Scottish Environment Protection Agency
Buidheann Dìon Àrainneachd na h-Alba

For the future of our environment

River Basin Management Planning in Scotland, Statement of Consultation Steps

14th November 2024

Statement of consultation opportunities during development of the next River Basin Management Plan for Scotland.

Overview

This statement sets out the steps SEPA will take to engage stakeholders in the review and updating of the River Basin Management Plan (RBMP) for Scotland.

Introduction

The River Basin Management Plan (RBMP) is Scotland's route map for protecting and improving the water environment. The plan sets out what the Scottish Government, SEPA, responsible authorities and others will do to maximise the benefits a healthy water environment can bring for wildlife, people and businesses.

The RBMP is reviewed and updated every six years. The first plan was published in 2009, the second in 2015, and third plan in 2021.

The next RBMP (called RBMP4) is due to be published in December 2027. This statement explains the steps we intend to take to involve you in the development of RBMP4. We are

proposing to work with public bodies, businesses, land managers and voluntary groups, building and strengthening the partnerships already established.

Timetable for updating the plan – when and how you can get involved.

We will publish the updated RBMP4 for Scotland in December 2027. Prior to publication, there will be two consultation opportunities of six months duration when you can help develop and influence the plan. These are:

By 22nd December 2025

There will be an opportunity to comment on the Significant Water Management Issues (SWMI) report. This report sets out the significant issues that adversely affect the quality of Scotland's water environment. These issues will form the basis for new or updated objectives and measures included in the draft RBMP4. The consultation will be open for six months, closing in June 2026.

By 22nd December 2026

An opportunity to comment on the draft version of RBMP4. We propose that this will take the form of a high-level summary supported by an interactive online tool, showing all the relevant data and draft objectives per water body. The draft plan will be open for consultation for six months, closing in June 2027.

Working in partnership

In addition to the formal consultations set out above, we will continue to work in partnership with responsible authorities, other public bodies, businesses, land managers and not for profit organisations and groups to help implement the third RBMP which runs until 2027.

During the development of RBMP4 we will continue to engage with our network of national and regional partners. In developing objectives and measures for RBMP4 we will continue to work closely with Scottish Water, land managers, hydroelectricity generators, distillers, local authorities, fisheries trusts and others on setting priorities and identifying actions.

Links to other plans and policies

We will continue to ensure alignment of RBMPs with many related plans and policies, including; land use planning, flood risk management planning, forestry plans and strategies, marine planning and others. We will place particular emphasis on strengthening links with the final draft Scottish Biodiversity Strategy to 2045 and Scotland's Climate Change Plan to ensure RBMP4 plays a central role in helping Scotland tackle the twin crises of climate change and biodiversity loss.

Cross-border arrangements for Solway Tweed

SEPA and the Environment Agency (EA) share responsibility for river basin management planning for the cross-border Solway Tweed river basin district. A separate document outlining consultation processes for the Solway Tweed RBMP4 is available. We are proposing to build on the approach developed for RBMP3 and enhance the use of information and data published in separate national repositories covering the Scotland and England parts of the river basin district respectively. We will supplement this with information on how we coordinate our work for cross-border catchments and water bodies. In addition, SEPA will host a single point of contact for the Solway Tweed consultations and final plan. More detail on the Solway Tweed statement can be found on SEPA's website.

If you wish to make any representations relating to this summary, you can contact us at RBMP@SEPA.org.uk before 14th May 2025

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

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