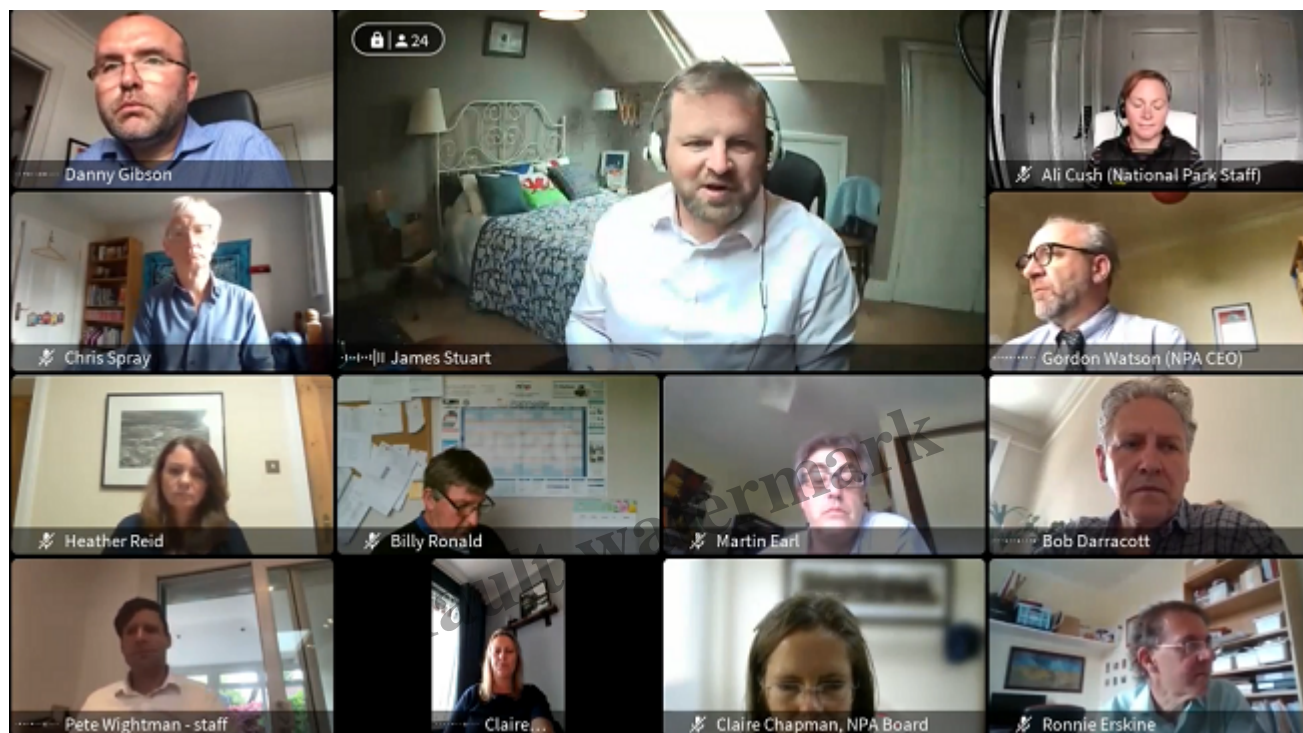


“Mainstreaming equalities” in the Loch Lomond and Trossachs National Park Authority

Description



Screenshot of LLTNPA Board Meeting 14th June taken during the discussion of the Equalities Mainstreaming Report and Equalities Outcomes 2021-25. Take away the staff who worked on the report (Ali Cush, the Education and Inclusion Adviser, and Claire) and you get some idea of the gender imbalance on the LLTNPA Board and senior management team

After the introduction of the UK-wide Equality Act (2010), Scottish Ministers introduced the the Equality Act 2010 (Specific Duties) (Scotland) Regulations 2012 ([see here](#)). These required Public Authorities in Scotland to report every two years “*on progress to make the equality duty integral to the exercise of its functions*” and, once every four years, starting from 2013, on equal pay including “*occupational segregation among its employees*” according to their gender, disability or race.

The Loch Lomond and Trossachs National Park Authority (LLTNPA) has been producing Equality Reports since 2013, which they publish on their website ([see here](#)). The most recent, entitled “Equalities Mainstreaming Report and Equalities Outcomes 2021–2025” was presented – it had already been published – to the Board Meeting which took place a couple of weeks ago ([see here](#) for covering paper and [here](#) for the report). This post takes a look at what the Report and the meeting had to say about the overwhelming preponderance of men on the LLTNPA Board and the Senior Management Team.

The facts are that men hold all the top management positions in the LLTNPA (Chief Executive and the Directors of Corporate Service, Rural Development and Conservation) and all the senior positions on the Board (Convener, Vice Convener, conveners of the Planning and Audit Committee). Just four out of seventeen LLTNPA Board Members are women. While both reports claim that *“we have worked hard to promote diversity and inclusion of our people and governance”* there is no analysis of what difference this has made or comparison of how the LLTNPA is doing compared to other Public Authorities.

The male dominated Board

While there are now more women Board Members than there were a couple of years ago, back in 2014-15 ([see here](#)) there were also four women on the Board. But the difference then was that one of them, Linda McKay, was Convener of the Board and another, Petra Biberbach, was Convener of the Planning Committee:

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Name	Nature of appointment	Date of most recent appointment	End of term	Committee membership	NPA Board attendance %	Statutory committee attendance (Planning & Access and Audit) %
David McCowan	(a)	03/07/2014	03/07/2018	A, PI	3/5	9/11
Owen McKee	(a)	03/07/2014	03/07/2018	PI, S	4/5	7/8
David McKenzie	(a)	03/07/2014	03/07/2018	A, PI	5/5	10/11
Willie Nisbet	(a)	03/07/2014	03/07/2018	D, PI	5/5	5/8
David Warnock	(a)	03/07/2014	03/07/2018	D, PI	3/5	7/8
Angus Allan	(b)	01/10/2014	30/09/2018	A	5/5	3/3
Colin Bayes	(b)	01/10/2014	30/09/2018	D, PI, S	5/5	7/8
Petra Biberbach	(b)	01/10/2014	30/09/2018	D, PI	5/5	5/8
Linda McKay	(b)	01/10/2014	30/09/2018	S	4/5	n/a
Lindsay Morrison	(b)	01/10/2014	30/09/2018	A, S	5/5	3/3
Kate Sankey	(b)	02/10/2010	30/09/2014	PI	1/1	2/4
James Stuart	(b)	01/02/2015	31/01/2019	D	1/1	n/a
Fergus Wood	(c)	01/10/2012	30/09/2017	PI	5/5	4/8
Bob Ellis	(c)	01/10/2012	30/09/2017	D	4/5	n/a
Martin Earl	(c)	01/10/2012	30/09/2017	D	5/5	n/a
James Robb	(c)	01/10/2012	30/09/2017	A	5/5	2/3
George Freeman	(c)	01/10/2012	30/09/2017	PI	5/5	7/8
Hazel Sorrell	(c)	01/10/2012	30/09/2017	A	4/5	2/3

Currently women now have far less influence and power on the LLTNPA Board than they once had. By comparison, while the senior management team in the Cairngorms National Park Authority is similarly male dominated, their Board comprises 10 women and 9 men and both the vice-Convener of the Board and the Convener of the Planning Committee are women. There was no mention of this in either the Report – Public Authorities are supposed to compare how they are doing compared to other organisations – or in the Board discussion.

Instead the Equalities Report tries to gloss over and excuse the highly unequal representation of men on the LLTNPA Board:

“Our Board is made up of three times as many men as women. However, of the six Board Members appointed directly by Ministers, three are women and three are men. The remaining ten Board Members are directly elected or nominated by Local Authorities, and we currently have one Board vacancy”.

The implication is that the Scottish Government is doing their bit but there is nothing anyone can do

about nominations from local authorities or the five directly elected members of the Board who are all men. This is not true. It is the Scottish Government who decides whether or not to accept the six people nominated by Local Authorities. It could insist, for example, that those Local Authorities nominating two members (Argyll and Bute and Stirling) put forward one male councillor and one female councillor. It is also the case that the Scottish Government could increase the number of women appointed by Ministers as they have done in the Cairngorms National Park where five ministerial appointees are women.

The LLTNPA could, of course, have been lobbying the Scottish Government to use their influence and powers to increase the numbers of women on the Board. But they have chosen not to do so. They could have taken the opportunity to consider the blatantly unfair first past the post system for electing local members to the National Park Board ([see here](#)) and ([here](#)) and whether changes to the electoral system might create diversity. They could also have decided to take encourage more people to stand for the Board, as the Cairngorms National Park Authority has done ([see here](#)). While these are not simple issues to address, as has been shown in the Cairngorms ([see here](#)), a Public Authority worth the name would be trying to address them.

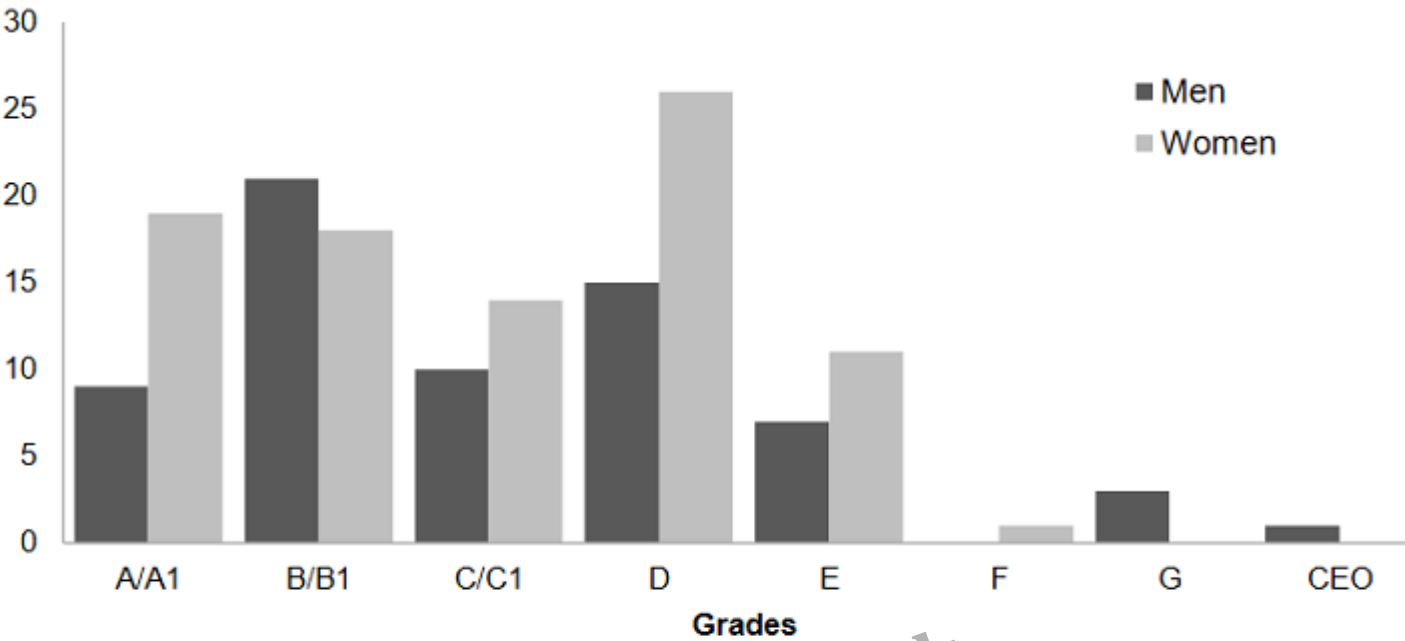
However, not a single LLTNPA Board Member attempted to question the adequacy of the Report or raise these issues and there was no debate about how to diversify the composition of the Board. A reasonable conclusion is that this was because it is not in the interests of the current incumbents to do so. Perhaps all the men who benefit from the current system should have declared an interest at the meeting and left before the discussion took place? Now that would have been interesting!

The LLTNPA Senior Management Team

It is a similar position with the Senior Management Team. Six years ago women made up almost half of all senior managers:

Headcount at 31 March 2015	Female	Male
Directors	1	1
Senior Managers	2	3
Operational Managers	7	5
Employees	68	45

Now, its men who run the show:



The above table provides the breakdown by sex and grade for 2020/21. Looking at the above graph you can see that the highest number of women work within the D grade and the highest number of men work within the B/B1 grade.

The Equalities report, however, avoids any analysis of the changes of the top. As required by law it analyses the gender pay gap:

Gender pay gap

At March 2021 the 'median gender pay gap' for the National Park Authority is 4.82% in favour of women. This means that when using the median, women at the National Park Authority are paid 4.82% more than men. For every £1 a woman earns, a man will earn 95

Sex	2020/21	2019/20
Women	£16.17	£14.63
Men	£15.43	£13.76

At March 2021 the "mean gender pay gap" for the National Park Authority is 6.81% in favour of men. This means that on average, men at the National park Authority are paid 6.81% more than women. For every £1 a man earns, a women earns 93p.

Sex	2020/21	2019/20
Women	£15.98	£14.76
Men	£17.15	£15.18

However, by considering the median pay gap first ([see here](#) for explanation) it makes the position of women appear far better than it is. Its the average pay gap that matters and what is very clear is that women in the LLTNPA are, on average, paid significantly less than men. (That situation is replicated on the Board where the Convener's of the Committees, who are all men, collect far more fees than other Board Members).

The Report also contains, as legally required, a brief section on occupational segregation. This conceals what is really going on by failing to report the exact number of male and female staff:

Occupational Segregation

We have undertaken occupational segregation which shows the split across each team men and women. The most notable difference is within the Executive Support/Strategy Policy team where all of the staff are women.

Service Area	Executive		Executive support/ Strategy & Policy		Corporate Services		Communications		Planning & Rural Development	
Grade	M	W	M	W	M	W	M	W	M	W
A/A1				<5	<5	5				
B/B1				<5	10	<5				
C/C1				<5	<5	<5	<5	<5	<5	<5
D				<5	5	5		<5	<5	<5
E					<5	<5		<5	<5	1
F		<5							<5	<5
G	<5									
CEO	<5									
Total	<5	<5	0	9	23	21	<5	5	7	2

By using <5 the report conceals the number of men and women at different levels of the organisation. Justification for this and it is quite ridiculous to report there is <5 of a CEO.

Pointing out that the Executive Support team are all women provides only half the picture. These women, including those who did the leg-work on the Equalities report, are all serving what is effectively an all male senior management team. The one woman who I understand is on the Senior Management Team is employed on a lower grade (F). In the best paid team in the National Park, Planning and Rural Development, while women make up the bulk of the workforce, men are far more likely to fill management positions.

There was not a single critical question raised about this at the Board Meeting.

What needs to happen

Since Gordon Watson was appointed Chief Executive and James Stuart was elected as Convener, gender equality among the most senior positions in the National Park have got worse, not better. My suspicion is that if the LLTNPA analysed what progress it had made since it was created almost 20 years ago there would be none. This makes all the fine words in the Equalities Report about striving for change effectively meaningless. Every four years the LLTNPA repeats the same mantra, this time it really is going to try harder.

Indeed, in terms of the wider content of the report – which provides anecdotes about what the LLTNPA is trying to do to increase the diversity of people visiting the National Park – it is not clear there has been any progress since 2009 when SNH produced a report on barriers to access in our National Parks ([see here](#)).

While in my view there is little evidence to show that the LLTNPA performed any better when more women filled powerful positions, given both the Scottish Parliament and Scottish Government's commitment to promoting gender equality, one might have expected both the Board Papers and the discussion to contain some critical discussion of the failure of the LLTNPA to tackle gender equality. There was none. The message to the new Scottish Minister responsible for National Parks, Mairi McAllan, is that the LLTNPA will never sort this out under their current Board and Senior Management Team and the reason for this is its contrary to their personal interests.

The question now is whether Mairi McAllan will be brave enough to step in and use her ministerial powers to get a new type of person onto the Board who sees their role as being more than rubber stamping whatever the Senior Management Team present to them.

Category

1. Loch Lomond and Trossachs

Tags

1. equality
2. Governance
3. LLTNPA
4. Scottish Government

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