

# Chief Executive's Report

June 2025



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# 1.Introduction

As we enter the summer months, the Agency has a focus on our recently launched [Annual Operating Plan 2025-26](#). The next year will be a challenging and exciting time as we step up the pace and scale of transformation across the Agency, whilst focusing delivery on our core services. Our Annual Operating Plan (AOP) will direct our activities to protect and enhance Scotland's environment, enhance economic prosperity and contribute to the improved the health wellbeing of the nation.

In tandem with producing the AOP, we have been working to strengthen our Performance Management Framework and our reporting mechanisms. We now have a robust framework with developed Objectives and Key Results (OKRs), and a range of Key Performance Indicators (KPIs). Combined, this suite of measures provides a more complete picture of how well we are doing and how we can be held accountable by the people and communities of Scotland.

Following the approval and launch of the AOP, our performance development review process was launched at the beginning of May. This ensures managers and employees can have good conversations and agree goals, prompting discussions on embedding our values and behaviours.

Our people are our biggest asset and as part of the launch of our Strategic Approach to Wellbeing and the week of 12<sup>th</sup> May being the Mental Health Awareness Week, we scheduled a number of events for colleagues. These included a range of topics such as financial planning, taking care of our wellbeing, chair yoga, navigating change, and stress management. These have been collated into an events calendar and communicated to the organisation.

I noted in my last report about our new Mental Health First Aider programme. This has resulted in 24 people from across the organisation volunteering. These volunteers completed their training, and the programme was launched to all employees during the Mental Health Awareness Week. These initiatives strengthen our Employee Support Framework as committed to in our People Strategy.

With the warmer weather of summer, our waters are a great asset to Scotland. Our beautiful beaches provide local communities with many opportunities to enjoy social interactions and physical activities, such as swimming and paddleboarding, helping improve health and

wellbeing. Scotland has over 80 designated bathing waters where we monitor water quality from 15 May to 15 September and publish the sampling results online and on electronic information signs at bathing water locations. [Bathing Waters | Home | Scottish Environment Protection Agency \(SEPA\)](#). We classify each bathing water – the general water quality condition for each location is described by a classification statement – as excellent, good, sufficient or poor, to help people make informed choices about using the water.

As an Agency that is passionate about protecting our environment, professional in our approach and purposeful in our actions, we are responding proactively to the growing national pressure of water scarcity. Our [weekly Water Situation Report](#), shows changes in conditions with May seeing half of Scotland's river catchments at Alert status for water scarcity, with the remaining catchments at Early Warning. Only the Inner Hebrides remained at Normal. This reflected continued dry weather, falling river flows and no rain forecast in the days ahead. The beginning of June saw heavy rain resulting in some recovery of ground and river conditions, particularly in the west of the country. However, some areas of the north and northeast are still at risk of reaching significant water scarcity. More can be read on this later in this report.

May and June were busy months with many positive meetings internally and externally. I had a very productive meeting with the Chief Executive for Keep Scotland Beautiful. Keep Scotland Beautiful's mission is to inspire changes in behaviour to improve Scotland's environment, the quality of people's lives, their wellbeing and the places that they care for.

Discussions around Grangemouth Industrial Hub were a feature when I met with the Chief Executive of Scottish Enterprise. Scottish Enterprise encourages economic development, enterprise, innovation, international and investment in business. Our Chair, Lisa Tennant, and I also met with the Chair and Chief Executive of Scottish Water in May to discuss areas of mutual interest.

The Agency has a long standing and positive strategic relationship with the whisky industry. Since the early 2000's when the industry first published its Sustainability Strategy, we have worked with them to assist, where appropriate and possible, their Net Zero and Circular Economy ambitions. Along with our Agency Board and Corporate Leadership Team, I visited William Grant & Sons Ltd to showcase our regulatory role with the industry. The Scotch Whisky Association, the trade body for Scotch Whisky distillers, was also in attendance.

I also met with the new Chief Executive of Verture. Verture has evolved from what many will know as SNIFFER (Scotland and Northern Ireland Focus for Environmental Research) and is a Scottish charity with the vision to 'help everyone, in every place, thrive as our climate changes'. At our meeting we discussed organisational reset and transformation, and areas for future collaboration.

I attended the non-departmental public body (NDPB) Forum, providing an update on the Environment cluster and hearing direct from the Public Finance Minister on Scottish Government's plans for Public Sector Reform (PSR), and working with SEPA colleagues to lean into PSR delivery.

Over the period I also engaged with Scottish Government including the Director General Net Zero's leadership team on our transformation and thereafter in Dunkeld to discuss SEPA's delivery. Likewise, there was also a discussion of our transformation with the Director's leadership team on SEPA's transformation journey, and in one-to-ones.

Ministerial engagement also took place with Ms Gougeon – Cabinet Secretary for Rural Affairs, Land Reform and Islands, Mr Fairley – Minister for Agriculture and Connectivity and Ms Martin – Cabinet Secretary for Net Zero and Energy.

This report features some highlights as our teams continue to deliver for Scotland.

For the future of our environment.

## 2. Collaboration and partnership

We recognise the impact of progressive partnerships and collaborative working across the public, private and third sectors, as well as with communities. We share service delivery so that we offer better outcomes more efficiently, and with a customer focus.

### **43<sup>rd</sup> European Environment Agency Network meeting**

We are a member of the network of European Environment agencies which meets twice a year bringing together the Chief Executives, or representatives, to share experience, knowledge, challenges and opportunities to protect the environment and enhance services. We attended this event in April, and the key areas of focus were:

- learning from 40 years of the Austrian Environment Agency;
- insights and policy focus from across Europe;
- strategic role of trust for Agencies in a time of reform and transformation;
- transforming Environment Protection Agencies: challenges and opportunities;
- the role of Artificial Intelligence for Environment Protection Agencies;
- climate change adaptation; and
- towards 2027 – international year of tourism and the environment.

We also continue to co-chair a subgroup of the network, with the Irish Environment Protection Agency, which leads on areas for consideration and the development of environmental legislation and policy improvements.

Key areas of discussions set out above are supporting SEPA's focus on engagement and communication, influencing the development of future opportunities for transformation and informing our approaches to Artificial Intelligence.

### **National report to the IAEA on implementation of the Joint Convention**

The UK is signatory to the Joint Convention on the Safety of Spent Fuel Management and on the Safety of Radioactive Waste Management. This is a legal instrument of the United Nations's International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), which sets global standards for safety in these fields. We have been working with UK partners to prepare our contribution to the UK's eighth national report and are involved in the UK's peer review of submissions from 18 other

nations. We were represented in the UK delegation to the report peer review meeting at IAEA HQ, Vienna, attended by over 80 nations. Our contributions were welcomed by Scottish and UK Government and by other partners, both domestic and international. Learning from this experience will be captured and shared. Some immediate benefits to the Agency and to Scotland include:

- Relationship building with UK regulatory bodies, developing mutual understanding of respective obligations, and exploring opportunities for collaboration.
- Focussed discussion and problem solving on shared regulatory issues.
- Highlighting Scotland's achievements regarding environmental protection, in an international forum.
- Insight on best practice in other global nations to help shape the review of Scottish radioactive substances policy.

### **International support**

The United Nation's IAEA also specifies the basic requirements for safety for the use and keeping of nuclear and radioactive materials. As part of its mission, the IAEA reviews and supports member states in developing expertise in the control of radioactive sources through support missions.

As a recognised international expert in their field, one of our colleagues was asked to provide one week of training to Bangladeshi organisations and regulatory bodies as part of the country's programme in commissioning two nuclear power reactors. The work was supported by the IAEA and involved developing an in-depth programme of training and lectures to ensure that the attendees gained the greatest possible experience. The training was focused on assessment of the impact of releases on the public and environment and developing a monitoring programme to allow these to be assessed.

Although the work is supporting the safe use of nuclear power in other member states, the Agency gains understanding of issues in other countries and possible solutions that can be applied within Scotland. The work also provides excellent international links and cooperation in the field of nuclear regulations. We gain from the experience in being recognised as contributing to global safety and being capable of developing international experts in their field.

### 3. Public Sector Reform

As a public service, we continue to respond effectively to the increasing pace of change, and we are committed to considering the best models for delivery of all our services. SEPA continues to lead and engage with a range of initiatives to further the objectives of public sector reform.

#### **Co-location of workspaces**

Co-locating with public sector organisations and partners by default is part of our Strategic Approach to our Workspaces and fits with the Scottish Government vision for public sector reform. We are preparing to welcome colleagues from VisitScotland who will be sharing our workspace in Ayr. We are also delighted that our new Dundee Hub Workspace, shared with Social Security Scotland (SSS), is now ready to welcome SEPA colleagues. To meet Scottish Government security requirements, SEPA employees require refreshed Baseline Personnel Security Standard checks of which are underway.

#### **Environment Public Sector Reform initiative - People Group**

We continue to play a leading role in Scottish Government's Environment Public Sector Reform initiative. Our work to lead the People group for the Environment and Economy cluster has been productive. An in-person workshop took place in May, bringing together senior leaders from across each of the public bodies to discuss our approach to reform and agree the key priority areas for our people. Various organisations who have successful examples of people transformation were asked to share these with the group to support wider learning and confidence.

### 4. Transformation

To deliver effectively for Scotland, we need to transform areas of our organisation and embed a customer and delivery focus in everything we do. Doing so will mean we can design and offer better, more resilient services that meet the needs of our customers.

#### **Chemical Screening Project**

We have taken delivery of two new high precision, high accuracy Gas Chromatography Mass Spectrometry instruments. These instruments will enable an extension to our current Liquid



Chromatography Mass Spectrometry approach, expanding the range of chemicals to cover more volatile substances and allow us to deliver our current and future statutory duties.

Unlike traditional approaches that focused on detecting specific substances, these instruments are designed for open-ended investigation. They allow the opportunity to take a closer look at a diverse range of chemicals without pre-selection. If an “unknown” substance is detected, the original sample data can be reprocessed to determine its concentration without having to re-analyse the water sample.

The image below shows the installation of one of the high accuracy Gas Chromatography Mass Spectrometry instruments in one of our laboratories.



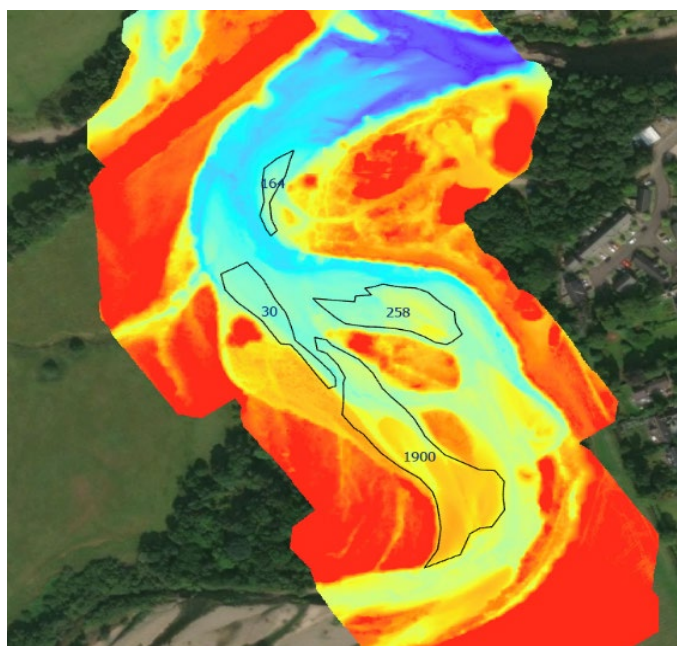
The methodology offers significant environmental and operational advantages. It requires smaller water samples, reducing the environmental footprint of the sampling process, and enables the creation of an archive of data that can be revisited and reprocessed with emerging analysis methods.

As part of the implementation, we hosted the Scottish Government Environment and Forestry Directorate Management Team who sponsored the purchase of the instruments. We discussed

the approaches we are developing and the value it could add to protecting Scotland's environment.

### **Development of Light Detection and Ranging (LiDAR) monitoring capabilities**

Over the past year, we have been developing our ability to collect and analyse LiDAR data using drones and dedicated software. The technology bounces laser light from surfaces and measures the time taken to return, creating high resolution maps of our environment. The benefits over other survey methods are substantial – it's much quicker, highly accurate and can provide data on otherwise inaccessible sites. It can also capture data on topography through tree cover unlike satellite images. The National LiDAR project will use this method along with the existing LiDAR coverage in some areas of Scotland to provide a baseline layer. We can then use this to extract information at a national scale and compare changes over time, in both terrain and vegetation.



The images above show how we have used LiDAR to measure volumes of gravel after gravel extraction from the Ruchill Water at Comrie in 2024.

The applications for us are extensive and have already been tested in two river restoration sites and one gravel extraction site. We can assess compliance with new engineering authorisations as well as detect unauthorised works. We can monitor changes over time efficiently, particularly

in very dynamic rivers, and can measure flooding assets, providing vital information to support climate resilience strategies. LiDAR also provides new capabilities to measure the structure and condition of riparian vegetation. This data will be invaluable both in pursuing our regulatory duties and working with partners to support river restoration initiatives. More information can be found [here](#).

### **Applicant Tracking System**

A project is underway to implement a new Applicant Tracking System (ATS) which is a key step in transforming and modernising our approach to recruitment and talent acquisition. As part of this project, all existing recruitment processes are being reviewed and streamlined, from approval to onboarding stage, to help ensure a great experience for candidates and hiring managers. The ATS will utilise the new Career role profiles as the basis for job adverts and job descriptions and will help strengthen our Employer Brand. The ATS will also align to the Scottish census categories to allow us to gather and analyse applicant diversity data, as well as capturing candidate feedback on our processes.

## **5. Focused on delivery**

SEPA is Scotland's principal environmental regulator, and our purpose is to protect and improve Scotland's environment. Our approach to deliver for Scotland focuses on what we do and our corporate plan priorities. We also continue to develop our approaches to communicate and engage effectively with all our customers, the public and communities.



### **Enhanced Battery Energy Storage System (BESS) webpages**

Energy storage has an important role to play in the development of a smart, flexible and decarbonised energy system.

We also recognise that there are potential environmental impacts associated with BESS. While BESS do not fall within the Pollution Prevention and Control (Scotland) Regulations 2021 (PPC), or the Control of Major Accident Hazards Regulations 2015 (COMAH), some activities such as

water abstraction, discharge and drainage at construction and operational stages are regulated under the [Water Environment \(Controlled Activities\) \(Scotland\) Regulations 2021](#) (CAR).

We continue to work closely with Scottish Fire and Rescue Service and Scottish Government to address environmental concerns including developing planning guidance and managing and responding to potential fire incidents. We recognise this as a rapidly growing sector and have therefore updated our website to highlight our regulatory role and signpost to further information to help with this transition: [Battery Energy Storage Systems | Scottish Environment Protection Agency \(SEPA\)](#).

### **New Hydrogen Production webpage**

We are actively supporting Scotland's journey to net zero by enabling the growth of renewable and low-carbon energy. At the same time, we recognise the potential environmental impacts that these developments can have, whether locally, through emissions to air, land and water, or globally, via greenhouse gas emissions.

Research shows that by 2045, Scotland could produce up to 3.3 million tonnes<sup>1</sup> of green hydrogen annually, equivalent to around 90% of the country's current total energy demand.

As the hydrogen sector expands, we will use our full regulatory toolkit to promote efficient use of energy and resources, while safeguarding and enhancing Scotland's environment. To facilitate this, we have developed a bespoke application form and permit template for hydrogen production activities that meet 'low risk' criteria supported by guidance that we developed with other UK environmental regulators. This is all available on our new dedicated hydrogen webpage - [Hydrogen | Scottish Environment Protection Agency \(SEPA\)](#)

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<sup>1</sup> [Taken from Scottish Government](#) information.

## Improve

### **Completion of Remediation at former ExxonMobil Oil terminal site in Bowling, West Dunbartonshire**

The remediation of hydrocarbon contamination at the former ExxonMobil Oil terminal site was completed in April 2025. Our specialists provided advice to West Dunbartonshire Council, ExxonMobil and their consultants and contractors over a 12-year period, on remediation to improve the water environment, including groundwater and the Clyde Estuary, and appropriate re-use of materials on site. This included anticipating requirements for, and providing advice on, authorisations to protect the environment as works were progressing.

This was one of the biggest remediation sites in the UK, requiring excavation of 264,000 m<sup>3</sup> of soil with more than 90% of materials excavated being re-used on site following treatment. The project was highly commended for best project preparatory work in the Brownfield Awards of 2025 with regular engagement with regulators, including SEPA, highlighted as being key to success. Central to this was an open, structured and collaborative approach between partners.

West Dunbartonshire Council provided positive feedback on our engagement and transparent approach which helped to avoid unnecessary delays at critical stages throughout and more importantly at the end of a project.

The site can now be safely developed as a major industrial and commercial site including active travel routes, green space and a relief road route for the A82. The image below shows soil treatment at Bowling Remediation.





### **LIFE Shipments of Waste Enforcement Actions Project (LIFE SWEAP)**

The European Union Network for the Implementation and Enforcement of Environmental Law (IMPEL) has undertaken enforcement activities related to waste shipments via its “Shipment of Waste European Enforcement Actions” (SWEAP) project since 2003. We have been leading this flagship project since 2011. Our involvement in this work has ensured an excellent working relationship with other European authorities.

Through LIFE SWEAP, IMPEL set out to intensify European and international cooperation, promote joint working and develop novel digital tools for inspections and enforcement. The project targets were exceeded, with over 90,200 inspections recorded across Europe.

We are now active in the essential post-project work, building on what has already been delivered:

- An innovative Inspection app was developed to provide a cost effective, paperless solution for collecting, analysing and reporting inspection results, and violations detected. At this time, 202 officers from 38 European competent authorities are registered to use the app and it has been translated into 10 languages. The data from the app feeds a Spotfire tool, developed by the Agency, which highlights emerging trends in illegal activity and is used by regulators to plan their annual inspections.

- Officer exchanges have provided training to new recruits and allowed the dissemination of best practice in identifying illegal waste shipments. A total of 146 inspectors from 22 countries participated in 15 exchanges. We hosted two exchanges and participated in several others.
- The [PREVENT](#) training portal provides an online repository of training and capacity-building materials for the law enforcement community. PREVENT has 382 registered users and a total of 23 webinars were delivered as part of LIFE SWEAP which provided an opportunity to discuss problematic waste types amongst waste shipment experts in an online forum.

More detailed information can be found in this [summary of LIFE SWEAP](#) and this [video on the main deliverables](#).



The image above shows the officer exchange involving SEPA officers in Rotterdam.

### UK security requirements for radioactive sources

The UK updated its requirements for keeping radioactive sources secure in summer 2024. Building upon earlier stakeholder engagement, we worked with Police Scotland's Counter Terrorism Security Advisers at an event in April, coordinated with the trade body Offshore Energy UK (OEUK), to issue the updated requirements to practitioners in the offshore oil and gas sector and to raise awareness of our recently published Regulatory Position Statement – [Security Requirements for Radioactive Sources – RS-POL-010](#). This is an essential step in implementing the updated requirements in the offshore sector. We will be repeating the event later in the year for practitioners unable to attend this time.

**Packaging Extended Producer Responsibility (pEPR)**

The Packaging Extended Producer Responsibility (pEPR) transformation project has involved several years of policy and legislative reform support to UK and Scottish Governments. The project ensured delivery of a programme of work on operational implementation and business readiness. The reformed pEPR scheme will require the producers of packaging to pay the costs of managing household packaging waste, with up to £1.2bn paid from packaging producers to local authorities across the UK (see also section below on Materials Facilities for further detail on how this is calculated). The new scheme implements modulated fees to incentivise producers to use recyclable packaging and the mandatory labelling of packaging for recyclability. Annual packaging waste recycling targets to 2030 have also been set.

New legislation came into force on 1 January 2025. This required obligated producers to register with SEPA by 1 April 2025 and report on the amount of packaging they produce and place on the UK market. SEPA has developed guidance with UK government and regulators, received producer registrations, and verified the accuracy of the information supplied by producers. As of 1 May 2025, SEPA has registered 42 Scottish companies directly and three compliance schemes with a total of 2,700 producers across the UK, including their subsidiaries. We are getting in touch with companies who we think may be obligated to register. A new UK charging scheme is in place to ensure the cost recovery of regulatory effort by all UK Environment Agencies.

**Materials Facilities (MF)**

The successful implementation of the updated Materials Facilities (MF) Code of Practice on 1 April 2025 marks a significant step towards enhancing waste recycling data. This is required by the revised pEPR regulations and will inform important local authority payments from packaging producers. It will do this by requiring facilities which handle recyclable packaging waste (Material Facilities) to analyse samples of this material and report into SEPA the proportions of each packaging material. A UK-wide Scheme Administrator then calculates and administers payments to local authorities to cover full costs of collection (see also pEPR update above). This work is a testament to the collaborative efforts and strong partnership between various teams within SEPA and the Scottish Government.

This project involved colleagues from across the Agency and together, we delivered 22 permit variations in time for the implementation deadlines, ensuring compliance with the new



regulations. Leading up to the implementation of the legislation, we held a stakeholder workshop on the new Code of Practice, helping to prepare Materials Facilities for their new reporting duties and SEPA's expectations in terms of compliance.

Our collaboration with the Scottish Government was crucial in securing a Ministerial Direction to support the implementation of the Code of Practice. This directive provided the necessary legal framework for SEPA to require the updated reporting requirements for Material Facilities.

### **Genetic research confirms that wild salmon have returned to the upper Garry**

In 2017, following collaboration with Scottish and Southern Energy (SSE) and the Tay District Salmon Fishery Board, water was returned to the upper River Garry from a major hydropower intake, and a barrier to fish passage was removed. This allowed migratory fish to access the upper reaches of this river for the first time since the 1950's. This followed extensive work on the amount of water, and flow variation, needed for a healthy ecosystem to reestablish. These improvements were a requirement of the River Basin Management Plan, delivered via SEPA's regulatory powers. Since 2017, research lead by the Institute for Biodiversity and Freshwater Conservation at the University of Highlands and Islands, has sought to determine whether wild salmon are indeed returning to the river and breeding there.

To kick start the recovery process following the rewatering of the Garry, the river has been stocked with salmon eggs, produced from broodstock from adjacent tributaries. Scientists wanted to establish whether the broodstock salmon were surviving and returning to their stocking location to spawn. They also wanted to determine how successful wild salmon had been at spawning in the now accessible stretches of river, compared to broodstock salmon.

Electrofishing surveys were carried out between 2018 and 2023, and DNA analysis used to differentiate between wild and broodstock juvenile salmon. The results found both broodstock and wild salmon and across the six years of the study, the proportion and distribution of non-stocked juveniles has increased. This evidence demonstrated the successful return of a breeding population of wild Atlantic salmon to the Upper Garry.

The images below show the River Garry, before (on the left) and after (on the right) water was returned from the Garry hydropower intake.

SEPA continues to use regulation to deliver improvements to Scotland's water environment via the RBMP process, working with the hydropower sector and stakeholders.



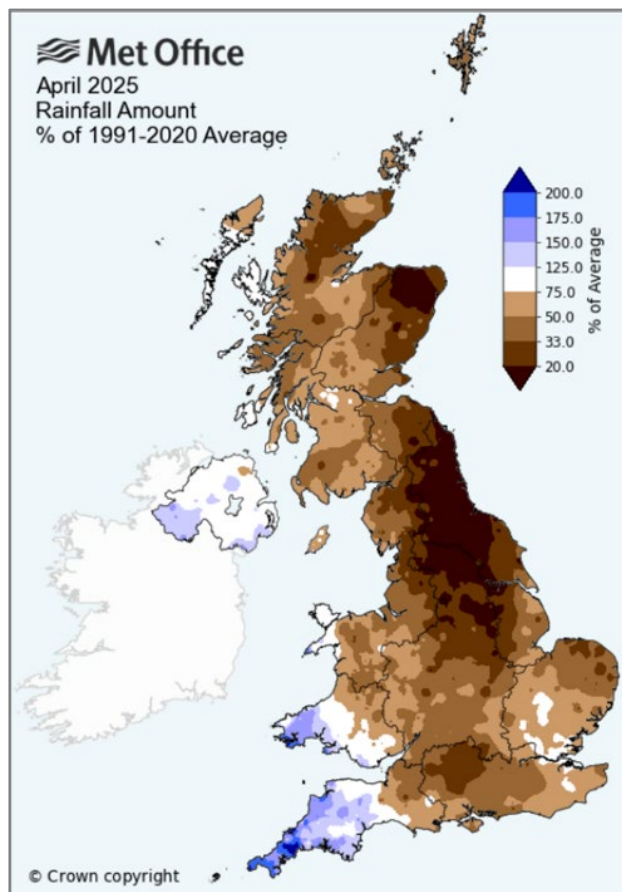
### Water scarcity update

Relatively dry weather throughout autumn, winter, and spring has led to an increasing likelihood of significant water scarcity across Scotland. The areas currently most at risk are the east coast and parts of the far north. We are monitoring the situation closely and issuing weekly reports indicating the relative water scarcity levels across the country. These reports can be accessed on the SEPA website [here](#). SEPA is in contact with abstraction licence holders in the areas most at risk to provide advice about current conditions and water resilience actions. We provide updates to the Scottish Government and relevant stakeholder groups, ensuring all interested parties remain informed about the evolving situation.

We have generated widespread media coverage of the evolving situation. Since March, we published our first report after winter, we have generated well over 450 articles and broadcast pieces. For example, the media activity on the [report of 15 May 2025](#) which highlighted increasing trends and impacts generated 90 pieces of coverage including five interviews and 32 with quotes from our spokespeople. Our approach includes proactively sharing pre-recorded audio clips for broadcasters to download directly for use in news bulletins and packages,

alongside more traditional interview formats. We are working with partners to share messaging, for example the Scottish Fire and Rescue Service on risk of wildfire, and Scottish Water consumer advice. Our water scarcity messages have also been widely shared with key membership organisations including NFUS, the Scotch Whisky Association and Fisheries Management Scotland.

The Met Office map of the UK below shows the percentage of rainfall that has fallen in April 2025 compared to the 1991-2020 average. It shows that eastern and northern parts of Scotland have seen significantly less rain than the average.



### Learning session for land use planning practitioners

At the end of April, colleagues worked together to deliver an online learning session for land use planning practitioners in planning authorities, Scottish Government and other key agencies. The

session was facilitated by the Improvement Service and was designed to improve understanding of flooding, the impact of climate change on flooding in Scotland, SEPA's flooding role in the planning system and associated tools and advice.

Over 200 practitioners attended the session, which was also recorded for future reference. Feedback has been very positive; the session was well received and relevant to colleagues with a range of backgrounds. The session was part of our commitment to continually improve the implementation of the National Planning Framework 4 (NPF4) and was informed by discussions held recently with Scottish Government, Heads of Planning Scotland, and industry practitioners. We hope to follow up with a future session for elected members.



### **Attendance at Resilience Community Roadshows**

Between April and May, we attended the Angus Resilience Community Roadshow at Montrose, Arbroath, and Brechin, alongside other resilience partners such as Angus Council, Scottish Flood Forum, and Scottish Fire and Rescue Service. This gave us a platform to promote SEPA's Floodline service, flood risk management planning, and flood resilience within communities.

It was also a great opportunity to reconnect with our resilience partners in person as we work together to support communities and individuals who are at risk of flooding and who have also been severely impacted during events such as Storm Babet. We also made new connections, set up future events and spoke to members of the public about our information products and advice. The positive feedback we received highlights the importance of attending these types of events to promote SEPA's flooding services and products, to strengthen our partnerships and ultimately help communities become flood resilient.

The images below show our colleagues at the Angus Resilience Community Roadshow.





### Hydrometric Network Improvements

In 2023 it was identified that the safety standards for our Hydrometry Cableways needed to be reviewed and improved. Our cableways are essential to enabling measurement of river flow at many of our stations. Confidence in our flow measurement is essential to critical data users including Flood Risk Management, Flood Warning, and Drought Risk Management.

Over the last two years we have been working hard to upgrade many of our two hundred cableways and decommission those that we don't think will be necessary in the future, due to changes in technology. We recently passed the milestone of 80% of cableways being reinstated or decommissioned. This work represents a significant investment in maintaining our understanding of river flow over the next 20+ years across Scotland.

An example at Newmilns Gauging Station is below where we had an old concrete stanchion, shown in the image to the left, and have replaced it with a new steel stanchion.



Newmilns old far side stanchion.



Newmilns new far side stanchion.

## 6. Spotlight on...

### SEPA Update

We have shared our SEPA Update e-newsletter with people and organisations across Scotland for over 14 years. How people want to receive information over this time has changed, with the growth of digital channels and an increasing demand for personalisation, accessibility and user driven content.

We recently re-launched the newsletter, supplementing our regular news round up with focussed editions: Towards Net Zero, Our Water Environment and SEPA Update for Business. Combined, as of early May, these editions now reach over 25,500 people each month across email and LinkedIn subscriptions, an increase of 962% from the 2400 subscribers we had before the re-launch. By improving our subscription offer, we are providing our audiences with personalised, accessible content that talks to their areas of interest. For us, it is a cost-effective channel to reach our audiences directly, which also gives measurable results. Each update is also highlighted through our social media channels.

We are using the SEPA Update to tell our stories, share advice and promote best practice, not just the high-profile announcements, but the work we are doing every day that makes a difference for our communities, businesses and the environment. Whether it is sharing with businesses that new guidance is available for their sector, promoting a new digital application form to support compliance or letting a community know an air quality exhibit will be visiting their town, the newsletters are giving people more information than ever before about the work we're doing for Scotland.

Our refreshed brand has come to life through the newsletters, with a unique identity for each using our new colour palette, iconography and a more personable, informal tone. This is leading to high engagement rates with open rates as high as 78% and click through regularly around 10% - benchmark average open rate is 35% and a click rate of 3%. This lets us know that we are sharing the types of information our customers, stakeholders and the people of Scotland find useful and interesting. To join the mailing list for the SEPA Update, please register [here](#). You can also subscribe and read the [latest update via LinkedIn](#).

This report represents an overview of SEPA's delivery activity across the period.

**Nicole Paterson, Chief Executive, June 2025.**