

**Chair and Board Report**

February 2025

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# Introduction

This report provides an update on activities carried out by the Chair and Board since the last Agency Board meeting held on 26 November 2024. These activities have been undertaken to align with our strategic priorities.

# Chair’s Commitments

| **Meeting Date** | **Topic** | **Participants** | **Location** |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| 27 November 2024 | Overview of Scottish Forum on Natural Capital  | SEPA - Innovation Unit Manager & Principal Policy Officer | MS Teams |
| 05 December 2024 | Non-Executive Directors (NXD) in-person event | External event – various attendees  | Edinburgh |
| 09 December 2024 | Scottish Leaders Forum (SLF) drop-in session | External event  | Zoom |
| 09 December 2024 | Nature Finance Lab | External event  | Edinburgh |
| 10 December 2024 | Audit, Risk and Assurance Committee meeting | Audit, Risk and Assurance Committee | MS Teams |
| 11 December 2024 | Carbon Literacy Workshop 1 | Various SEPA employees | MS Teams |
| 16 December 2024 | Public Service Reform (PSR) Clusters | Taylor Clarke - Clive Martlew  | MS Teams |
| 17 December 2024 | Carbon Literacy Workshop 2 | Various SEPA employees | MS Teams |
| 07 January 2025 | Natural Capital - SEPA/ICAEW (Institute of Chartered Accountants in England & Wales) | SEPA - Innovation Unit Manager, Principal Policy Officer, Head of Engagement and InsightICAEW - Richard Spencer andHenning DiederichsCapitals Coalition - Tim Polaszek | MS Teams |
| 21 January 2025 | Health and Safety (H&S) Board Champions meeting | SEPA – Chief Officer People, Workspaces and Development, and Chief Operating Officer Data, Evidence, and Innovation, and Board Champion Group Members | MS Teams |
| 21 January 2025 | Regulatory update | SEPA – Chief Operating Officer Regulation, Business and Environment | MS Teams |
| 22 January 2025 | Board and Budget Planning | SEPA – Chief Officer Governance, Performance and Engagement, and Clerk to the Board | ASB |
| 22 January 2025 | Introductions and Strategic Engagement | SEPA – Head of Engagement and Insight, and Head of Strategy and Communications | ASB |
| 22 January 2025 | Chapter Zero roundtable and networking | External event | Edinburgh |
| 23 January 2025 | Association of Chief Executives (ACE) and Public Chairs’ Forum (PCF) Quarterly Seminar: What does a mission-driven Government mean for public bodies and how to support its delivery | External Event | Zoom |
| 23 January 2025 | Board session planning for Board Strategy days | SEPA – Chief Officer Governance, Performance and Engagement and Chief Executive | MS Teams |
| 27 January 2025 | Digital / Budget update | SEPA – Chief Officer Finance, Modernisation and Digital | MS Teams |
| 29 & 30 January 2025 | Agency Board Site Visit and Strategy Day | Board members, Corporate Leadership Team (CLT) various SEPA, Aberdeenshire Council | Stonehaven & Aberdeen |
| 30 January 2025 | Dinner with the CEOs of City of Edinburgh Council and Forth Ports | External Event | Edinburgh |
| 31 January 2025 | Meeting with Programme Leader for Renewable and Sustainable Engineering  | University of Wrexham - David Sprake | MS Teams |
| 03 February 2025 | VIBES Update | SEPA – Chief Officer Governance, Performance and Engagement | MS Teams |
| 04 February 2025 | VIBES Panel Update for Celebration Event | SEPA – Unit Manager, Senior Policy Officer and Innovation specialist-VIBES lead 2024 | MS Teams |
| 04 February 2025 | Natural Capital Approaches | ICAEW - Richard Spencer andHenning DiederichsCapitals Coalition - Tim Polaszek | MS Teams |
| 04 February 2025 | Introductory call with Head of Data and Analysis | SEPA – Head of Data and Analysis | MS Teams |
| 05 February 2025 | Board Recruitment/Skills Matrix | SEPA – Clerk to the Board | ASB |
| 05 February 2025 | Follow up to Ethical Standards Commissioner survey  | Ethical Standards Commissioner – Melanie Stronach | MS Teams |
| 06 February 2025 | Natural Capital Follow Up | SEPA - Innovation Unit Manager, Principal Policy Officer, Head of Engagement and InsightICAEW - Richard Spencer andHenning DiederichsCapitals Coalition - Tim Polaszek | MS Teams |
| **Planned meetings following report submission on 14 February 2025** |
| 17 February 2025 | Public Sector Reform Summit | External Event | University of Strathclyde |
| 20 February 2025 | H&S Board Champions meeting | SEPA – Chief Officer People, Workspaces and Development, and Chief Operating Officer Data, Evidence, and Innovation, and Board Champion Group Members | MS Teams |

Personal development undertaken:

* Boards Oversight of Sustainability for Value Creation from Boards Impact Forum.

Regular meetings which were also undertaken since the Board meeting on 26 November 2024:

* Weekly check-ins with the Clerk to the Board
* Monthly meeting with the Deputy Chair to the Agency Board
* Regular and ad-hoc check-ins with Board Members
* Fortnightly check-ins with the Chief Executive
* Monthly Forward look Board planning meetings.

# Board Engagement

Board Activities and Updates

The Audit, Risk & Assurance (ARAC) Committee took place on 10 December 2024. An update will be provided by the Chair of ARAC during the Board Meeting on 25 February 2025 as a separate agenda item.

The series of Board Information Sessions continued with a focus on Information Governance on 21 January 2025. This session was recorded and will be accessible to all Board Members.

The Chair and Board Members attended a site visit to Stonehaven Flood Protection Scheme on 29 January 2025. This follows on from Flooding discussion at the 26 November 2024 Board meeting, providing an opportunity for a site visit to see flood defences. This was followed by a Strategy Day in Aberdeen with members of the Corporate Leadership Team (CLT) on 30 January 2025. The day was comprised of rich discussions on SEPA’s long term vision/strategy and included a laboratory visit at Inverdee House to tour the newly refurbished facilities. The Chair extends her thanks to all those involved in the planning and facilitation of an interactive and informative two days.

The Chair, Deputy Chair and Chair of the Audit, Risk & Assurance committee recently undertook security vetting and have each been granted National Security Clearance at Security Check (SC) Level. Feedback received indicates this was a straightforward process with minimal time commitment.

All Board Members and the Chair have now completed the required Carbon Literacy training and workshops.

Board Champions Update

The Terms of Reference (ToR) for the Transformation Board Champion Group has been updated to reflect a change in CLT membership. The CLT lead is Kirsty-Louise Campbell, Chief Officer Governance, Performance and Engagement.

The following Board Champions meetings have taken place since the November Board meeting:

| **Meeting Date** | **Meeting** | **Location** |
| --- | --- | --- |
| 10 January 2025 | Communications & Public Relations (PR) | MS Teams |
| 20 January 2025 | Risk | MS Teams |
| 21 January 2025 | Health & Safety | MS Teams |
| **Planned meetings following report submission on 14 February 2025** |
| 20 February 2025 | Health & Safety | MS Teams |
| 20 February 2025 | Environmental Performance Assessment Scheme (EPAS) | MS Teams |
| 25 February 2025 | Transformation | MS Teams |
| 25 February 2025 | Flooding Service | MS Teams |

Board Governance

All Commitment of Duties forms for 2024 have now been signed and returned by Board Members. The forms confirm the fulfilment of the number of days committed to SEPA in a calendar year as outlined in Board Member contracts.

The 2024 Board Member appraisal cycle is complete. All Board Members had an individual appraisal meeting over the course of November 2024 with paperwork now submitted to the Scottish Government. Board Member Appraisals for 2025 will commence in September. Prior to this, a bi-annual 1-1 meeting with each Board Member will take place throughout May and June.

Board planning meetings took place in January, and I am pleased to endorse the 2025-2026 calendar of meetings presented on the Board agenda for the meeting on 25 February 2025.

As advised at the Agency Board meeting on 26 November 2024, I will pass on the role of Chair of the People & Resources Committee. A new proposed Chair is presented here for approval under the SEPA and Board Governance paper.

As part of the Governance Performance and Engagement (GPE) portfolio redesign, there have been changes to the Communications team structure. Work is now underway to establish a new stakeholder engagement plan for 2025. The timeline of the strategy will be confirmed to the Board in due course.

**Lisa Tennant**

**Chair**

**February 2025**