

Our Annual Operating Plan

2025/26



Protect Improve Adapt Avoid Warn

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Foreword



Nicole Paterson
Chief Executive
Officer

I'm pleased to present our Annual Operating Plan (AOP) for 2025/26.

Protecting and improving Scotland's environment is our primary purpose – delivering our vital services and contributing to our strategic priorities – **net zero, climate resilience, water environment, resource efficiency** and **business environmental performance**.

We're now into the second year of our 2024-2027 [Corporate Plan](#), which laid the strong foundations for our organisational reset. In the first year of delivery, we introduced new leadership, developed new ways of working and identified areas of transformation for ensuring the best protection of Scotland's environment for the future.

This year, we will accelerate our transformation – recognising that Scotland's environment is changing at pace and that as Scotland's principal environmental regulator, Scotland's strategic flood risk management authority, and as a public body, we need to do the same.

We have set an ambitious transformation programme, focused on our customers and enhancing what we do for the public and communities of Scotland. This year, we are concentrating on our regulatory approach, being enabled by digital solutions, driving customer experience and enhancing our data driven decision making. As we navigate an upcoming period of transformational regulatory change, we will engage closely and openly with key sectors and operators ensuring we are an effective but accessible, collaborative regulator.

I'm proud of what we have delivered for Scotland in the last year and our contribution to the nation's environmental performance. Looking forward, we are focused on working together to further our ambitions and demonstrate our values – **Purposeful, Professional** and **Passionate** – for the benefit of Scotland's environment, now and in the future.

Ro-ràdh



Nicole Paterson
Ceannard

Tha mi toilichte a bhith a' cur air adhart am Plana Obrachaidh Bliadhnail againn (AOP) airson 2025/26.

'S e dìon agus leasachadh àrainneachd na h-Alba am prìomh adhbhar againn – a' lìbhrigeadh sheirbheisean fìor-chudromach agus a' cur ri na prìomhachasan ro-innleachdail againn – **neoni lom, ath-leumachd a thaobh gnàth-shìde, àrainneachd uisge, èifeachdas stòrasan agus coileanadh àrainneachdail ghnothachasan.**

Tha sinn a-nis san dàrna bliadhna den [Phlana Chorporra](#) againn airson 2024-2027, a stèidhich nam bonn làidir airson ath-ùrachadh na buidhne againn. Sa chiad bhliadhna de lìbhrigeadh, thug sinn a-steach ceannardas ùr, leasaich sinn dòighean-obrach ùra agus chomharraich sinn raointean cruth-atharrachaidh airson dèanamh cinnteach gum bithear a' dìon àrainneachd na h-Alba san dòigh as fheàrr airson an ama ri teachd.

Am-bliadhna, bidh sinn a' dol nas luaithe sa chruth-atharrachadh againn – ag aithneachadh gu bheil àrainneachd na h-Alba ag atharrachadh gu luath agus, mar phrìomh riaghladair àrainneachdail na h-Alba, mar ùghdarras rianachd cunnart thuiltean airson Alba, agus mar bhuidheann phoblach, gum feum sinne dèanamh mar an ceudna.

Tha sinn air prògram cruth-atharrachaidh àrd-amasach a chur romhainn, a' cur fòcas air custamairean agus a' meudachadh na tha sinn a' dèanamh airson muinntir agus coimhearsnachdan na h-Alba. Am-bliadhna, tha sinn a' cumail aire air a' mhodh-obrach riaghlaidh againn, a' comasachadh fhuasglaidhean didseatach, a' cur air adhart gnàth-eòlas a' chustamair agus a' meudachadh na h-ìre aig am bi ar co-dhùnaidhean air an dràibheadh le dàta. Fhad 's a tha sinn gar stiùireadh tro ùine de chruth-atharrachadh riaghlaidh, bidh sinn an sàs ann an conaltradh, gu dlùth agus gu fosgarra, le prìomh raointean agus gnìomharaichean, a' dèanamh cinnteach gu bheil sinn èifeachdach ach so-ruigsinneach agus co-obrachail mar riaghladair.

Tha mi moiteil às na lìbhrig sinn airson Alba sa bhliadhna mu dheireadh agus às na tha sinn a' cur ri coileanadh àrainneachdail na dùthcha. A' coimhead air adhart, tha sinn air fòcas a chur air obair còmhla agus ar n-àrd-amasan a chur air adhart agus ar luachan – **Dealasach, Dreuchdail agus Dìorrasach agus** – a nochdadh a chum leas àrainneachd na h-Alba, an-dràsta agus san àm ri teachd.

Our delivery 2024/25



Issued 289 flood alerts, 370 flood warnings and 3 severe flood warnings.



50 monetary penalty notices issued.



£4.4m of river restoration work funded through the Water Environment Fund.



104 illegal sites closed.



25 water scarcity reports issued.



Flooding advice given on 1,478 planning applications.



Nearly 80,000km² of land mass covered by new surface water and small water course maps.



Over 86% of Scotland's bathing waters at excellent or good classifications.



Over 94% response rate for Freedom of Information and Environment Information requests.

For the future of our environment

Scotland's natural environment is at the heart of our identity as a nation – it is fundamental to our health, our quality of life and our economy. As custodians of Scotland's environment, we are committed to its protection and improvement, ensuring its resilience and abundance for our future generations.

Our statutory purpose provides our mandate – **to protect and improve the environment in ways that, as far as possible, also create health and well-being benefits and sustainable economic growth**. Our [Corporate Plan](#) sets out five priorities to focus our work between 2024-2027 that will help us do this: net zero, climate resilience, water environment, resource efficiency and business environmental performance.

Our day-to-day role includes a diverse range of duties and activities. As Scotland's principal environmental regulator, we set conditions for good environmental performance, check compliance and intervene 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.

As Scotland's flood forecasting and warning authority and strategic flood risk management authority, we help partners, places and people avoid, adapt and act against flooding. We prepare long term flood risk management plans and advise on flood risk and drought when consulted on new developments. We help communities and businesses prepare for flooding by issuing forecasts and warnings and by advising on the response to events when they occur.

Using our strong science and evidence base, we monitor and assess our environment providing a clear understanding of its current state and how it is changing. We use this evidence to inform decisions, provide advice and promote best practice.

We support the delivery of environmental improvements and associated societal benefits through our role in river basin management planning and Scotland's Water Environment Fund, helping to address impacts on the water environment.

As a public body, we are committed to ensuring we are in the best position to deliver for the environment and the people of Scotland. We work with the Scottish Government and other partners, contributing not only to the Environment Strategy for Scotland and Scotland's National Strategy for Economic Transformation, but also other strategies including the National Flood Resilience Strategy, Scottish National Adaptation Plan, Circular Economy and Waste Route Map, and the National Litter and Flytipping Strategy.

We also work to develop regulatory frameworks and policies in areas such as fish farming, a common framework for environmental authorisations, digital waste and deposit return. We provide strategic leadership and resources to progress public sector reform in the environment sector through our estates, digital and people workstreams.

We are committed to demonstrating good corporate governance, ensuring **our organisation** is well-run and resilient, open and transparent and of best value to the public purse. We invest in our people, ways of working, organisational culture and customer engagement to ensure that we have the right skills and expertise, that our workspaces enable service delivery and that we listen to internal and external feedback to shape work for the future. We are keen to keep pace with new innovations and technology prioritising a **programme of transformational change**.

We recognise the importance of partnership working and ensuring our stakeholders, operators, the public and communities are actively involved and engaged in what we do. We are committed to building on and forging new relationships, bringing together a wider range of powers, duties, tools and specialist expertise that will maximise value and benefit to Scotland's environment. We recognise that Scotland's environment does not exist in isolation to global changes, and we continue to keep abreast of developments through our networks and partnership working.

All of our work comes together in What We Do – Protect, Improve, Adapt, Avoid and Warn – delivering for Scotland:

- We **protect** Scotland's environment and communities from harm.
- We **improve** Scotland's environment for future generations.
- Our information and advice help Scotland to **adapt** to the impacts of our changing climate.
- We help to **avoid** environmental harm and increased future risks from flooding.
- We **warn** communities and businesses about potential harm and risk of flooding.

This plan sets out our key areas of focus for 2025/26.

Our plan on a page

Our purpose

To protect and improve the environment in ways that, as far as possible, also create health and well-being benefits and sustainable economic growth.

Our values



Purposeful



Professional



Passionate

Our priorities

Net zero

Climate resilience

Water environment

Resource efficiency

Business environmental performance

Organisation & transformation

Our objectives 2025/26

- Develop our regulatory role with a more integrated approach to energy efficiency and industrial decarbonisation.
- Transform our workspaces and fleet to minimise emissions, reduce costs and move to co-located workspaces by default and zero emissions fleet by 2030.
- Improve awareness and understanding of flood and drought risk, including implications of climate change, to support effective decision making.
- Ensure effective and resilient flood services which are designed to meet future requirements.
- Deliver River Basin Management Plan programme of actions to improve the water environment.
- Prepare for future cycles of river basin management planning.
- Prepare to support the 2026/27 phase of the UK digital waste tracking service implementation by DEFRA and Scottish Government.
- Ensure key stakeholders are engaged and informed on the necessary preparations required for compliance with the Biodegradable Municipal Waste (BMW) Landfill Ban.
- Tackle environmental crime using interventions approach.
- Deliver our People Strategy to build a safe, welcoming and high performing environment which empowers our people to be purposeful, professional and passionate.
- Introduce effective digital public services for customers.

For the future of our environment

Our focus for 2025/26

Net zero

As a nation, Scotland has set an ambitious target to transition to net zero emissions from all greenhouse gases by 2045. Our ambition is **to fully play our part in helping Scotland to become a net zero country and reduce our own emissions.**

The just transition to net zero requires innovation and collaboration. We help businesses explore new techniques through our expertise and partnerships, and as required, use our regulatory tools to ensure that the local environment is protected and improved. In 2025/26, we will use our expertise, evidence and regulatory toolkit to scope out options with energy intensive pilot sites to understand the full potential for energy efficiency improvements and industrial decarbonisation.

Recognising that Grangemouth is a significant industrial cluster in Scotland with a vision for just transition, we will continue to take forward an outcome-based regulation approach, bringing regulators together to explore opportunities for delivering innovation in regulation to support a fairer, greener future.

We are conscious of our own emissions, and whilst they are only a tiny fraction of the global emissions, we have set an ambitious goal *to reduce emissions to net zero by 2035*. This year, we will be introducing a new climate change impact assessment for our strategic leadership decisions and new regulated procurements. We will also be focusing on achieving Gold Carbon Literate Organisation accreditation.

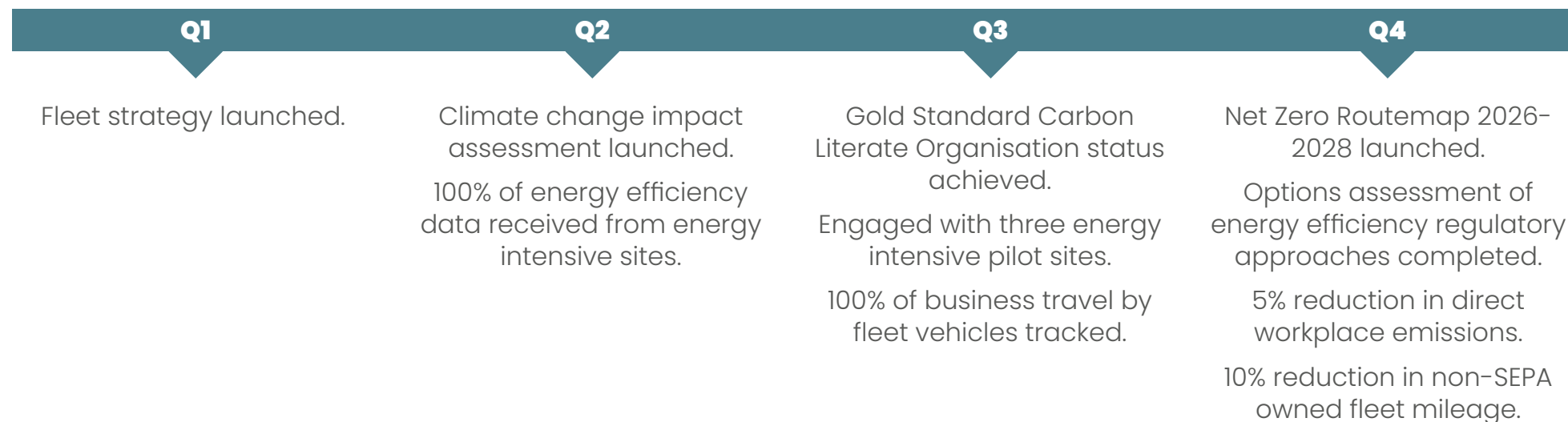
Through our 'How We Work' programme, we will continue to transform our workspaces, moving away from a traditional estate with owned and leased buildings to a modern, more flexible, co-location approach that saves money and emissions. Our new Fleet Strategy will drive our ambition to have a zero emissions fleet by 2030.

Our current Net Zero Routemap covers the period 2024-2026. We will update and adopt a new routemap for 2026-2028, refreshing our areas of focus towards achieving our net zero ambition.

Our 2025/26 objectives

- Develop our regulatory role with a more integrated approach to energy efficiency and industrial decarbonisation.
- Transform our workspaces and fleet to minimise emissions, reduce costs and move to co-located workspaces by default and zero emission fleet by 2030.

Our 2025/26 roadmap



Climate resilience

Scotland's climate is changing, increasing the likelihood of more extreme weather – floods, water scarcity, rising temperatures and storms – a significant risk to our environment, our economy and our communities.

Our ambition is **to reduce the damaging impacts of floods and droughts and help Scotland to prepare for, and become more resilient to, the impacts of a changing climate.**

This year, we will focus on understanding the future of our current flooding service and, where necessary, designing a new service model to meet future requirements, helping support the delivery of Scotland's National Flood Resilience Strategy. While looking ahead, we will continue to ensure delivery of an effective and sustainable flood warning service.

Working with the Scottish Government and other environment partners – as part of our commitment to public sector reform – we will contribute to the trial of a place-based approach in two catchments – Aberdeenshire Dee and Angus South Esk – dealing with rural land use environmental impacts and opportunities. This innovative approach, currently in an early stage of development, has potential to deliver a wide range of environmental and societal benefits including improved climate adaptation, increased nature recovery and biodiversity, and improvements to water quality.

We will publish the revised national flood risk assessment which considers the implications of climate change (a key requirement for the third cycle of Scotland's Flood Risk Management Planning) and improve flood maps to enhance the efficiency in the delivery of the land use planning services – ultimately, improving awareness and understanding of flood risk to support effective decision making.

We will deliver a multi-year plan to develop a sustainable water management strategy and ensure that both we and operators have improved information to manage water use during periods of water scarcity, supporting sustainable water abstractions and reducing harm to the environment.

Our 2025/26 objectives

- Improve awareness and understanding of flood and drought risk, including implications of climate change, to support effective decision making.
- Ensure effective and resilient flood services which are designed to meet future requirements.

Our 2025/26 roadmap



Water environment

Scotland's water environment is one of our nation's greatest natural 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 ambition is twofold – **for the water environment to be protected so that there is no deterioration of condition, and that our water environment is improved where required.**

We will continue to deliver River Basin Management Plans improvement objectives through regulation, and through deployment of the Water Environment Fund to restore rivers and remove barriers to migratory fish. We will further align river basin management and flood risk management planning to release multiple benefits across catchments.

In preparation for the next cycle of River Basin Management Planning, we will undertake evidence-based assessments of pressures and impacts on the water environment to inform improvement actions, objectives and co-ordination. We will also consult on and publish a Significant Water Management Issues report as part of these preparations.

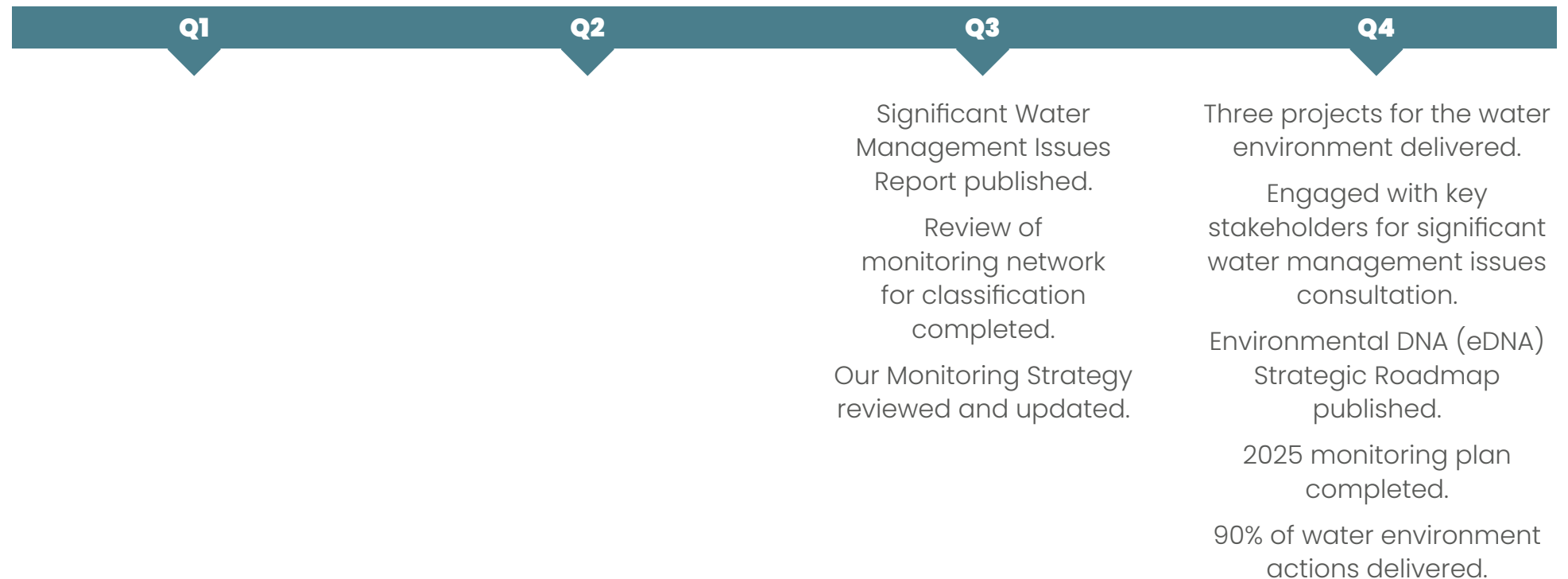
We will deliver the monitoring plan for 2025 (including DNA sampling) and take the opportunity to review and enhance our long-term monitoring and evidence strategy. Through this we will continue to develop and implement new technologies and capabilities to enhance the efficiency and effectiveness of our monitoring.

We will lead collaboration across partners to help produce a strategic roadmap for maximising the potential uses of environmental DNA and other biomolecules to efficiently monitor, and better understand, Scotland's environment.

Our 2025/26 objectives

- Deliver river basin management plan programme of actions to improve the water environment.
- Prepare for future cycles of river basin management planning.

Our 2025/26 roadmap



Resource efficiency

How we use our material resources in Scotland remains a significant issue in the current climate crisis. As a nation, we have set out an ambitious plan that will help us maximise progress towards a circular economy.

Our ambition is again two-fold – one, **to fully play our part in helping Scotland to transition to a circular economy** and, two, **to ensure that the management of waste does not harm our environment or our communities.**

We will continue working with operators to support innovation that creates less waste and improves resource efficiency – helping to create a more prosperous economy.

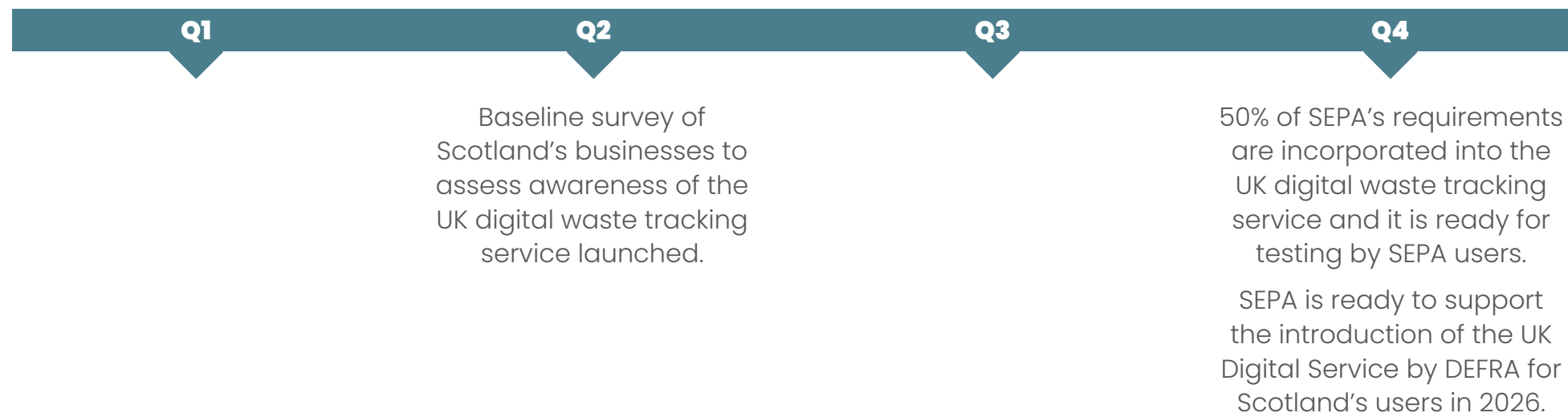
Working collaboratively with the UK and Scottish Governments, and the other UK environmental regulators, we will prepare ourselves and Scottish businesses for the new UK digital waste tracking service. The vision for this service is to provide near real time tracking of waste movement throughout the UK economy. In turn, it will make it much easier for responsible waste companies to comply, while making it much harder for rogue operators. In addition, it will also provide valuable insights into waste flows to help us to better target our regulatory activity.

As the UK digital service build is progressed by the UK Government (Department for Environment, Food & Rural Affairs – DEFRA), we will look to monitor awareness and preparedness for the digital waste tracking service implementation.

Our 2025/26 objective

- Prepare to support the 2026/27 phase of the UK digital waste tracking service implementation by DEFRA and Scottish Government.

Our 2025/26 roadmap



Business environmental performance

Scotland has many businesses that have operations impacting the environment. Our ambition is **to secure high environmental performance from those businesses that we regulate, reducing pollution, protecting and improving our environment, protecting communities and supporting businesses to prosper from their investment in a green economy.**

For 2025/26, we will continue to regulate and monitor releases of radiation to the environment, reported in the annual Radioactivity in Food and Environment (RIFE) Report, to ensure Scotland is meeting the international standard for radiation protection. We will continue to support the Scottish Government on the review of the Scottish Higher Activity Radioactive Waste Policy and Strategy.

We will also continue to progress the development of our sea lice regulatory framework, offering greater protection for wild salmon and sea trout populations.

We will prepare ourselves and businesses for the regulation of the forthcoming Biodegradable Municipal Waste (BMW) Landfill Ban which comes into effect on 31 December 2025. We will engage with the sector, sharing regulatory guidance to help industry understand what they need to do to comply.

Our Integrated Authorisation Framework will be expanded to the regulation of water, waste management and industrial activities (pollution prevention and control (PPC)). This will provide a new common framework for authorisations and enforcement using a risk-based, proportionate approach – helping to bring businesses into compliance quickly, easily and cost effectively.

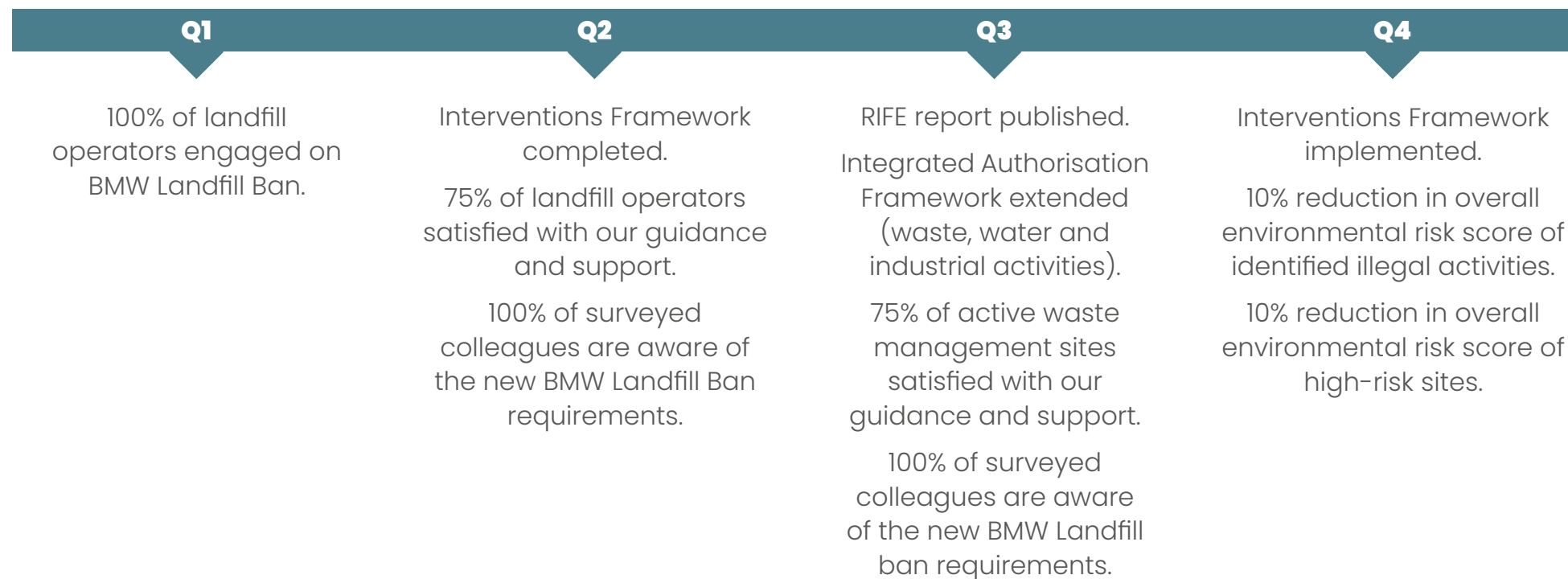
We will develop an Interventions Framework to guide how we use intelligence-led interventions to create hostile conditions for those that choose not to comply with the law, thereby helping to protect communities blighted by environmental crime.

All our work in this area requires robust and accurate data and information. As part of our 'Future of Regulation' transformation programme, we will continue the development and build of two tools – our Environmental Performance Assessment Scheme (EPAS) and our new online public register.

Our 2025/26 objectives

- Ensure key stakeholders are engaged and informed on the necessary preparations required for compliance with the Biodegradable Municipal Waste (BMW) Landfill Ban.
- Tackle environmental crime using interventions approach.

Our 2025/26 roadmap



Our organisation

We are committed to public service reform, ensuring that we are a well-run organisation, using a digital first approach, achieving best value for the resources invested in us. We also value our highly talented people and their diverse skills and experience and are committed to supporting our people to do great work for Scotland's environment and creating a positive place to work.

We will deliver new digital contact capabilities with a strong focus on customer satisfaction and quality of service. We will strengthen our community engagement and public participation approach to better enable communities and businesses to connect with us and help us to design the services they use.

We will scope our Data and Digital strategies to facilitate our transformation goals, drive operational efficiencies and be an enabler for an agile organisation.

Delivering our People Strategy, we will continue to build a safe, welcoming and high performing environment which empowers our colleagues to deliver to their full potential. Our values (Purposeful, Professional and Passionate) and Behaviours Framework introduced last year, are fundamental to this and are woven into everything we do.

During 2025/26, we will look at opportunities to improve how we engage with our colleagues on a range of topics to ensure we are using their insight to foster the best possible working environment and positive culture. We will launch our strategic approach to well-being including access to an internal mental health first aid programme. We will continue to implement our strategic approach to learning, enhancing our development and learning opportunities and identifying future requirements through skills mapping. A strong focus will be on health and safety, ensuring colleagues have the knowledge, tools, guidance and support to undertake their activities safely.

We will launch and promote our unique employer brand (Passionately Purposeful), providing an authentic and compelling picture of why a career with us makes a difference to Scotland's environment. Transformation of our recruitment process, including introducing a new Applicant Tracking System, will improve candidate and hiring manager experience and enhance our selection processes.

We refreshed our Equality and Human Rights approach which has enhanced how we consider the different needs of our people, our customers and the communities we serve. This year, we will review our equality outcomes, reflecting on our progress to date and refreshing as need be, to identify the most impactful way that we can progress equality, tackle discrimination and harassment, and promote good relations between different groups.

Our refreshed Corporate Procurement Strategy will drive focus on delivering social, economic and environmental benefits through our procurement activities, ensuring we maximise the value and impact of our resources.

Our 2025/26 objectives

- Introduce effective digital public services for customers.
- Deliver our People Strategy to build a safe, welcoming and high performing environment which empowers our people to be purposeful, professional and passionate.

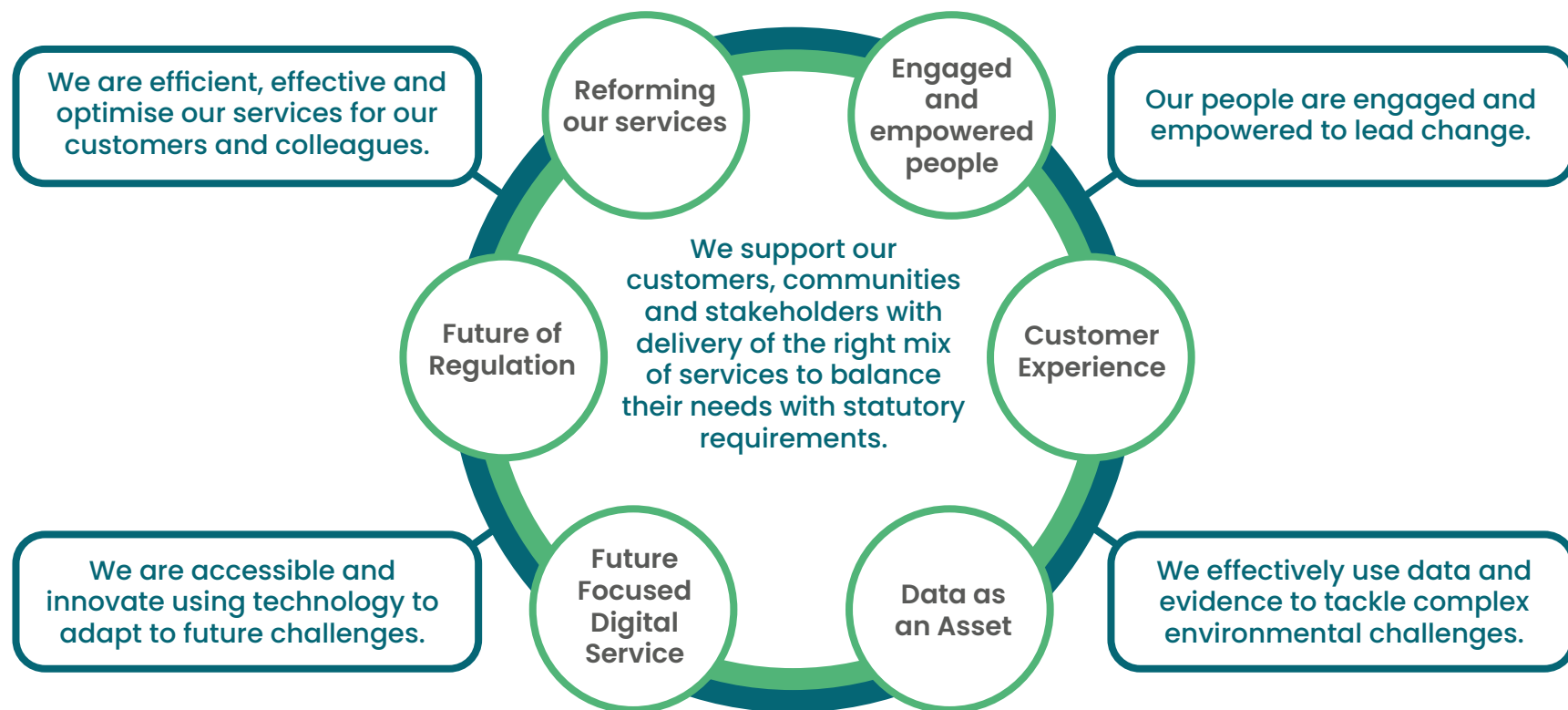
Our 2025/26 roadmap

Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4
Digital contact methods for customers and public launched. Strategic approach to wellbeing launched. Offer of mental health and wellbeing support to colleagues improved.	Customer service standards implemented. Our employer brand and career role profiles launched.	Colleague engagement plan launched. 75% of recruiting managers reporting improved satisfaction with applicant tracking system. Data Strategy launched. Digital Strategy launched.	Equality outcomes reviewed. 50% of colleagues accessing leadership or personal development opportunities.

Our transformation

In preparing SEPA for the future we will accelerate our transformation. Our vision is that SEPA is sustainable, dynamic and future focused, and to achieve this we have been developing our transformation programme.

Our ambitious programme is focused on the priority areas of the work that we do for our stakeholders, the public and communities of Scotland. Our key areas of focus will be on the Future of Regulation, Customer Experience, Data as an Asset and Future Focused Digital Services.



Our performance

We will judge our success by how well we are delivering for Scotland's environment, so we can be held to account by Scottish Ministers and the people and communities of Scotland.

We are continuing to strengthen and shape our performance framework to more effectively report on delivery against our strategic objectives, our impact on the environment in Scotland and our organisational effectiveness.

We are challenging ourselves to develop measures and milestones that illustrate the golden thread running from Government priorities and policies, through our [Corporate Plan](#) and Annual Operating Plan down to operational delivery, driving change against our strategic priorities. This will ensure we capture and represent the value and benefits delivered from our work and, ultimately, ensure the right levels of progress are being made.

Our measures

We have developed a suite of strategic and operational key performance indicators (KPIs) aligned to our corporate plan priorities. They measure how we are fulfilling our long-term mission of protecting Scotland's environment and communities, as well as how we are performing as an organisation overall. These are consistent over the three-year period of our Corporate Plan, providing a continuous view of our strategic and operational performance.

We recognise our ability and level of control to influence or direct performance for these KPIs can vary. Therefore, we are clear on whether we:

- | | |
|---|---|
| <p>1. Indirectly influence – Longer term, 'state of the environment' measures which help us understand how our environment is changing over time. We contribute to these as part of a complex system, alongside a range of other partners and interventions. We are responsible for reporting Scottish data but are not wholly responsible for achieving these measures.</p> | <p>2. Directly influence – Short to medium-term measures that demonstrate where and how we add value or facilitate impact, working either directly or collaboratively.</p> <p>3. Directly control – Typically short-term measures where we have more autonomy over decision making, usually internally focused.</p> |
|---|---|

We are complementing these KPIs by developing annual objectives and key results (OKRs). OKRs set out our clear, short-term areas of focus for us to target ambitious, measurable change and impact, and help align resources with our strategic priorities. We will revise these on an annual basis, alongside any significant milestones or outputs, to reflect our priorities for each year. We will also look to confirm further key results in year as our plans mature or as we can more accurately determine and quantify success.

Taken together, our KPIs and OKRs provide an integrated perspective, enabling us to reflect on progress towards our strategic priorities and identify where we can drive improvements. This will help ensure SEPA's priorities are clearly communicated and understood to key stakeholders, providing a more complete picture of how well we are meeting our ambition.

Our measures and metrics will continue to evolve, becoming more robust as we build capability and develop understanding of how we use them to inform decision making. We will report progress against our performance measures and milestones through our quarterly performance reports and Annual Report and Accounts.

Net zero

Key strategic and operational performance indicators

Aim	Measure	Trajectory	Measure type
Greenhouse gas emissions from regulated sites are reducing.	Annual greenhouse gas emissions in the Scottish Pollutant Release Inventory.	Reducing	Strategic - Indirect influence
Direct greenhouse gas emissions from our workspaces and transport are reducing.	Annual reports of greenhouse gas emission by SEPA.	Reducing	Strategic - Direct control
Reducing our carbon footprint.	Percentage of vehicles in SEPA fleet that are ultra-low emissions.	Increasing	Operational - Direct control
Reducing our carbon footprint and improving financial efficiency.	Number of SEPA solely owned or leased buildings/co-located workspaces.	Reducing	Operational - Direct control

2025/26 annual objectives and key results

Our objective
Develop our regulatory role with a more integrated approach to energy efficiency and industrial decarbonisation.
Key results
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 100% of requested energy efficiency data received from energy intensive sites. (Q2) Direct engagement with three pilot sites, from the list of energy intensive sites. (Q3) Deliver options assessment of regulatory approaches in relation to energy efficiency and industrial decarbonisation. (Q4)

Our objective

Transform our workspaces and fleet to minimise emissions, reduce costs and move to co-located workspaces by default and zero emissions fleet by 2030.

Key results

1. Launch of our Fleet Strategy, working to reduce emissions in our owned vehicle fleet. (Q1)
2. 100% of all business travel by fleet vehicle is tracked. (Q3)
3. Reduce mileage of non-SEPA owned fleet vehicles by 10%. (Q4)
4. 5% reduction of greenhouse gas emissions (carbon savings) from SEPA workspaces by realising savings through workspaces transformation. (Q4)

Climate resilience

Key strategic and operational performance indicators

Aim	Measure	Trajectory	Measure type
Warnings and alerts are issued for all significant flood events.	<u>Number of flood warnings and alerts issued by SEPA.</u>	Maintaining	Strategic – Direct Control
Warnings and alerts are issued for all significant water scarcity events.	<u>Number of water scarcity warnings and alerts issued by SEPA.</u>	Maintaining	Strategic – Direct Control
Consistently provide timely and accurate flood risk information to internal and external partners, supporting informed decision-making.	Percentage of daily Flood Guidance Statements and Scottish Flood Forecasts issued on time.	Maintaining	Operational – Direct Control
Consistently provide timely and accurate water scarcity information to internal and external partners, supporting informed decision-making.	Percentage of water scarcity warnings and alerts issued on time.	Maintaining	Operational – Direct Control
New developments are approved in accordance with our advice on flood risk avoidance.	Proportion of developments approved in accordance with our advice on flood risk.	Maintaining	Strategic – Direct Influence
Our advice is timely and impactful, enabling action within statutory deadlines.	Percentage of responses to planning consultations within time.	Increasing	Operational – Direct Control
Indicates the usage and accessibility of SEPA's flood warning services, highlighting public reliance on SEPA's digital resources during flood events.	Number of people accessing flood warning information on SEPA's website.	Maintaining	Operational – Direct Influence
Engagement and awareness of SEPA's flooding information and advice, contributing to people's preparedness for emergencies.	Number of people registered to Floodline to receive flood alerts and warnings.	Increasing	Operational – Direct Influence

2025/26 annual objectives and key results

Our objective

Improve awareness and understanding of flood and drought risk, including implications of climate change, to support effective decision making.

Key results

1. Complete risk assessment database build to produce statistical output for flood risk assessment service reporting. (Q2)
2. Publish a revised national flood risk assessment for Scotland by 31 December 2025. (Q3)
3. Engage five national utility infrastructure owners to increase awareness of the potential wider impacts of flooding. (Q4)
4. All irrigation licences varied to include a time limited water scarcity condition. (Q4)

Our objectives

Ensure effective and resilient flood services which are designed to meet future requirements.

Key results

1. Review all 10 flood services to identify improvements and future design requirements. (Q2)
 2. Increase the number of stations that deliver hydrometry data in near real time (within 30 minutes) from 70% to 95%. (Q4)
 3. Deliver upgraded flood warning models in two highest priority areas. (Q4)
- Further key result under development and to be confirmed in year.

Water environment

Key strategic and operational performance indicators

Aim	Measure	Trajectory	Measure type
The condition of the water environment is improving.	<u>Classification of water bodies across Scotland.</u>	Increasing	Strategic – Direct influence
Prevent deterioration of, and improve, water quality.	Number of surface water bodies at High, Good, Moderate, Poor or Bad status/potential for water quality.	Improvement	Strategic – Direct influence
Prevent deterioration of, and improve, water flows and levels.	Number of surface water bodies at High, Good, Moderate, Poor or Bad status/potential for water flows and levels.	Improvement	Strategic – Direct influence
Prevent deterioration of, and improve, physical condition of water bodies.	Number of surface water bodies at High, Good, Moderate, Poor or Bad status/potential for physical condition.	Improvement	Strategic – Direct influence
Prevent deterioration of, and improve, access for fish migration.	Number of surface water bodies at High, Good, Moderate, Poor or Bad status/potential for access for fish migration.	Improvement	Strategic – Direct influence
Monitor, prevent deterioration and improve the quality of Scotland's bathing waters, ensuring they meet or exceed established standards for public health and environmental quality.	Percentage of bathing waters meeting sufficient or better/higher quality standards.	Improvement	Strategic – Direct influence

2025/26 annual objectives and key results

Our objective

Deliver river basin management plan programme of actions to improve the water environment.

Key results

1. Review and update our monitoring strategy for the water environment. (Q3)
2. Complete 2025 monitoring plan for water environment. (Q4)
3. 90% of our programme of actions for the water environment are delivered. (Q4)
2. Three projects for the water environment are delivered by 31 March 2026. (Q4)

Our objective

Prepare for future cycles of river basin management planning.

Key results

1. 100% completion of review of monitoring network for classification to understand the pressures and impacts, to prepare for the 2026 monitoring plan. (Q3)
2. Publish Significant Water Management Issues report by 22 December 2025. (Q3)
3. Target engagement with 100% of identified key stakeholders for significant water management issues consultation by 31 March 2026. (Q4)

Resource efficiency

Key strategic and operational performance indicator

Aim	Measure	Trajectory	Measure type
The amount of material disposed of to landfill is reducing.	Rates of waste to landfill in annual Scottish household waste data .	Reducing	Strategic - Indirect influence

2025/26 annual objective and key results

Our objective
Prepare to support the 2026/27 phase of the UK digital waste tracking service implementation by DEFRA and Scottish Government.
Key results
<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Launch baseline survey of Scotland's businesses to assess awareness of the UK digital waste tracking service. (Q2)2. 50% of SEPA's requirements are incorporated into the UK digital waste tracking service (by the DEFRA digital build team) and it is ready for testing by SEPA users. (Q4)3. SEPA is ready to support the introduction of the UK Digital Service by DEFRA for Scotland's users in 2026. (Q4)

Business environmental performance

Key strategic and operational performance indicators

Aim	Measure	Trajectory	Measure type
The amount of material disposed of to landfill is reducing.	<u>Rates of waste to landfill in annual Scottish household waste data.</u>	Reducing	Strategic – Indirect influence
SEPA's ability to meet statutory obligations across various sectors.	Percentage of statutory reviews completed.	Increasing	Operational – Direct control
SEPA provides timely and accurate environmental data, on or before the planned release date.	Percentage of (environmental monitoring) statutory reports published by the scheduled date.	Increasing	Operational – Direct control
SEPA processes applications efficiently and issues decisions within the legal deadlines.	Percentage of applications determined within statutory determination times.	Increasing	Operational – Direct control

2025/26 annual objectives and key results

Our objective

Ensure key stakeholders are engaged and informed on the necessary preparations required for compliance with the Biodegradable Municipal Waste (BMW) Landfill Ban.

Key results

1. 100% of landfill operators engaged through seminar and one to one engagement by 30 June 2025, to help them prepare for compliance with BMW Landfill Ban. (Q1)
2. 75% of landfill operators surveyed are satisfied with our guidance and support. (Q2)
3. Engage 100% of identified active waste management sites to raise awareness and help them prepare for compliance with BMW Landfill Ban. (Q2)
4. 75% of active waste management sites surveyed are satisfied with our guidance and support. (Q3)
5. 100% of surveyed SEPA waste regulation colleagues are aware of the BMW Landfill Ban and compliance requirements by December 2025. (Q3)

Our objective

Tackle environmental crime using interventions approach.

Key results

1. Complete an interventions framework to enhance our current SEPA toolkit and improve partnership working. (Q2)
2. Reduce the overall environmental risk score of identified illegal activities by 10%, from 2024/25 baseline, through targeted interventions. (Q4)
3. Lower the overall environmental risk score of high-risk sites by 10% from 2024/25 baseline. (Q4)
4. Implement and establish the interventions framework to increase our success in disrupting high risk environmental crime. (Q4)

Our organisation

2025/26 annual objectives and key results

Our objective

Introduce effective digital public services for customers.

Key results

1. Launch of new digital contact methods for our customers and the public to contact SEPA. (Q1)
 2. Customer service standards implemented. (Q2)
- Further key results under development and to be confirmed in year.

Our objective

Deliver our People Strategy to build a safe, welcoming and high performing environment which empowers our people to be purposeful, professional and passionate.

Key results

1. Launch strategic approach to wellbeing and improved offer of mental health and wellbeing support to colleagues. (Q1)
2. Launch our employer brand and career role profiles, bringing to life the unique career opportunities at SEPA. (Q2)
3. 75% of recruiting managers reporting improved satisfaction with applicant tracking system. (Q3)
4. Launch colleague engagement plan. (Q3)
5. 50% of colleagues accessing leadership or personal development opportunities through e-learning, workshops and facilitated programmes. (Q4)

Our resources

Our Annual Operating Plan will be delivered within our current year's financial allocation and with existing and planned resources. Our funding comprises of Grant in Aid of £49.8 million plus funding from our charging regimes of £55.9 million, recovering relevant costs of our regulatory activities and £1.4 million in other income. Together, this provides us with £107 million to invest in protecting and improving Scotland's environment, contributing to the delivery of our day-to-day activities and key areas of focus for 2025/26.

Income and expenditure for 2025/26

Revenue income and expenditure account (excludes Capital)	Budget 2025/26 £000's
Grant in Aid	49,780
Charging schemes	55,877
Other income	1,361
Total income	107,018
Staff costs	75,423
Other staff costs	360
Transport costs	1,066
Property costs	4,587
Supplies and services	18,202
Total expenditure	99,638
Depreciation / impairments	7,380
Total operating costs	107,018

Other income for 2025/26

Other income	Budget 2025/26 £000's
Bank interest	50
Transfrontier free rider	372
Payments from other agencies	263
Scottish landfill tax	350
Landfill communities fund	149
Facilities recharges	157
Other income	20
Total other income	1,361

Engaging with us

As Scotland'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 wellbeing benefits, and sustainable economic growth.**

It is therefore important we engage with, and understand the views and priorities of, Scotland's diverse communities. To help us achieve this, we talk with and engage those who matter most – our communities, the businesses we regulate and their stakeholders, and our partners.

We welcome involvement in our policy making and invite comments on any of the current consultations available through our [SEPA Consultation Hub](#). Closed consultations, as well as our responses to third party consultations, are also available to view.

We are committed to continuous improvement in all that we do. If you have something to tell us about our Annual Operating Plan, or our services, please [Contact us](#). Further information can also be found on the [SEPA website](#).

Equality, diversity and inclusion

Equality, diversity and inclusion is integral to all our work, our service provision and our interactions with communities and businesses as well as our people.

Our [Equality Outcomes](#) were introduced in 2022 and reflect our commitment to developing and promoting best practice. We have recently published our [Equality Mainstreaming and Outcomes Report for 2025](#) along with our [People Information Report 2025](#), where we assess our performance against our Equality Outcomes.

This plan was subject to an Equality and Human Rights Impact Assessment (EqHRIA) in compliance with the Scottish Public Sector Equality Duty. The [assessment](#) is published on our website.

For information on accessing this document in an alternative format or language, please contact SEPA by emailing equalities@sepa.org.uk.