

Our Corporate Plan

2024–2027



Protect Improve Adapt Avoid Warn

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Foreword

Scotland's environment is at the heart of our identity, success and development as a nation. It is fundamental to our culture, economy and quality of life.

This requires an environment where the quality of our air, water and land is high, where our resources are used fairly and efficiently and where species in Scotland are thriving. It also means tackling the climate and biodiversity crises.

We have a leading role to play in making this a reality. This is our Corporate Plan that sets out how we will do it. This is a plan which involves all of us - SEPA, our partners, our stakeholders and the communities across Scotland that we serve.

We are determined to play our full part. We will work hard to safeguard Scotland's environment and ensure that we pass on a thriving planet for our future generations.

As the nation's principal environmental regulator, our purpose is to protect and improve Scotland's environment in ways that as far as possible also create health and well-being benefits and sustainable economic growth. Our plan focuses on doing this, whilst supporting the transition to a net zero and circular economy and enabling Scotland to be resilient to the changes already occurring due to climate change.

We have developed five strategic priorities to focus our work over the next three years: net zero; climate resilience; water environment; resource efficiency; business environmental performance. We are resetting SEPA to focus on delivering the greatest possible environmental benefit.

Together - working collaboratively with our partners, stakeholders and local communities - these priorities will help us to build a lasting foundation for the long term.



Nicole Paterson
Chief Executive



Lisa Tennant
Chair

Ro-ràdh

Tha àrainneachd na h-Alba aig cridhe ar dearbh-aithne, soirbheachas agus leasachadh mar dhùthaich. Tha e bunaitich do ar cultar, ar n-eaconamaidh agus càileachd ar beatha.

Tha seo a' cur feum air àrainneachd far a bheil càileachd an adhair, an uisge agus an fhearainn againn àrd, far a bheil na goireasan againn air an cleachdadh gu cothromach agus gu h-èifeachdach agus far a bheil gnèithean ann an Alba a' soirbheachadh. Tha e cuideachd a' ciallachadh dèiligeadh ri èiginn gnàth-shìde agus bith-iomadachd.

Tha prìomh àite againn ri chluich ann a bhith a' toirt seo gu buil. Is e seo ar Plana Corporra a tha a' mìneachadh mar a nì sinn e. Is e plana a tha seo a tha a' toirt a-steach a h-uile duine againn – SEPA, ar com-pàirtichean, ar luchd-ùidh agus na coimhearsnachdan air feadh Alba air a bheil sinn a' frithealadh.

Tha sinn dìorrasach ar làn phàirt a chluich. Obraichidh sinn gu cruaidh gus àrainneachd na h-Alba a dhìon agus gus dèanamh cinnteach gun toir sinn seachad planaid shoibheachail dha na ginealaichean ri teachd.

Mar phrìomh riaghlaidhe àrainneachd na dùthcha, 's e ar n-amas a bhith a' dìon 's a' leasachadh àrainneachd na h-Alba ann an dòighean a chruthaicheas, cho fad 's as urrainnear, buannachdan slàinte is sunnd is fàs seasmhach don eaconamaidh. Tha am plana againn a' cur fòcas air seo, agus aig an aon àm a' toirt taic don ghluasad gu eaconamaidh lom neoni agus cruinn; agus a' toirt comas do dh'Alba a bhith ath-

leumachd ris na h-atharrachaidhean a tha a' tachairt mar-thà ri linn atharrachadh gnàth-shìde.

Tha sinn air còig prìomhachasan ro-innleachdail a leasachadh gus ar n-obair a chuimseachadh thar nan trì bliadhna a tha romhainn: lom neoni; ath-leumachd gnàth-shìde; àrainneachd uisge; èifeachdas stòrais; coileanadh àrainneachd gnìomhachais. Tha sinn ag ath-shuidheachadh SEPA gus fòcas a chuir air a' bhuannachd àrainneachd as motha a lìbhrigeadh.

Còmhla – ag obair còmhla ri ar com-pàirtichean, luchd-ùidh agus coimhearsnachdan ionadail – cuidichidh na prìomhachasan sin sinn gus bunait mhaireannach a thogail airson an fhad-ùine.

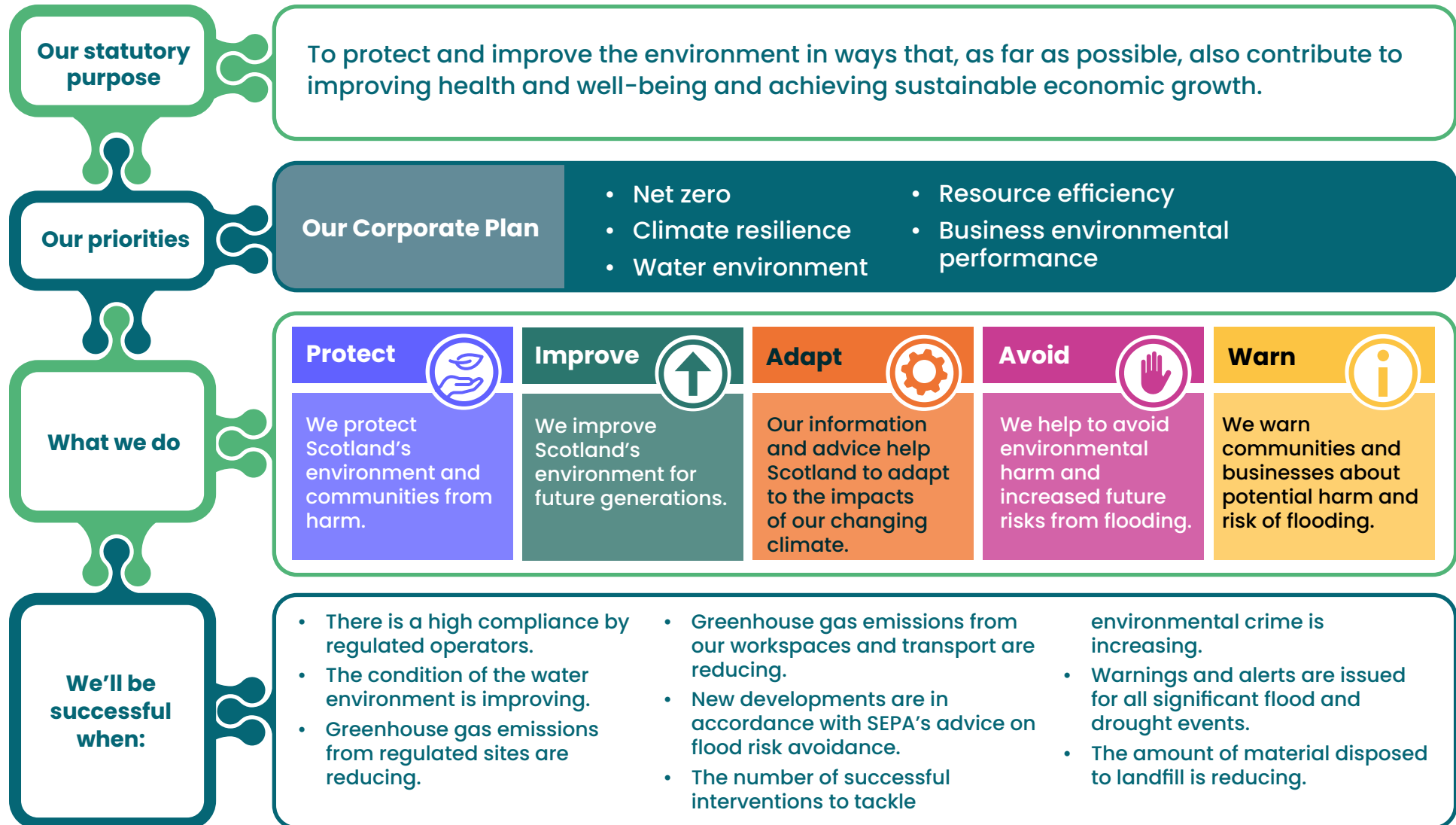


Nicole Paterson
Ceannard



Lisa Tennant
Cathraiche

Our plan on a page



Introduction

We live in very challenging times and the environment that we all cherish is under threat. As the nation's principal environmental regulator, the role we play is more important than ever.

Scotland's people rightly expect a lot from us. They expect us to provide strong leadership and to make a difference to their lives now and in the future. They expect their environment to be protected from harm so they can enjoy the benefits to health, well-being and the economy that a high-quality environment brings. They also expect us to do everything we can to tackle the climate and biodiversity crises.

This is not something we take lightly. We are an organisation with a strong science and evidence base. This gives us a clear understanding of our environment and how it is changing. We are committed to using this to play a lead role - working collaboratively with others - to create a healthy environment for our future generations.

Our work doesn't sit in isolation, but is integrated with environmental goals set by Scotland and internationally. We are dedicated to contributing to the ambitions of the [United Nations Sustainable Development Goals](#) and the [National Performance Framework for Scotland](#).

Our work is also guided by our contributions to delivering key strategies such as the [Environment Strategy for Scotland](#), the [Scottish Biodiversity Strategy](#), [Scotland's National Strategy for Economic Transformation](#), [Clean Air for Scotland 2](#) and [Scotland's Climate Change Plan](#).

More than ever, we must deliver our work through progressive partnerships and collaborative working across the public, private and third sectors, as well as with communities. We must share the job of service delivery so that we offer better outcomes more efficiently, and with a customer focus. Collaborating means we'll deliver far more than we can ourselves.

We'll continue to open our doors to allow more organisations to work closely with us, enabling communities and businesses to engage with us and help us to design the services they use.

Our Corporate Plan in context

Figure 1: How our Corporate Plan will be delivered



The background for our plan

Multiple crises

Our environment is threatened by interconnected crises: climate change, biodiversity loss and pollution. Together they threaten our quality of life and the prosperity of our economy.

Scotland has set ambitious targets and programmes to tackle these crises. We are fully committed to playing a lead part, aligning ourselves to the strategies and actions of government and other partners.

We must continue to protect our communities from pollution so people can enjoy the benefits of a high-quality environment, but we must also act to tackle these systemic challenges and improve our environment for our future generations.

Reform and improvement

Public services are responding to the increasing pace of change and we are committed to considering the best models for delivery of all our services.

We must focus on collaborating effectively with our partners and key stakeholders to act on opportunities for shared approaches and services in line with the principles of public sector reform.

In particular, we have an important role in prevention, prioritising our investment in services that prevent negative outcomes for the environment and communities.

Innovation






Technology is fast changing how we and those we regulate work. New approaches will be employed as part of Scotland's transition to net zero, while emerging technologies such as AI offer the potential for increased impacts and opportunity.

We must understand what these changes might mean and be agile enough to respond in ways that allow us to control new environmental risks and take advantage of the benefits of innovation.

We must use our leadership role and expertise to inspire innovative solutions that help transition Scotland to a net zero economy.

What we do

Our purpose: To protect and improve the environment in ways that, as far as possible, also contribute to improving health and well-being and achieving sustainable economic growth.

Protect 	Improve 	Adapt 	Avoid 	Warn 
<p>We protect Scotland's environment and communities from harm.</p>	<p>We improve Scotland's environment for future generations.</p>	<p>Our information and advice help Scotland to adapt to the impacts of our changing climate.</p>	<p>We help to avoid environmental harm and increased future risks from flooding.</p>	<p>We warn communities and businesses about potential harm and risk of flooding.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We regulate to protect the environment and communities from harm. • We plan for and respond to incidents and emergencies. • We tackle environmental crime. • We provide information to help people make decisions that protect the environment. • We monitor our environment to understand changes. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We regulate industry to improve energy efficiency and reduce emissions. • We work with others to help to restore land, water and air quality. • We inspire environmental excellence through awards and advice. • We reduce our own environmental footprint. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We help communities and businesses adapt to the increasing risks of flooding. • We provide flood maps that help people to make resilient choices. • We help businesses adapt to the increasing risk of drought and water scarcity. • We provide future forecasts to help people to become more resilient. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We provide information that helps to avoid new development in areas at risk of flooding or where it may cause environmental harm. • We require businesses to reduce their resource use, to re-use and recycle resources and to reduce waste and water use. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We warn when flooding is imminent so people can take action. • We warn the public when it is not safe to use bathing waters. • We warn when incidents pose a threat to the environment and communities. • We provide information to help people make choices that keep them safe.

Our priorities for 2024–2027

We have developed **five priorities** to focus our work over the next three years:

- **Net zero**
- **Climate resilience**
- **Water environment**
- **Resource efficiency**
- **Business environmental performance**

Through these, we will make our contribution to the delivery of [The Environment Strategy for Scotland](#) and its vision –

By 2045: by restoring nature and ending Scotland's contribution to climate change, our country is transformed for the better – helping to secure the well-being of our people and planet for generations to come.

Net zero

We're living in a climate emergency.

Scotland has set a target to reach net zero emissions by 2045. This means that the nation's contribution to climate change needs to end within a generation. Becoming net zero has benefits for communities and for nature as well as for our climate.

Opportunities for innovative net zero products and services can also help our economy to grow. A transformation across all sectors of our economy and society is beginning to take place.

We have a key role to play in supporting that transformation and in a way that is fair and just, benefitting all of us and leaving no-one behind.

We regulate industrial activities that generate greenhouse gas emissions, including many of Scotland's biggest emitters. We implement and enforce regulations that improve energy efficiency and reduces emissions.

As Scotland's environmental regulator, we also have an important role as an exemplar and advocate for action to deliver net zero.

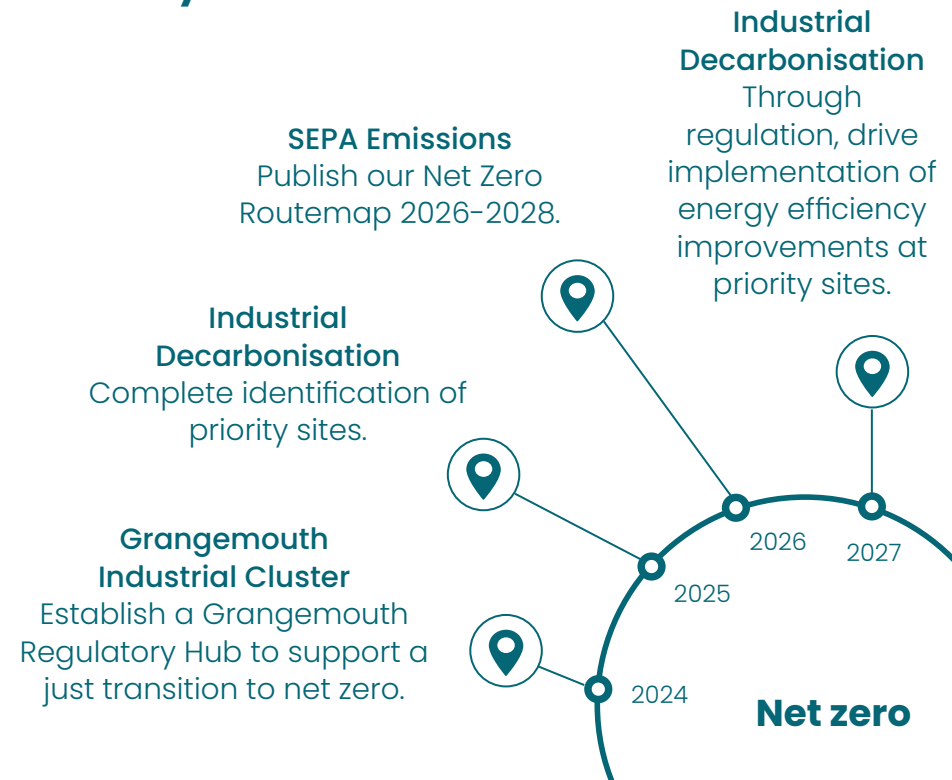
Our ambition

- To fully play our part in helping Scotland to become a net zero country by 2045.
- To reduce our own emissions towards net zero.

How will we get there? We will:

- Use our regulatory and influence levers to drive energy efficiency and the decarbonisation of regulated activities.
- Use our planning role to avoid or reduce greenhouse gas emissions.
- Reduce our own greenhouse gas emissions towards net zero.

Delivery milestones



Contributes to: **Protect Improve Avoid**



Assessed using: <https://sdgcompass.org/sdgs/>

Climate resilience

Our climate is already changing, increasing the likelihood of floods, droughts, rising temperatures and storms.

These events present a significant risk to lives and livelihoods. They damage the economy, disrupt infrastructure and devastate communities. They can also increase the risk of major industrial accidents and pollution events.

We play a lead role in preparing Scotland for a changing climate. We prepare long term flood risk management plans and advise on flood risk and drought when consulted on new developments. We also help communities to prepare for flooding by issuing forecasts and warnings and by responding to events when they occur.

We help water users to plan during times of drought by warning when droughts are imminent and use our regulatory powers to protect the water environment.

We are also a competent authority for regulating the control of major accident hazards.

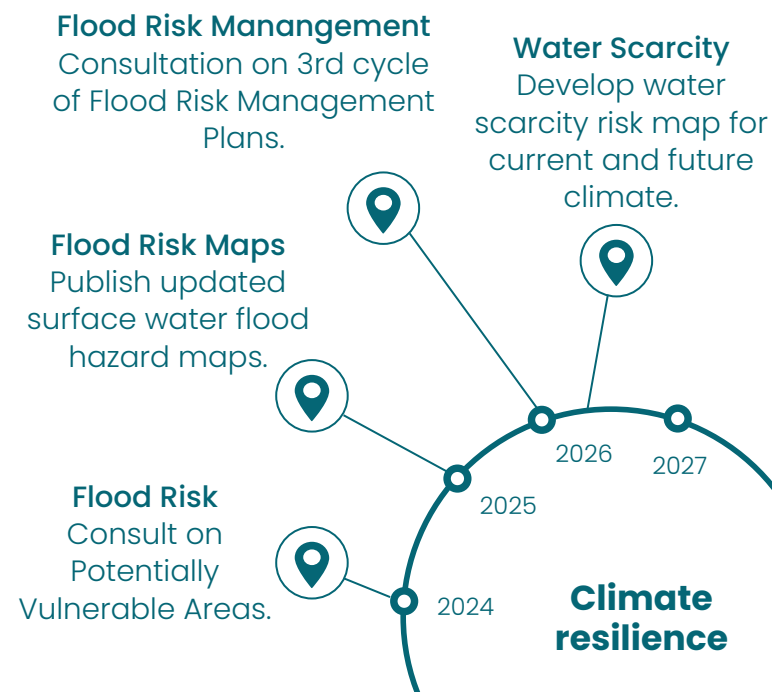
Our ambition

- That the damaging impact of floods and droughts is reduced.
- That operators are prepared for and resilient to the impacts of a changing climate.

How will we get there? We will:

- Develop our national flood and drought knowledge resources, including by mapping and measuring the impacts of climate change.
- Improve our understanding of Scotland's flood risk protection assets through pilot projects with partners.
- Work with communities and businesses to provide the information and products they need to help them make resilient choices.
- Use our regulatory and influence levers to support operators to adapt to climate change and improve water resilience.
- Work with the Scottish Government and partners to influence new legislation, policies and guidance that delivers adaptation.
- Innovate to improve the accessibility, resilience, quality and efficiency of our flood warning services in light of our changing climate.

Delivery milestones



Contributes to: **Adapt Avoid Warn**



Assessed using: <https://sdgcompass.org/sdgs/>

Water environment



Water is one of Scotland's most important assets.

It is a fundamental part of our identity as a nation renowned for the quality of our rivers, lochs, wetlands and seas.

It contributes to our health and quality of life, supports a rich diversity of wildlife and is an important part of our economy.

Our water is, however, under pressure from pollution events, land use and from the impacts of climate change.

We play a primary role in protecting and improving our water environment, particularly through our work to lead the [River Basin Management Plan](#). This is Scotland's shared national plan for the water environment so that it is managed to meet the needs for communities, businesses and wildlife, and is passed on in good health for future generations.

To check the progress we are making, we monitor our water environment to understand its condition.

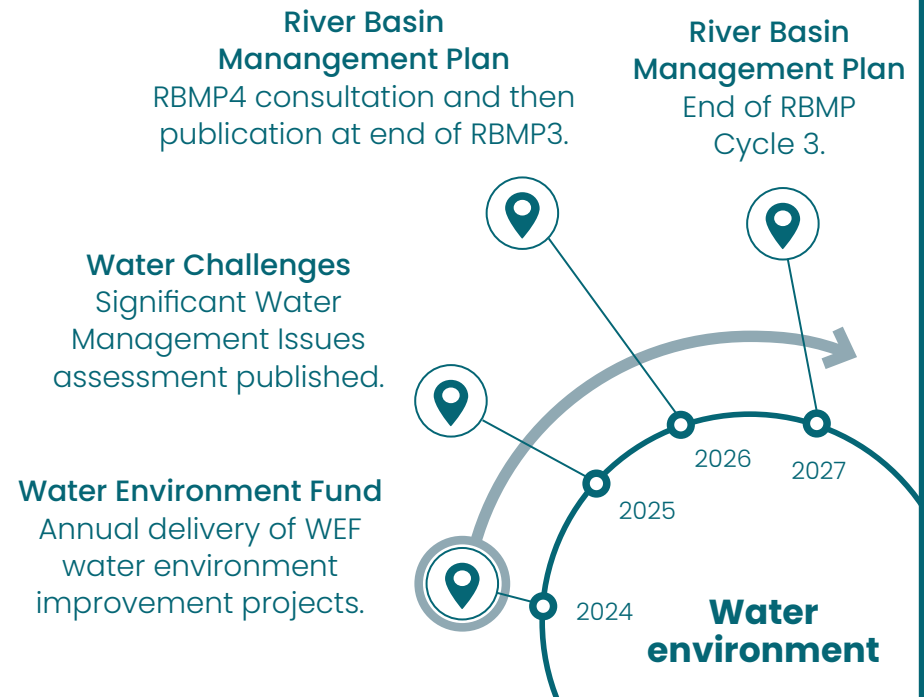
Our ambition

- The water environment is protected and there is no deterioration of condition.
- More of our water environment is improved to a good or better condition.

How will we get there? We will:

- Use our regulatory and influence levers to protect and improve the water environment.
- Restore rivers using the Water Environment Fund.
- Monitor the water environment to understand its condition and focus effort on where there is greatest risk of harm and/or opportunity for environmental improvement.
- Use our regulatory powers for reservoir safety.

Delivery milestones



Contributes to: **Protect Improve Adapt**



Assessed using: <https://sdgcompass.org/sdgs/>

Resource efficiency



The world's resources are under significant stress.

Rates of resource use are in many cases beyond the planet's ability to replenish. Getting the maximum possible value from resources circulating in the economy will reduce reliance on virgin raw materials, reduce emissions, reduce pollution and minimise waste.

We have a critical role in regulating those that produce and manage waste so that the environment and communities are protected.

We also play a significant role in working with operators to support innovation that creates less waste and improves resource efficiency – helping to create a more prosperous economy.

The introduction of digital waste tracking will transform our and others' work to manage waste more sustainably. It will make it much easier for responsible waste companies to comply, while making it much harder for rogue operators. It will also provide insights into waste flows to help us to better target our regulatory activity.

Our ambition

- To fully play our part in helping Scotland to transition to a circular economy.
- That the management of waste does not cause harm to the environment or communities.

How will we get there? We will:

- Implement digital tracking of Scottish waste in the UK.
- Implement packaging reforms to make producers fully responsible for the costs of recycling the packaging they generate.
- Monitor and regulate the waste management sector and support its transition to a more resource efficient circular economy.

Delivery milestones



Contributes to: **Protect Improve Avoid**



Assessed using: <https://sdgcompass.org/sdgs/>

Business environmental performance

Securing high environmental performance from those we regulate underpins our ability to achieve the ambition we have for our other priorities.

High environmental performance reduces pollution, protects communities and means businesses can prosper from their investment in a green economy. It also protects and improves the quality of our water, air and land.

Through our regulatory work we set conditions for good performance, check compliance and intervene swiftly and effectively where necessary. We expect all regulated operators to understand their impact on the environment and to comply with their obligations in legislation and conditions set out in authorisations. Operators that want to do the right thing are supported, those that seek to benefit from non-compliance are targeted.

Introducing a new integrated framework for all authorisations will be transformational, bringing all our main regulatory regimes – covering radioactive substances, pollution prevention and control (including air), water and waste – under a single integrated process that's more efficient and that allows us to focus on the environmental risks that matter the most.

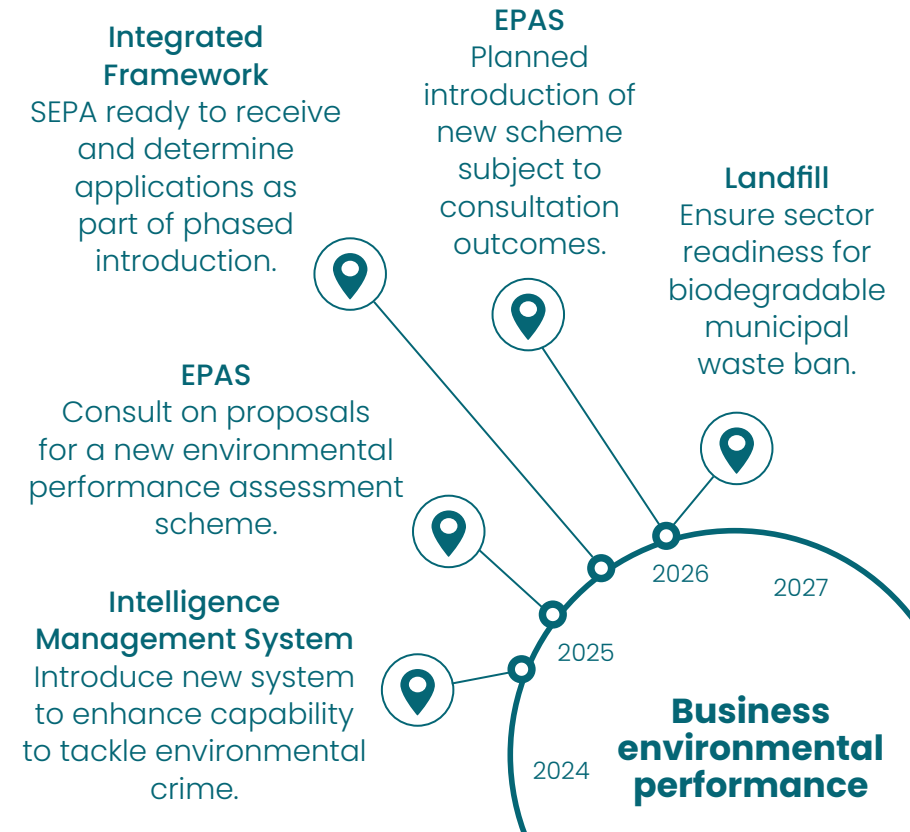
Our ambition

- That the environment and communities are protected from harm.
- For Scotland to be an inhospitable place for environmental crime.
- Businesses are supported by regulation to reduce their impact on the environment.

How will we get there? We will:

- Deliver a new integrated framework for environmental authorisations by implementing the revised Environmental Authorisations (Scotland) Regulations.
- Develop and deliver a new Environmental Performance Assessment Scheme (EPAS) for assessing and reporting the performance of regulated businesses.
- Develop and deliver an annual risk-based programme that identifies and prioritises where action is required to address non-compliance that is having significant impact on the environment and communities.
- Work in partnership using our regulatory and other levers to impactfully disrupt and deter environmental criminality.
- Support innovation in businesses we regulate that want to grow sustainably.

Delivery milestones



Contributes to: **Protect Improve Warn**



Assessed using: <https://sdgcompass.org/sdgs/>

Reform and improvement



To implement our plan, we must have a culture of continuous improvement and a delivery focus that underpins everything we do. Doing so will mean we can design and offer better, more resilient services that meet the needs of those that use them.

We are already an organisation with a strong science and evidence base. We constantly assess the quality of our environment by monitoring our air, land and water; using our findings to inform our decisions and actions, as well as advising government, industry and the public on environmental best practice.

We want to build on the successes of this foundation by modernising our approach under a series of programmes which will future proof the organisation with a delivery focus to maximise our efficiency and effectiveness. **We call this integrated approach One SEPA.** This includes:

Investing in our people

We value our highly talented people and their diverse skills and experience. We need to continue to invest in and develop our workforce so that our teams are focused, engaged, empowered, valued and resilient. We will embed a new people strategy that plans ahead for the future of

our workforce. This will give our teams the clarity, tools, resources and support they need to deliver our priorities and make a difference to people's lives and to the future of our environment. It will provide greater opportunities to share and collaborate and will help us to attract and retain talent.

Investing in our systems

People expect our services to be delivered digitally. They also expect high quality environmental data and insights to be available when they need them.

We will deliver a digital transformation that drives operational efficiencies and provides high quality environmental and regulatory information and data to those who need it. We also need to continue to improve our understanding of the environment and identify new threats so we can respond to them quickly and efficiently.

Our regulation

We are, through our priorities, implementing new processes, guidance and systems that support delivery of our duties as Scotland's environmental regulator.

Our income

We will review our charging schemes to ensure they are proportionate and fully recover our costs determined in accordance with the Scottish Public Finance Manual.



Delivering our plan

Through delivery of our five priorities we aim to protect and improve the environment for communities and help to create a greener, net zero and resilient economy.

To understand how our work is delivering on the ambition we set, we will track and report on eight strategic measures that help us to understand how our environment is changing.

We recognise that these are long term and involve the work of others to achieve. In addition to these strategic measures therefore, **we will develop a new performance framework that will help us to continually improve and understand the difference that we are making.**

Our work is further defined in our annual operating plans which identify the detailed areas of work that we will focus on every year and identify specific indicators and milestones that we aim to achieve each year.

These combined with the strategic measures will help us to understand how our work is delivering on the priorities we have set.

Our Corporate Plan is set within the context of SEPA's agreed financial settlement for 2024-2025. Our milestones and commitments for future years have a dependency on future annual settlements and charging income.

Our annual reports will explain our performance and the impact of our action.



Our strategic measures

Table 1: Our aims and how they will be measured

We will be successful when:	Measured by
Net zero	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Greenhouse gas emissions from regulated sites are reducing. Direct greenhouse gas emissions from our workspaces and transport are reducing. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Annual greenhouse gas emissions in the Scottish Pollutant Release Inventory. Annual reports of greenhouse gas emissions by SEPA.
Climate resilience	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Warnings and alerts are issued for all significant flood events and water scarcity events. New developments are approved in accordance with SEPA's advice on flood risk avoidance. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Number of flood warnings and alerts issued by SEPA. Proportion of developments approved in accordance with SEPA's advice on flood risk.
Water environment	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The condition of the water environment is improving. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Classification of waterbodies across Scotland.
Resource efficiency	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The amount of material disposed of to landfill is reducing. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Rates of waste to landfill in annual Scottish household waste data.
Business environmental performance	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> There is high compliance by regulated operators. The number of successful interventions to tackle environmental crime is increasing. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Compliance rates under EPAS once it is operational. Number of successful interventions per year.



For the future of our environment

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equalities@sepa.org.uk

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