River basin management planning in Scotland – Statement of consultation steps for the third plans

Thank you for your interest in our consultation on the steps SEPA will take to engage stakeholders in the preparation of the third river basin management plans for Scotland. SEPA are very keen to hear your thoughts on the steps set out in this document. The consultation is open from 22 June 2018 to 22 December 2018. Your response will be used to inform improvements we can make to the consultation arrangements set out in this document.

1. Introduction

Scotland is renowned worldwide for the quality of its water environment. Scotland's rivers, lochs, wetlands and seas are some of the country's greatest natural assets; attracting visitors, contributing to the health and well-being of its people, supporting a rich diversity of wildlife and providing for the sustainable growth of its economy. Maintaining and building on this enviable reputation is important for Scotland's continued economic success and well-being.

River basin management plans (RBMP) are Scotland's route map for protecting and improving the water environment. The plans set out what the Scottish Government, SEPA, responsible authorities and others will do to maximise the benefits a healthy water environment can bring for people and businesses.

River basin management plans are reviewed and updated every six years. The first plans were published in 2009 and the second in 2015 (https://www.sepa.org.uk/environment/water/river-basin-management-planning/the-current-plans/). The third river basin plans are due to be published in December 2021. This document sets out the steps SEPA will take in the development of the third plans to engage everybody with an interest in those plans. We are proposing to work closely with other public bodies, businesses, land managers and voluntary groups, building and strengthening the partnerships established during the first and second river basin planning cycles.

River basin management planning has its basis in the EU Water Framework Directive, which is transposed into Scot's law through the Water Environment and Water Services (Scotland) Act 2003. Following Brexit and the UK's planned withdrawal from the EU in March 2019, work on river basin planning in Scotland will continue. The benefits to Scotland from a planned approach to the protection and improvement of the water environment are clear, and are not dependent on the UK's membership of the EU.

2. Timetable for production of RBMP3

The third river basin management plans will be published in December 2021. The consultation steps associated with the preparation of the river basin plans are set out below.

22 June 2018	**Statement of consultation steps** – setting out the steps SEPA will take to consult stakeholders on the preparation of the third plans. The consultation will be open for six months.

By 22 December 2019	**Significant water management issues report** – setting out the remaining issues that adversely affect the quality of Scotland's Water Environment. These issues will form the basis for new or updated objectives and measures included in the draft plans. The consultation will be open for six months.
By 22 December 2020	**Draft River basin management plans** – draft version of the third river basin management plans. This will be in the form a high level summary for Scotland, supported by an interactive online tool, showing all the relevant data and draft objectives per water body. The draft plans will be open for consultation for six months.
By 22 December 2021	**Third River basin management plans published.**

All the above consultations and documents will be made available on SEPA's website.

3. Working in partnership

In addition to the formal consultations set out above, SEPA will continue to work in partnership with responsible authorities, other public bodies, businesses, land managers and voluntary groups to help shape the third river basin management plans.

During the development of the third plans we will continue to engage with our network of national and area based partners. This includes co-coordinating the Diffuse Pollution Management Advisory Group (DPMAG) and the Fish and Fisheries Advisory Group (FFAG). Detail of our stakeholder networks is available on SEPA's website:

https://www.sepa.org.uk/environment/water/river-basin-management-planning/who-is-involved-with-rbmp/

The main themes for the third round of plans will be similar to those in the second plans, namely impacts on water quality, flows and levels, physical condition, fish migration and invasive non-native species. In developing objectives and measures in these areas, we will continue to work closely with Scottish Water, farmers, hydroelectricity generators, distillers, local authorities, fisheries trusts and others on setting priorities and identifying actions.

At the same time as preparing river basin management plans SEPA is also launching a new sector planning approach to regulation. Sector planning is at the heart of delivering one planet prosperity in Scotland, ensuring we live and thrive within the planet's ability to regenerate the resources required to support our way of life and absorb our waste. We will work to ensure the sector planning approach supports and compliments the objectives and measures in the third river basin management plans. This will include a joined up approach to engaging businesses and others involved in sector plans. More details of the sector planning approach can be found in our regulatory strategy 'One Planet Prosperity' available on SEPA's website:

https://www.sepa.org.uk/media/219427/one-planet-prosperity-our-regulatory-strategy.pdf

4. Links to other plans and policies

We will continue to ensure alignment of river basin management planning with many related plans and policies, including; forestry plans and strategies, conservation and biodiversity, marine planning and others. We will place particular emphasis on strengthening links with land use planning and flood risk management planning, to ensure we deliver maximum benefits for people and businesses.

5. Cross-border arrangements for Solway Tweed

SEPA and the Environment Agency (EA) share responsibility for river basin management planning for the cross-border Solway Tweed river basin district. Considerable knowledge and expertise has developed over the previous river basin planning cycles so we are now better able to identify and work jointly with our partners to bring about improvements in catchments and water bodies that are shared between the two countries.

For the third river basin management plans, we are proposing to make better use of information and data published in separate national repositories covering the Scotland and England parts of the river basin district respectively. We will supplement this with information on how we coordinate our work for cross-border catchments and water bodies. In addition, SEPA will host a single point of contact for the Solway Tweed consultations and final plan.

More detail on the Solway Tweed statement of consultation steps can be found here:

https://consultation.sepa.org.uk/communications/working-together-statement-of-consultation-steps-f