective, grassroots organisations. Investing in these organisations and individuals, as seen in the Arts Council England case study (pages 44 to 45), would pay greater dividends than solely focusing on those currently operating within the Environment Sector.

Promoting collaboration over competition, especially in merging EDI expertise with environmental causes, encourages more effective initiatives in the sector.

The findings in this report suggest clear lines of action that Esmée could consider, and these are summarised in action plan below.

Advancing EDI in the Environment Sector: an action plan for Esmée Fairbairn Foundation

These recommendations outline how Esmée Fairbairn Foundation can make a significant contribution to transforming the environmental sector into a more diverse, inclusive, and effective force for addressing environmental challenges and promoting equity – and to back its intentions with concrete actions.

What will this mean for Esmée Fairbairn Foundation’s organisational priorities, committing of resources and staff capacity? It may require the Esmée to adjust its existing funding criteria and to deepen its support of grassroots and community-led organisations driving change.

What change is possible?

Intention	Action
<p>A Champion of Diversity: What is the change Esmée wants to see?</p>	<p>Create consensus and shared vision within the Esmée Fairbairn Foundation on what the future of the environmental sector workforce could look like and what intervention and action Esmée is prepared to take – the story of change.</p> <p>Esmée Fairbairn Foundation could demonstrate its commitment to EDI by allowing EDI principles to influence its funding decisions: for example, adapting its funding criteria to better accommodate community-led and grassroots organisations or larger organisations who are actively working to promote EDI.</p>
<p>Advocacy</p>	<p>Esmée Fairbairn Foundation can be a strong advocate for fostering diversity in the environmental sector and reinforcing inclusion - not just in words and strategies, but in the practice and actions of organisations by providing equal opportunities at every stage of the workforce journey.</p> <p>Esmée Fairbairn Foundation could promote the value of diverse perspectives, voices, skills, and backgrounds in strengthening the workforce; fuel organisational innovation and better equip them to address environmental challenges.</p> <p>They could also co-lead on developing the environmental case for diversity, creating spaces for discussion, and building up a groundswell of knowledge and thinking in this area.</p>
<p>Galvanise Sector Leaders</p>	<p>Leveraging its reputation, Esmée Fairbairn Foundation can bring together leaders (from across the sector and in ranging size and focus) in the environmental sector that are committed to EDI change for round-table discussions.</p> <p>This collective effort can stimulate crucial conversations and collaborative initiatives – developing an environmental case for diversity.</p>

	<p>This collaboration can lead to the development of shared strategies, goals, and commitments to promote diversity and inclusion, building up shared resource, good practice and peer learning.</p>
<p>Proactive Engagement</p>	<p>Shifting Esmée Fairbairn Foundation from a reactive approach to a proactive one means identifying individuals who are driving EDI change within their organisations and providing them with focused support.</p> <p>This support may include mentorship, resources, or networking opportunities to empower them to lead meaningful change.</p> <p>Consideration could be given to co-delivering programmes of support for emerging organisations (such as Elevate) and programmes with a focus on individual development (such as Change Makers and the STAR programme).</p>
<p>Identify and Support Sector Organisations</p>	<p>Esmée Fairbairn Foundation could engage with organisations that are eager to improve their EDI practices. Initiating exploratory conversations could assess their current EDI status and gather ideas for innovative approaches.</p> <p>These organisations could benefit from targeted financial support and access to resources and guidance tailored to their specific needs.</p>
<p>Facilitate Collaboration</p>	<p>To foster a more inclusive sector, Esmée Fairbairn Foundation can facilitate partnerships and collaborations among organisations by connecting them with established leaders in EDI.</p> <p>Sharing case studies and webinars showcasing successful EDI initiatives can provide practical guidance and inspire others to follow suit.</p>
<p>Support Talent Pipeline Growth</p>	<p>Collaborating with schools and career advice services, Esmée Fairbairn Foundation can begin to remove barriers that prevent young people from underrepresented communities from considering careers in the environmental sector by alerting them to opportunities.</p> <p>Awareness campaigns, mentorship programmes, and internships can introduce young individuals to the sector and provide them with the resources they need to pursue environmental careers.</p> <p>Early career development programmes, such as those run by Groundwork and UpRising offers routes into the sector.</p>
<p>Career Progression</p>	<p>Recognising the gap for support for career progression for mid-career and senior leaders, Esmée can support leadership development opportunities.</p>

	<p>This could include training, mentorship and sponsorship programmes, initiatives to create pathways to advance diverse talent, both within their organisations and to the benefit of the wider sector.</p> <p>The examples provided by programmes such as Change Makers, Common Purpose and On Purpose.</p>
<p>Sharing Best Practice and Knowledge: Communities of Practice</p>	<p>Esmée Fairbairn Foundation could create a centralised accessible online hub to promote and share best practice, practical resources, and guidance related to EDI - benefiting smaller organisations needing EDI expertise – providing a platform for organisations to learn from one another, discuss challenges, and collectively work toward greater inclusion.</p> <p>By coordinating communities of practice, (see for example the approach taken by Common Purpose in building networks across sectors) Esmée Fairbairn Foundation can facilitate collaboration, knowledge-sharing, and ideas exchange among organisations with shared EDI goals. Encouraging collaboration rather than competition can foster a more cohesive approach to driving change in the sector.</p>
<p>Improved Evaluation Practices</p>	<p>Support best practice and longer-term evaluation efforts to help organisations assess the lasting impacts of EDI initiatives beyond short-term outcomes and measure changes in organisational culture, decision-making, and governance structures.</p>

Appendices

Appendix 1: Organisations consulted for this research

Organisation
All the Elements
Amphibian and Reptile Conservation
Black Seeds Network
Bumblebee Trust
Campaign for National Parks
Community Suppliers Agricultural Network
Compassion in World Farming
Derbyshire Wildlife Trust
easypeasysustainability
Energise
Enviromail
European Welfare Association (EWA)
Faith for the Climate
Green Alliance
Groundwork
Historic England
Hubbub
Hudl
Institute of Chartered Foresters
Keep Wales Tidy
Lambeth Council
Local Storytelling Exchange
National Lottery Heritage Fund
National Trust
NI Environment Link
Northumberland Wildlife Trust
Plumpton Agricultural College

Rainforest Foundation
Secretariat, CIEEM
Sheffield Environmental Movement (SEM)
South Pennines Park
South Uplands Partnership
Students Organising for Sustainability (SOS UK)
The Raven Network
The Wildlife Trusts
UK Youth for Nature
Uplift
UpRising
Wildlife & Countryside Link
Wildlife Trust, Nottingham
Youth Environmental Service
Youth Hostel Association (YHA)

Appendix 2: Organisations of survey respondents

Organisation
Action for Conservation
All The Elements CIC
Bumblebee Conservation Trust
Campaign for National Parks
CIEEM
Compassion in World Farming
CPRE, the countryside charity
Crichton Carbon Centre
Derbyshire Wildlife Trust
Devon Wildlife Trust
East London Business Alliance
Environment Agency
Enviromail
European's Welfare Association CIC
Feedback Global

Green Alliance
Greenpeace UK
Groundwork UK
Hammersmith Community Gardens Association
Historic England
Hubbub
Hyde Park Source
Institute of Chartered Foresters
IUCN UK Peatland Programme
Keep Wales Tidy
London Borough of Lambeth
London Wildlife Trust
London Zoo
Marine Conservation Society
Nattergal
Natural England
Natural Resources Wales
Northern Ireland Environment Link (NIEL)
Northumberland Wildlife Trust
Nottinghamshire Wildlife Trust
Nourish Scotland
Open Seas
Plantlife International
Scottish Environment LINK
Scottish Wildlife Trust
SOS-UK
South Pennines Park
Southern Uplands Partnership
Surfers Against Sewage
Surrey Wildlife Trust
Sustainable Soils Alliance
Sustrans
The Community Supported Agriculture Network UK
The Conservation Volunteers (TCV)

The Froglife Trust
The Local Storytelling Exchange
The Royal Parks
The Royal Society of Wildlife Trusts
UK Youth for Nature
UK100
Uplift
Wales Environment Link
WDC, Whale and Dolphin Conservation
West Wales Rivers Trust
Wildlife and Countryside Link
Woodland Trust/ National Trust
WildTeam
Your Park Bristol & Bath