

Annual Equality Monitoring Report

1 April 2022 to
31 March 2023



Forestry Commission



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Introduction

At the Forestry Commission, we want our workforce to better represent Britain's communities. We also know that we are stronger as a business when our workforce is diverse and inclusive.

Everyone who works for our organisation is unique and we want to ensure that they are truly valued and can reach their full potential.

This report forms part of our requirement to publish workforce data to demonstrate our compliance with the Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED) and the Equality Act (2010).

The PSED requires us to publish information about our employees, broken down by relevant protected characteristic, to show how the Forestry Commission is having due regard to:

- Eliminating unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other conduct prohibited by the Equality Act 2010.
- Advancing equality of opportunity between people from different protected characteristics.
- Fostering good relations between people from different protected characteristics.

This report not only fulfils our statutory obligations, but it also highlights the work that is underway to promote equality, diversity and inclusion across the organisation.





Our people: in numbers

This report is based on our workforce figures across Forestry England, Forest Services, Forest Research and the Commissioners' Office for 31 March 2023. The report does not include casual staff.

This data shows some progress since 2019 with regards to the recruitment, retention and progression of female, ethnic minority and disabled staff.

As at 31 March 2023, the Forestry Commission had 2149 employees of which:



55% were Male



45% were Female



8% were from an ethnic minority background



88% of staff were white British
(4% have not disclosed)



6% told us they have a disability



58% were over 40 years of age

In addition, it is noted that:



40% of those in senior management positions were female



60% of those in senior management positions were male



The middle female salary is 0.28% higher than the middle male salary (2022)



The average (mean) hourly rate for males is 3.07% higher than females (2022)



4.1% of successful applicants following interview were from an ethnic minority background



6.4% of successful applicants following interview had a disability

Strategy and oversight

Diversity and Inclusion Strategy 2021-2024

In September 2021 we launched our **Diversity and Inclusion (D&I) Strategy**, which brings together our mission to make the Forestry Commission inclusive to all.

Our strategy is focused on five memorable actions:

Develop a more inclusive culture: To create working environments and recreational spaces where people are valued and respected for being themselves.

Grow a more representative workforce: To have a workforce that better represents all the communities we serve.

Listen using diverse insights: For all programmes, policies and services to be inclusive to all.

Learn, growing in capability and confidence: To be an organisation where equality, diversity and inclusion is everyone's responsibility.

Share our experiences and learning: Raise awareness, share best practice and celebrate success.

Everyone Belongs Board

To support the delivery of the diversity and inclusion strategy, we have launched the Everyone Belongs Board, chaired by our OD Director, to provide oversight, assurance and co-ordination of the Forestry Commission's programmes of work relating to equality, diversity and inclusion. The steering group has senior representatives from across the organisation and its divisions, who will champion a culture where everyone is welcome and included.

Training and development

Equality, diversity and inclusion training

The 'Equally Yours' board game continues to be rolled out, with the aim of helping staff discuss issues of diversity and inclusion openly and better understand their colleagues, visitors, and communities. 186 people received Equally Yours training over the past year, taking the total to over 50% of the organisation to date.

Inclusion Ambassadors

We currently have 32 Inclusion Ambassadors (plus 7 Bullying, Harassment and Discrimination Ambassadors at Forest Research), who have been trained to tackle both conscious and unconscious discrimination and promote inclusion using regular 'conversation starters' to increase knowledge and understanding of diversity alongside inclusive practice.

Professional Manager Programme

Our Professional Manager Programme (PMP) which launched in September 2019 continues to support the growth of future leaders for the organisation. Its aim is to provide a consistent approach to leadership and management development, thus advancing opportunities for all. Open to managers at pay bands 5, 5 ops, 4 and 3, the Professional Manager Programme has been designed for the Forestry Commission, taking the very best in tools, materials and facilitator input the market has to offer.

Due regard has been paid to ensure representation for both nominees and mentors participating in the programme. The programme presents an opportunity to nurture the leadership skills of staff from underrepresented groups.

The Professional Manager Programme includes an Equally Yours session and an Inclusive Leadership session as core elements of the programme.

In addition, we have funded three places on the **Stepping Up Diversity Leadership programme**. This will help us to nurture the next generation of diverse leaders to strengthen the talent pipeline.

Stepping Up is a positive action programme which aims to unlock potential and develop talent while ensuring a fair representation of Minority Ethnic, Disabled, Women and LGBTQ+ staff in positions of leadership.



Supporting and growing our staff networks

The Forestry Commission has 4 staff networks, all of which (except for Rainbow Canopy) were set up in 2022. These are:

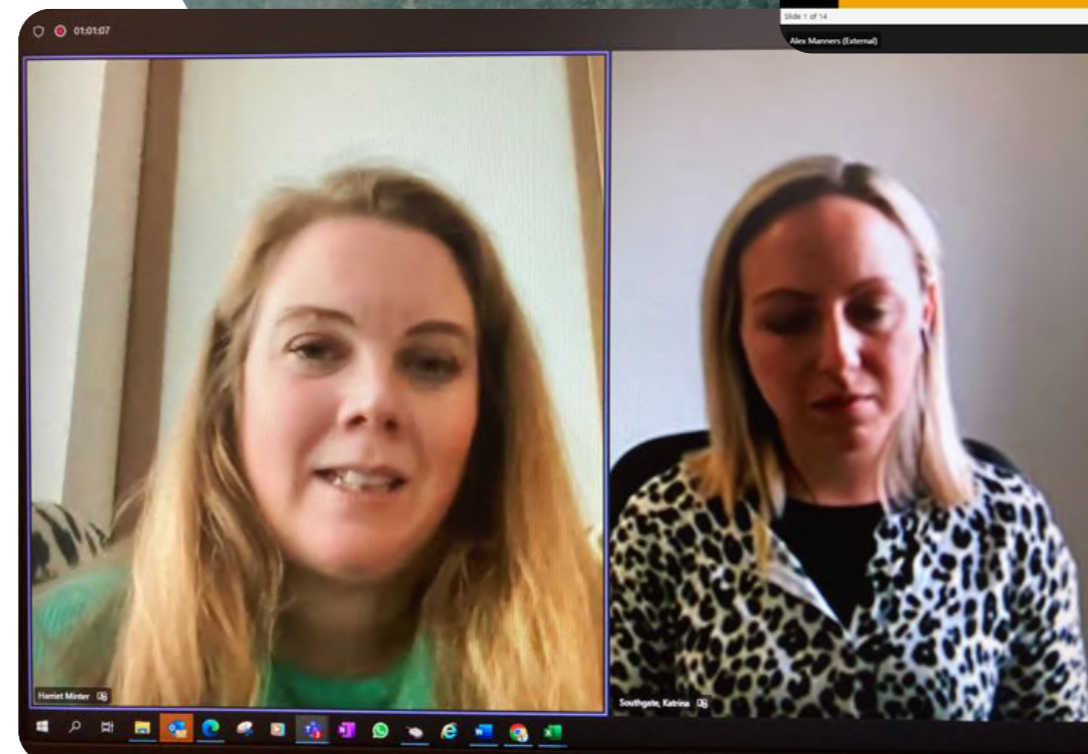
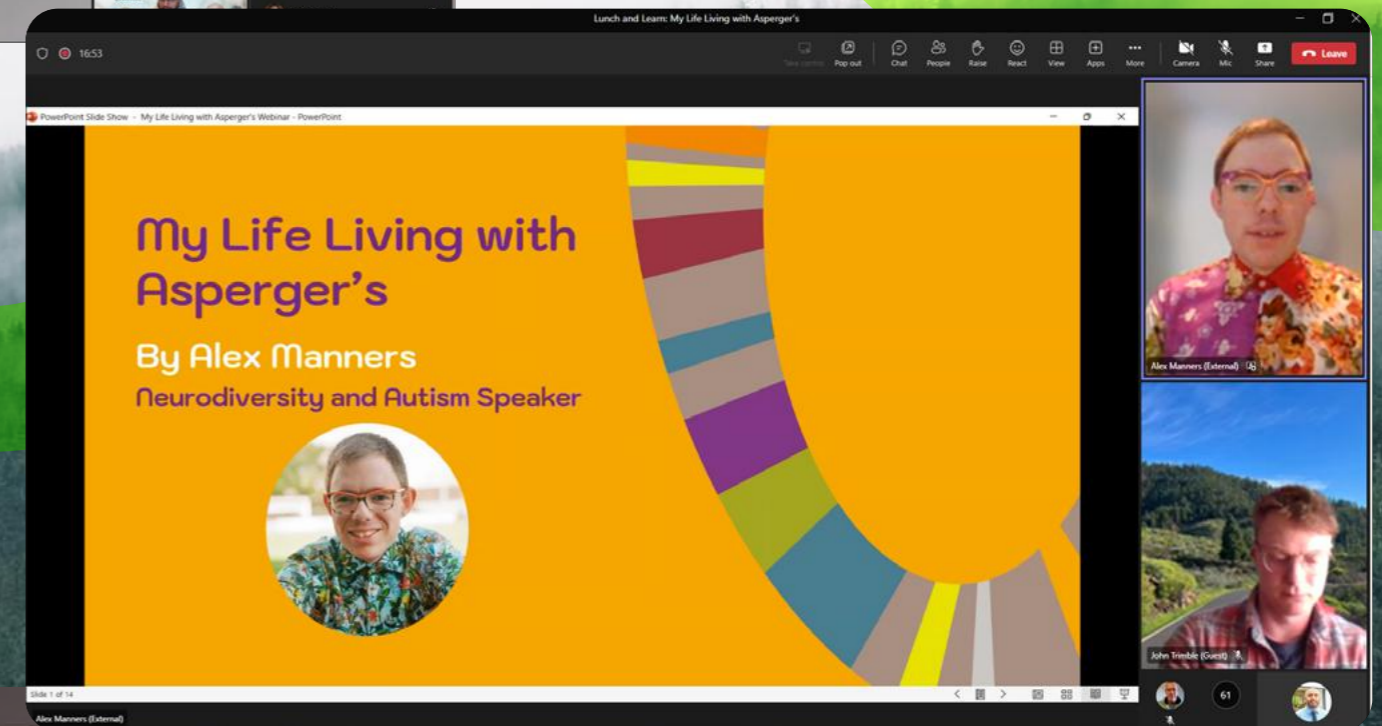
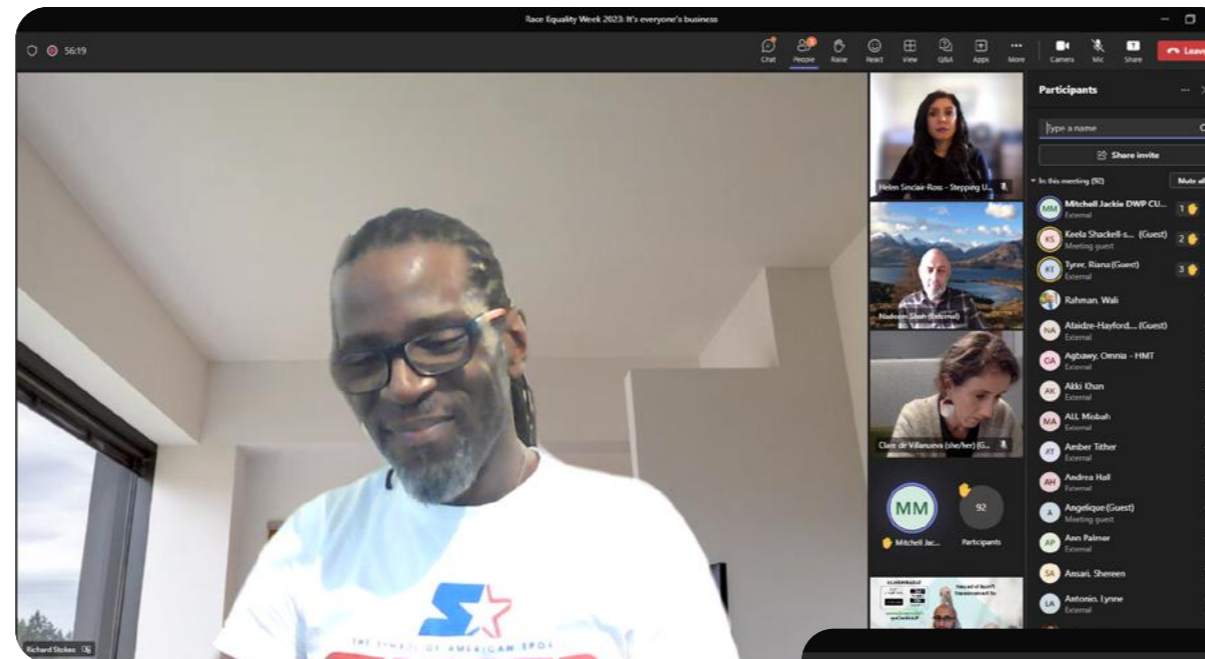
- Rainbow Canopy (plus LGBTQ+ supporters) Staff Network
- Disability, Neurodiversity and Carers Staff Network
- Women's Staff Network
- REACH (Race Equality and Cultural Heritage) Staff Network

The purpose of the staff networks is to provide mutual support to their members and allies, to help inform staff about issues affecting them, and to advise the organisation on how to improve the quality of working life for all staff.

The networks contribute to diversity and wellbeing communications via blogs and news stories marking awareness days promoting diversity and inclusion as well as organising events and lunch and learn sessions.

This includes PRIDE, LGBTQ+ History Month, Black History Month, Race Equality Week, South Asian Heritage Month, Neurodiversity Celebration Week, Disability Pride Month, World Menopause Day, International Women's Day, Women's History Month and many other dates, which are promoted on our Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Calendar.

These events have proven to be very popular with around 100 people attending on average, including external staff from over 35 Civil Service departments.



Forests for Everyone Programme

Forestry England commissioned a Forestry Commission report that investigated how we could better reflect and serve the communities and society of today. The group presented the Forests for Everyone report that focused on Ethnicity and Religion. The actions correlate to our five-year plan **Growing the Future: 2021-26**, which aims to increase the diversity of our visitors and staff to reflect the communities our forests serve.

The Forests for Everyone (FfE) programme was launched in 2022 and is taking forward the recommendations from the report through individual projects. The programme has also broadened its remit beyond ethnicity and religion to advocate for better, deeper and more inclusive engagement with diverse communities and underserved audiences.

The programme aims to bring together and learn from the work taking place locally so that we can achieve a bigger impact nationally.

The Forests for Everyone network group has been established and a new FFE Community Programme Manager is now in post, whose role is to deliver externally facing Diversity and Inclusion outcomes and initiatives. Some of the work carried out last year under the programme include:

- Hosting an intern for the **Summer Diversity Internship Programme** with the Cabinet Office. This gives people from diverse backgrounds a workplace taster to experience what a career in the Civil Service is like.
- Exploring opportunities for work placements with partner organisations for young people from diverse backgrounds to undertake a range of environmental roles to enrich the sector and transform lives.
- Working with inspiring people on the **Forest Runner Influencer Campaign**.
- Continuing our partnership with **Eco-Sikh UK to develop one-ness groves** with local communities.
- A Diversity Data group was established, which is developing a data dashboard for the whole of the FC.

A holistic approach to wellbeing

The health and wellbeing of our staff remains a high priority. Results from the most recent staff engagement survey revealed 78% agreed they knew how to access support for their health and wellbeing if they needed it. Internally, the continued promotion of the wellbeing offer is being refreshed to reflect a more holistic and balanced view of health, to include physical and financial wellbeing not only mental health.

The new wellbeing communications campaign is used to publicise a wider range of wellbeing topics, providing opportunities to drive wellbeing engagement across all business areas through a variety of mediums including blogs, newsletters, and lunch and learn sessions.

Following the cost-of-living crisis, we created an intranet page on Financial wellbeing support, which catalogues the options and support available to Forestry Commission staff to help their financial wellbeing. This was promoted at the same time as the new financial wellbeing hub in November 2022. This groups together existing financial wellbeing content, such as blogs, notices, offers, relevant policies,

and signposting to support and tools available. The financial wellbeing hub is a one-stop-shop for staff to find support and advice available through work. When new content is created it will be tagged with 'financial wellbeing' and automatically added.

In addition to communications, we have strengthened the refreshed approach through several practical wellbeing opportunities, such as the return of the health kiosk tour, continuing to offer free flu vaccinations annually, and funding free staff places in our forest runner series.

We currently have a network of over 135 Mental Health First Aiders, plus a growing network of Wellbeing Champions (currently 51). To support the Mental Health First Aider Network, we continue to offer refresher training to ensure their skills and knowledge remain up to date.

More widely, for all staff, we offer courses for Mental Health Awareness which is included as part of the Professional Managers' Programme and was attended by 84 people across the business last year. We continue to explore new training available, helping to further embed wellbeing and continue the positive cultural progress being made.

In February 2023, we organised a health kiosk tour of 15 sites to help staff identify potential medical conditions and to provide advice on how to improve their general health and fitness.

Following the results of our internal staff engagement survey in early 2022, we are taking the opportunity to participate in the Mind Workplace Wellbeing Index to deep dive specifically into wellbeing. It will help us find out where we are doing well and where we can improve our approach to wellbeing in the workplace. The findings will enable us to make improvements to our current wellbeing policies and procedures.





The Forestry Commission is pleased to have passed the 5 star verification process to become an Includability Committed Employer. We're happy with the feedback we received for our work in the areas of mental health, wellbeing, sustainability, talent management and diversity and inclusion. We hope this partnership will help us to achieve our broader strategic goals to diversify our workforce and visitors and help us to continue to be an organisation where everyone is valued and welcome, regardless of their background.



RICHARD STANFORD

*Forestry Commission
Chief Executive*



Partnership working, benchmarking and sharing good practice

The Forestry Commission's Diversity and Wellbeing Manager was the Civil Service Race Forum's Black History Month 2022 project manager and curated a programme of events taking place across government, which were advertised to all Civil Servants, including FC staff. We also published a blog for Black History Month with stories from FC staff.

The Forestry Commission passed a 5-star verification process to become an **Includability Committed Employer**, being recognised for excellence in the areas of mental health, wellbeing, sustainability, talent management and diversity and inclusion. Includability is an inclusive job board and community. This membership and recognition will give us access to a wide range of experts and partners to share best practice with. It will also provide a platform to advertise roles and gain access to a wider and more diverse talent pool.

A suite of family and inclusivity workforce policies have been updated in collaboration with the Forestry Commission Trade Unions.

A regular diversity and wellbeing update is given to the Forestry Commission Trade Unions via staff council meetings. In January 2023 a tailored diversity and wellbeing workshop for Forestry Commission Trade Unions members saw high participation levels and was received with favourable reviews.

A **Diversity and Inclusion calendar** has been published for 2023, which has helped to inform our communications plan for internal and external engagement. It also raises awareness of key dates affecting our stakeholders and wider society.

Our **gender pay gap report** for the period of 1 April 2021 to 31 March 2022 has been published and shows we are moving in the right direction and the gap is narrowing.

Our gender pay gap is 3.07% (mean) and -0.28% (median). This has decreased since the 2021-22 pay gap publication which previously had a mean of 4.6% and a median of 6.1%.

The proportion of female employees in the Forestry Commission increased by 1.9% since 2021, to 43.9%.

In September 2022, as part of National Inclusion Week, we ran the 'This is me' campaign to increase staff diversity data declaration numbers across the whole of the Forestry Commission.

Case Studies

These case studies give you a glimpse into some of the projects and programmes we run at the Forestry Commission; welcoming everyone into our forests and growing an environment where equality, diversity and inclusion benefits all our employees and citizens across the UK.

The success of Rainbow Canopy

The Forestry Commission's LGBTQ+ Supporters Network began in 2019, with the intention of supporting lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and questioning colleagues across the organisation, and to look at how we could be more inclusive externally too.

An initially small group of changemakers spent time reviewing the Stonewall **Workplace Equality Index**, creating content for our Inclusion Ambassadors, our intranet and our newsletters,

and advising on matters such as the use of pronouns in email signatures. However, they wanted to do more, and ended up formalising the group by holding a vote for a network name and elections to form the Steering Group. They also developed a Statement of Values.

The name, 'Rainbow Canopy', encapsulates all they wanted to be for the organisation, with the nod to the colourful flags and their significance, and with 'canopy' signifying not only a place where people can come together to learn and connect, but also to feel safe and take shelter.

Now partnering with other networks and inclusion initiatives such as Forests for Everyone, Rainbow Canopy's ambition is to drive the Forestry Commission to become the leader of LGBTQ+ inclusion in the sector.

Women in Forestry evolves into the Women's staff network

The Women in Forestry programme was formed in 2019 to make positive changes for women in our workplaces.

Using feedback gained from four focus groups held across the country, the programme took on key issues including:

- working to improve welfare facilities for female staff who work out in the forests/ away from our standard facilities.
- helping to introduce female suited PPE.
- creating our internal 'Challenge it, change it' materials which address gender assumptions and negative bias towards women.
- ensuring diversity and inclusion is explored in depth with managers through the Professional Manager Programme.

In late 2022, the work of the Women in Forestry programme wrapped up and the baton was passed to the new Forestry Commission Women's Staff Network.

As part of a blog to mark **International Women's Day 2023**, some members of our women's staff network were asked: **"What does embracing equity in the workplace mean to you?"**

Below are some of the responses:



"For me, everyone's circumstances are different, but in my family, childcare falls heavily on my shoulders. Being able to work around pick-ups and drop-offs, sickness and appointments, while still feeling like I am valued and can make a difference at work is really important. That's equity to me."

- Katrina Southgate, Internal Engagement Manager and Co-Chair of the Women's staff network



"Equity in the workplace is about meeting people's needs so that they can perform to the best of their ability. It is about listening and making adjustments to best suit the individual, so that they can feel comfortable and happy at work."

- Anna Leveridge, Trainee Forest Planner



"Equity to me is acknowledging that not only are everyone's circumstances different but that they also change. I've experienced a lot of change in the past few years: becoming a parent, relocating, and moving into a new role within the team. Adjustments have been made making me feel valued and allowing me to progress. We should all be able to flourish and shine as the individuals that we are!"

- Becki Gawthorpe, Biosecurity and Awareness Manager, Plant Health Forestry and the FC Women's Network co-chair

Inclusion is within everyone's ability – Accessibility at Dalby Forest

When Jody Craddock joined Forestry England as Yorkshire District's Marketing Manager last year, little did she know that it was going to take her on an extraordinary journey into the world of accessibility.

An audit had been prepared for Dalby Forest as part of a partnership project between [Visit England](#), the [North York Moors National Park Authority](#) and Accessible UK. The [project](#) aimed to improve accessibility within the region and increase the awareness of domestic and international tourism for those with disabilities. Twelve businesses and attractions from the region were chosen and Dalby was lucky enough to be one of those.

In May 2022, Accessible UK were invited to Dalby to present autism and dementia awareness training for district staff. The training session was

such a success, people in the district started asking for another one and were talking about accessibility at every level. This led to the formation of an accessibility steering group within the district where anyone could join. The group meets once a quarter to identify needs, projects and any opportunities they may have missed.

In summer 2022, two trampers arrived at Dalby Forest, allowing visitors with accessibility needs to enjoy the forest more freely. This led to the team being invited to conferences, being tagged in social media posts, participating in photoshoots with Visit England, hosting visits from disabled influencers and being featured in The Guardian: ['I love the sense of freedom': an accessible adventure in North Yorkshire | Travelling with disabilities | The Guardian](#)

The inclusion and accessibility journey in the Yorkshire district continues as the team are carrying on with this vital and pioneering work.

Celebrating Black History Month 2022

During Black History Month 2022, members of our REACH (Race Equality and Cultural Heritage) staff network contributed to a blog on what Black History Month means to them.

One of those stories was from **Mel Jones, HR Business Partner**, who shared the following written by her mum Jean: "I am of the Windrush Generation and arrived in the UK from St. Vincent and the Grenadines on 19 March 1967 when I was 15 years old. When I arrived, I was excited to see snow on the rooftops and on the ground which was a stark contrast from the tropical climate and the warm waters of the Caribbean sea. My family came here for a better life in the 'Motherland' and thought they would be welcomed with open arms and were not prepared for the racism faced at school and at work.

"I loved the music of the late 1960s which was different from the lively sounds of soca [soul of calypso music] and television was something new, because in those days very few families had a television in the Caribbean. I was shocked to see the negative ways in which black people were portrayed."

"My daughters are third generation descendants from the Windrush and black history was not taught at school. My earliest recollection of them understanding black history was watching the TV adaptation of Alex Haley's Roots. I then taught them about other black figures including Harriet Tubman, Rosa Parks, the Bristol Bus Boycott and the Civil Rights Movement in the US."

"Black History Month is important as it's a celebration of the contribution black people have made to society. I've been here for 55 years and while a lot of progress has been made, there is still a long way to go."

Mel says:
This is my Mum, and this is my history.



Mel's mum Jean in the late 1960s and in summer 2022

Photo credit: Visit England

Encompassing diversity into Forest Runner

The Active Forests programme team had been thinking of ways to encourage participation in **Forest Runner** from harder to reach audiences, including black and minority ethnic people, people with disabilities, and women – mums in particular.

The Active Forests team and the Digital Marketing team collaborated on the Forest Runner influencer project. They wanted to work with a group of individuals who each represent a different community or group, and find out what their experiences of running were, and if they had faced any barriers to accessing exercise in nature.

The selected influencers included **Haroon Mota**, founder of **Active Inclusion Network** (made up of Muslim Runners, Muslim Hikers, and Muslim Cyclists), Mel Bound, founder of **This Mum Runs**, **Shareefa Radford**, presenter and plus-size model who raises awareness for Black Lives Matter, LGBTQIA+, mental health and much more, **Mark Ormrod**, triple amputee veteran and 11 times Invictus Games medallist, **Flora Beverley**, an ultra-runner (races of 26 miles and over) who focuses on sustainability, and **Sabrina Pace-Humphreys**, co-founder of Black Trail Runners.

Sarah King, Digital Marketing Officer for Active Forests said:

“ We chose to work with these inspiring people because of the groups they represent and the knowledge they can share with us in helping Forest Runner, and Forestry England, become more inclusive and welcoming to as many people as possible. They represent a more accurate cross section of the population and showcase the running series as something that people from across society can get involved with and make their mark in. ”

On 1 June 2022, the team met the influencers at Alice Holt for a day of filming, fun activities and, of course, food! They captured some fantastic content on the day, including interview style Q&As, group shots and great video content.

Mel, from This Mum Runs, reflected on the influencer filming day saying:

“ I just wanted to thank you and the team for a wonderful day, and for the opportunity to be a small part in such a brilliant campaign! It was refreshing to see the effort you had put into finding a really diverse group of creators – most brands don't bother so this was just great to see! ”

This campaign represents the beginning of a new marketing focus for Active Forests. Our goal is to expand and explore our influencer campaign programme in order to gain the necessary knowledge and understanding needed to break down barriers in accessing the nation's forests.

Also, Forest Runner now includes non-binary as an entrant choice for the first time.



Appendix

Recruitment data

The information below includes employment data collected between 1 April 2022 and 31 March 2023 for Forestry Commission employees. As at 31 March 2022, the Forestry Commission had 1869 employees.

Disability

- Total applicants who have a disability: 8.9%
- Total applicants who do not have a disability: 86.4%
- Total applicants who prefer not to say whether they have a disability: 4.6%
- Interviewed applicants who have disability: 7.7%
- Interviewed applicants who do not have a disability: 88.2%
- Interviewed applicants who prefer not to say whether they have a disability: 4.1%
- Successful applicants who have disability: 6.4%
- Successful applicants who do not have a disability: 88.8%
- Successful applicants who prefer not to say whether they have a disability: 4.9%

Ethnicity

- Total Ethnic Minority applicants: 13.3%
- Total white applicants: 82.4%
- Total applicants who prefer not to say their ethnicity: 4.3%
- Interviewed Ethnic Minority applicants: 4.3%
- Interviewed white applicants: 92.9%
- Interviewed applicants who prefer not to say their ethnicity: 2.8%
- Successful Ethnic Minority applicants: 4.1%
- Successful white applicants: 93.3%
- Successful applicants who prefer not to say their ethnicity: 2.6%

Gender

- Total male applicants: 58.3%
- Total female applicants: 38.8%
- Total applicants who prefer not to say their gender: 2.5%
- Interviewed male applicants: 49.7%
- Interviewed female applicants: 48.1%
- Interviewed applicants who prefer not to say their gender: 2.0%
- Successful male applicants: 47.6%
- Successful female applicants: 50.6%
- Successful applicants who prefer not to say their gender: 1.7%

Age

- Total applicants who are aged 39 or below: 66.8%
- Total applicants who are aged 40 or over: 30.4%
- Total applicants who prefer not to say their age: 2.8%
- Interviewed applicants who are aged 39 or below: 58.5%
- Interviewed applicants who are aged 40 or over: 38.5%
- Interviewed applicants who prefer not to say their age: 2.9%
- Successful applicants who are aged 39 or below: 58.1%
- Successful applicants who are aged 40 or over: 39.1%
- Successful applicants who prefer not to say their age: 2.8%



