



Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Strategy

2023-2025

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Introduction

“The Library is dedicated to being a place of inclusion, welcoming people of all identities and beliefs”

As the guardian of the nation’s printed and recorded memory, the National Library of Scotland has a responsibility to represent the diversity of people, histories and cultures of Scotland.

This includes all those who now or ever have considered it their home. This includes people who do not neatly fit into mainstream society and those who have been forgotten or had their histories erased.

The Library is dedicated to being a place of inclusion, welcoming people of all identities and beliefs. We are guided by the values and principles set out in our [2020-2025 Reaching People strategy](#) – open, trusted, inclusive, connected, inspiring and responsible.

Since 2020, the world has experienced fundamental changes. The Covid pandemic brought to light significant inequalities across all areas of society. As Scottish writer and Library supporter Damian Barr observed: “We might all be in the same storm, but we are not in the same boat.”

The murder of George Floyd and the climate crisis sharpened our awareness that inequality

is at the heart of many of our global and local challenges. Every individual and every organisation has a responsibility to do what they can to support a more equitable, empathetic and empowered society, both for today and future generations.

Libraries have long been at the heart of democracy and empowerment through free access to information and community space. As Andrew Carnegie said: “So every [hu]man can sit with the genius of [hu]mankind.” Unfortunately, libraries and other cultural institutions have also had a role in perpetuating inequalities, reflecting the inequities and biases in wider society.

However, they are also a powerful tool for addressing these ‘silences’ and have an opportunity, through working in partnership with our communities, to unlock the hidden stories in our collections and support research, education, discussion and empathy.

We will soon be developing our 2025-30 strategy, however, we believe a bold statement of our intention to embed equality across all areas of our work is necessary



in the meantime, to ground our ambitions in targeted actions and to act as a bridge to take us on the journey required to meet our ambitions.

It also provides an opportunity to publicly highlight this step change in our approach to our key partners, stakeholders and users and future users across Scotland and the world.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "A. Shah." followed by a vertical line.

Amina Shah
National Librarian
and Chief Executive

Our guiding principles



Open

We commit to openness and transparency in all areas of our work. We aim to make our collections and our related work free, open and reusable wherever possible.



Trusted

We provide accurate and reliable information to support debate and discussion.



Inclusive

We are responsive and inclusive as we build and interpret collections for current and future generations. We will challenge ourselves, our assumptions and our policies to create a more inclusive collection and a more diverse audience.



Connected

We work collaboratively to improve our services and extend the benefits they offer.



Inspiring

We believe in the power of the collections to change lives through learning, research, discovery and improved well-being. We actively support participation in culture and heritage for everyone.



Responsible

We commit to minimising our environmental impact and to creating a more sustainable, resilient and healthy environment for future generations.



Strategic aims

Over the next two years, we will use our current strategy to inform the ongoing development of our EDI action plan. This is where we set targets and goals and monitor progress.

▮ Priority 1: Safeguarding collections

We commit to creating, interpreting and celebrating collections that reflect our whole society, using inclusive language.

This is an opportunity to challenge the organisation's unconscious bias and to become aware of the stories we hold and how we describe them. We have a duty to capture stories from the whole spectrum of communities in Scotland.

▮ Priority 2: Improving access

We will demonstrate and implement accessibility requirements across the organisation.

Digital, as well as physical accessibility, are both key areas of work that each and every team must consider and plan around.

▮ Priority 3: Engaging audiences

We will ensure EDI is woven into our public offering.

Our current audience engagement activities meet the needs of a specific section of society. We know this through our audience research. For us to appeal to wider audiences, we must make a much more concerted effort to embed EDI into all of our public engagement work.

To do this, we will partner in equitable ways by:

- Being open, transparent, accountable and participatory in our approaches.
- Creating supporting mechanisms for our partners and stakeholders to engage in these practices with us.
- Continuing to develop our understanding of who is using our services and who we are not reaching.

▮ Priority 4: Supporting learning, research and discovery

We will highlight EDI within our collections.

There are incredible things within our collections. It's important that we are uplifting and celebrating the voices of marginalised people, whether through direct

examples from the collections or (re)interpretation of our well-known collections, by bringing in perspectives from a range of marginalised voices too.

▮ Priority 5: Developing the organisation

We will cultivate a sense of openness and opportunity for staff and the public to engage in conversations around topics connected to EDI.

We will continue to build on the training and engagement with staff around EDI topics, increasing awareness and knowledge and creating ongoing opportunities for staff to have conversations both about these topics and how these relate to the work of the Library.

We will continue to create opportunities for constructive and difficult conversations and ways to build understanding and empathy. We will provide resources and opportunities that empower staff to make changes through personal action.

We will champion and focus on systemic and structural change, ensuring that EDI work is embedded into the structure and systems of the organisation.

This is a chance for the Library to re-evaluate and review the processes and policies we have in place and consider how any structural barriers can be removed. We will consider and test more intersectional ways of working.

We will explore more inclusive methods of recruitment and retention for the workforce.

We will research, test and experiment with recruitment and consider actions and work needed to ensure that marginalised workers feel included and welcomed by the organisation. We will create a culture where staff can raise concerns through robust and effective reporting and supporting procedures. We will establish parameters for EDI data and enable people to access this data more effectively (while protecting individuals' privacy).

Key projects

This small selection of projects are an example of the work we are undertaking.

Membership

We want to rethink what being a reader and user of the Library could mean. This project incorporates a range of initiatives relating to the visitor journey at our George IV Bridge building, all with EDI at their core.

They include making the joining process easier and more inclusive, introducing 'taster' sessions to the reading rooms and improving signage and wayfinding outside and around the building to create a much more user-friendly experience.

Accessible

This review of our buildings in Edinburgh and Glasgow, and the work that will arise from its recommendations, can help us make our physical spaces more accessible and broaden the range of people who can engage with our collections and public programmes.

Open-access collections in the General Reading Room

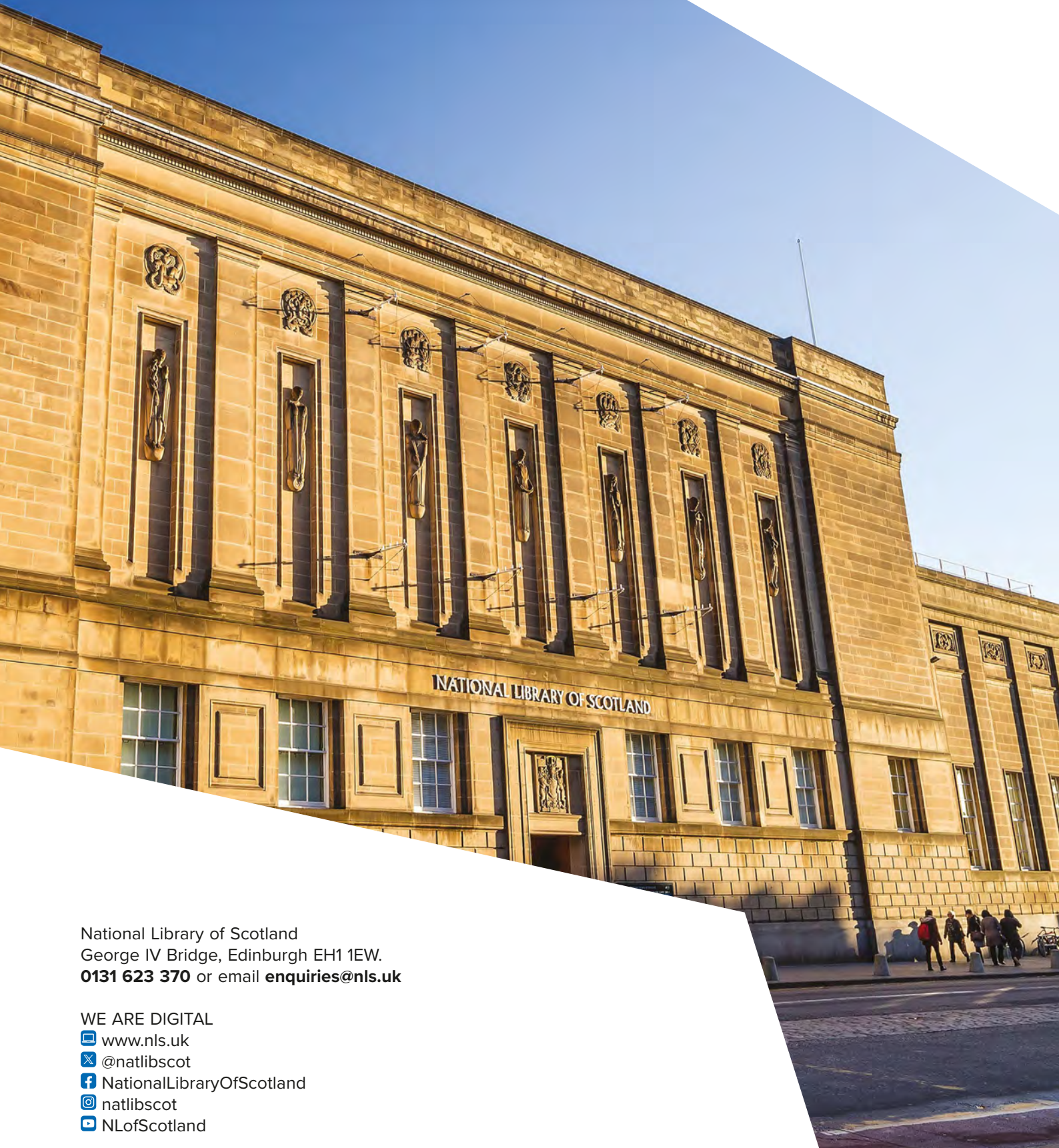
At the same time that the Registration Review widens access to the reading rooms, this project will revamp the experience of being in the General Reading Room by changing the material on the open shelves.

Selected material will showcase the variety and depth of our collections and give readers a more welcoming space where anyone can see themselves and their history reflected.








“We want to rethink what being a reader and a user of the Library could mean”





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