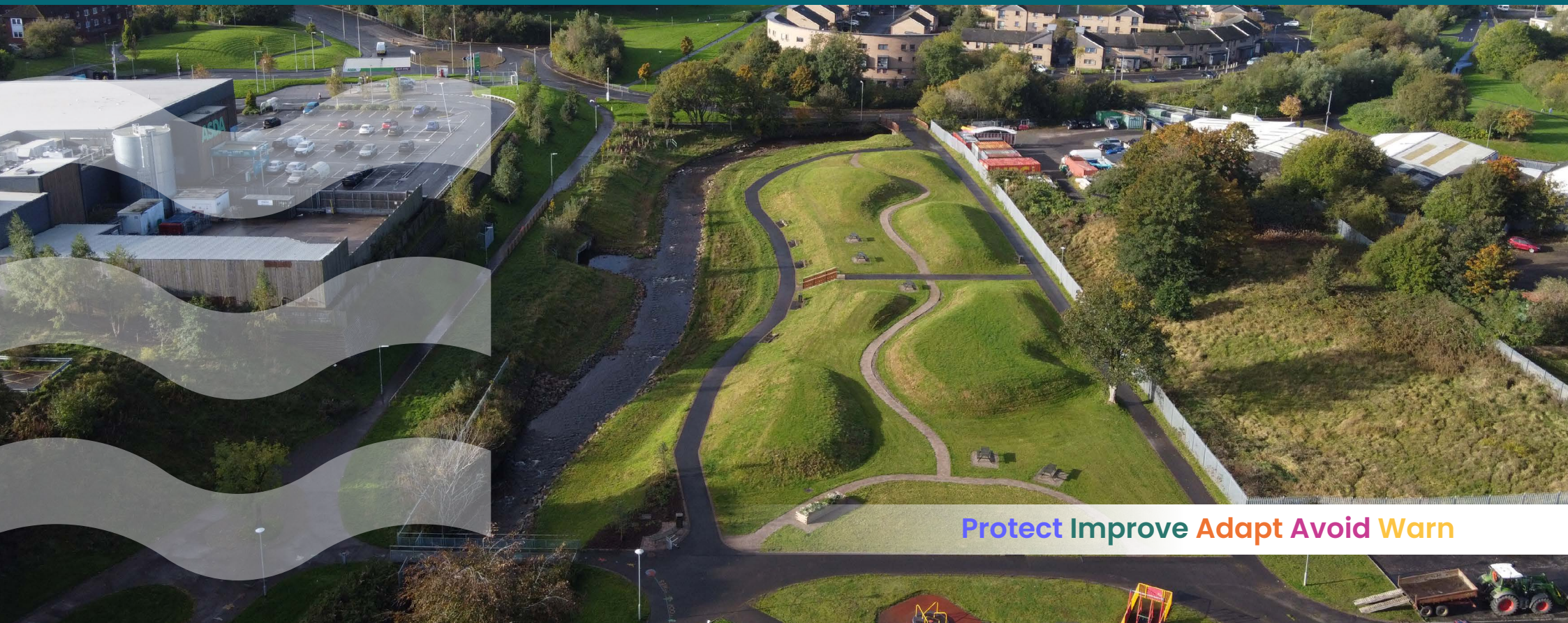


Our Annual Operating Plan

2024–2025



Protect Improve Adapt Avoid Warn

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Foreword



Nicole Paterson
Chief Executive

This is an important and exciting year for us. We have recently published our three-year Corporate Plan and have developed five strategic priorities to focus our work: **net zero, climate resilience, water environment, resource efficiency** and **business environmental performance**.

Our Corporate Plan comes at a time when we know our environment is on the frontline of the global crises of climate change and biodiversity. We also know that the scale and pace is significant and that we need to do more to prepare and act with urgency.

More than ever, we must have strong leadership, ambition, confidence and collaborative working to see meaningful change. We must deliver our work through partnerships and by connecting with businesses and communities so they can participate in our efforts to make a difference to the environment and to peoples' lives.

This is our first Annual Operating Plan underneath our new Corporate Plan. It sets out both 'what we do' and our 'areas of focus' that drive our determination to play our lead role in safeguarding Scotland's environment for our future generations.

Earlier this year, we welcomed our new Chair and six new board members. We have refreshed our Corporate Leadership Team and we are resetting our organisation, focusing on outcomes, our people and targeting our resources to maximise environmental benefit. All of which strengthens our commitment to reform, improvement and transformation.

As we look to the year ahead, we know that there is, and will continue to be, more to be done. We have strong foundations on which to build and we are committed to playing our leadership role in protecting and improving Scotland's environment.

Ro-ràdh



Nicole Paterson
Ceannard

Is e bliadhna chudromach, bhrosnachail a tha seo dhuinn. Tha sinn air ar Plana Corporra trì-bliadhna fhoillseachadh o chionn ghoirid agus tha sinn air còig prìomhachasan ro-innleachdail a leasachadh air am bi ar n-obair a' cuimseachadh: **neoni lom, foghainteachd gnàth-thìde, àrainneachd uisge, èifeachd ghoireasan, agus coileanadh àrainneachdail gnìomhachais.**

Tha ar Plana Corporra a' nochdadh aig àm nuair a tha ar n-àrainneachd air thùs na strì anns an dà èiginn chruinneil de dh'atharrachadh na gnàth-thìde agus call bith-iomadachd. Tha fios againn cuideachd gu bheil meud agus astar na h-èiginn susbainteach agus gum feum sinn barrachd a dhèanamh gus ullachadh agus a dhol an gnìomh sa bhad.

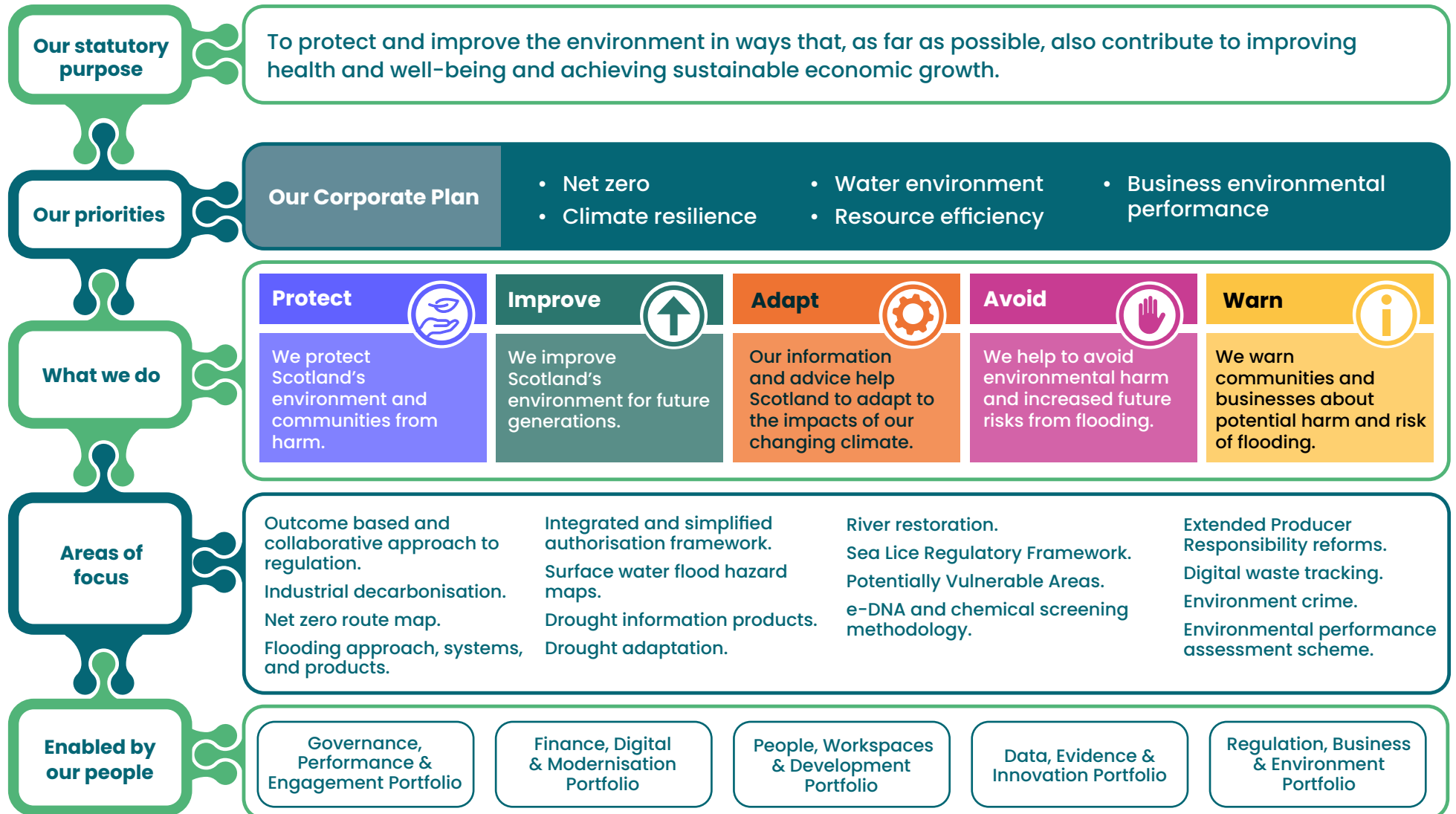
Nas motha na bha e a-riamh, feumaidh ceannardas làidir, mòr-mhiann is misneachd a bhith againn agus feumaidh sinn obair còmhla gus atharrachadh brìoghmhor fhaicinn. Feumaidh sinn obair tro chom-pàirteachasan agus ceangal ri gnìomhachasan agus coimhearsnachdan gus an urrainn dhaibh pàirt a ghabhail nar n-oidhirpean airson eadar-dhealachadh a dhèanamh don àrainneachd agus do bheatha dhaoine.

Seo a' chiad Phlana Obrachaidh Bliadhnail againn fon Phlana Chorporra ùr againn. Tha e ag innse 'na bhios sinn a' dèanamh' agus na 'raointean cuimseachaidh' againn a tha a' stiùireadh ar dìongmhaltas a bhith sa phrìomh àite a' dìon àrainneachd na h-Alba airson nan ginealaichean ri teachd.

Na bu tràithe am-bliadhna, chuir sinn fàilte air a' Chathraiche ùr againn agus sianar bhall ùr a' Bhùird. Tha sinn air an Sgioba Stiùiridh Chorporra againn ùrachadh agus tha sinn ag ath-eagrachadh ar buidhne, a' cuimseachadh air builean agus air ar daoine, agus a' riarachadh ar goireasan gus buannachd àrainneachdail a chur am meud. Tha seo uile a' neartachadh ar dealais airson ath-leasachadh, piseach agus cruth-atharrachadh.

Mar a choimheadas sinn ris a' bhliadhna a tha romhainn, tha fios gu bheil, agus gum bi, barrachd ri dhèanamh. Tha bunait làidir againn air an tog sinn, agus tha sinn dealasach a thaobh ceannardas a nochdadh ann a bhith a' dìon agus a' leasachadh àrainneachd na h-Alba.

Our plan on a page



Working together for the future of the environment

Scotland's environment is a unique and valuable resource, that sits at the heart of our nation's health, well-being and prosperity. We recognise this in our statutory purpose **'To protect and improve the environment in ways that, as far as possible, also contribute to improving health and well-being and achieving sustainable economic growth.'**

We also recognise the imperative of working collaboratively with our partners, stakeholders and local communities, both to safeguard this precious resource and to sustainably manage it so we pass on a healthy and thriving environment for our future generations.

We will play a lead role in making this happen. Our organisational reset will strengthen collaboration across the Agency, promoting expertise and skills, innovation and reform, and a strong customer focus. We will continue to build partnerships and align ourselves to the strategies and actions of government and other partners – delivering more together than we can ourselves.

We will come together to **Protect, Improve, Adapt, Avoid** and **Warn**, and use our unique skills and knowledge to deliver for Scotland's environment.



Our latest information shows:

10

years of
restoring rivers
across Scotland.

Flooding advice given
on more than

1,400

planning applications.

Issued

426

flood alerts

520

flood warnings
and

7

severe flood warnings.

86%

of Scotland's water
environment is good or better
condition for water quality.

21

water scarcity
reports issued.

50%

estimated reduction in our
emissions from our move to
the new East Regional Hub.

With partners, completed
transformation of

£2.8m

Barrhead's Lavern water.






Completed over

8,700

permit
applications.

What we do

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

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

Our focus for 2024–2025

Our Corporate Plan 2024–2027 sets out **five priorities** to focus our work over the next three years:

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

Delivering these priorities requires a continuation of 'What we do' while also progressing specific 'Areas of focus' every year. Doing so, will mean that we continue to deliver high quality services while also investing in projects that will enable us to do more, to be more efficient and to have the greatest impact for Scotland's environment.

Net zero

Playing our part in helping Scotland to become a net zero country by 2045

What we do

We regulate industrial activities that generate greenhouse gas emissions.

We use our regulatory toolkit to drive more efficient energy and resource use.

Our planning role provides the opportunity to offer advice on avoiding or reducing greenhouse gas emissions.

The just transition to net zero requires innovation and collaboration. We help businesses explore new techniques through our expertise and partnerships, whilst also ensuring that the environment is protected and improved.

We reduce our own emissions, aiming to become net zero and striving to be an exemplar.

Areas of focus 2024–2025

- Pilot an outcome based and collaborative approach to regulation in the Grangemouth industrial cluster.
- Identify priority sites for industrial decarbonisation.
- Implement our net zero route map 2024–2026.

Climate resilience

Reducing the impacts of floods and droughts

What we do

We are Scotland's flood forecasting and warning authority and strategic flood risk management authority.

We issue water level and rainfall data, alerts, warnings and advice on risk if flooding is imminent, 365 days a year, 24/7.

We deliver advice to policy makers and responsible authorities on options for action to help communities adapt to the increasing risk from climate change.

We deliver flood risk advice, evidence and guidance on planning applications to avoid flood risk to new communities and businesses.

We provide a drought warning service and information to manage available water supplies.

We use our regulatory toolkit to help businesses adapt and be more resilient to climate change, including the regulation of water abstractions and the prevention of major accidents and hazards.

Areas of focus 2024–2025

- Enhance our flooding approach, systems and products based on community and partner research and feedback.
- Consult on and publish an updated set of Potentially Vulnerable Areas.
- Publish updated surface water flood hazard maps.
- Implement the recommendations of user research on our drought information products.
- Deliver a programme of engagement with land managers to discuss options for drought adaptation to improve their water resilience.

Water environment

Protecting and improving our rivers, lochs, groundwater, wetlands and seas

What we do

We work with businesses to protect the water environment, including bathing waters, water supply and reservoir safety.

We monitor our water environment to understand its condition and use this evidence to inform decisions, provide advice and promote best practice.

We restore rivers through our delivery of the Water Environment Fund.

We prepare, co-ordinate and deliver the River Basin Management Plans for Scotland and, in doing so, assess the state of the environment.

Areas of focus 2024–2025

- Deliver projects that restore rivers and remove or ease barriers to migratory fish.
- Implement our Sea Lice Regulatory Framework at marine pen fish farms.
- Implement innovative e-DNA and chemical screening methodology.

Resource efficiency

Playing our part in helping Scotland transition to a circular economy

What we do

We support policy development and implementation across the waste and resources sector, establishing regulatory frameworks where necessary and planning for the implementation of the Circular Economy (Scotland) Bill and Scotland's Circular Economy and Waste Route Map to 2030.

Using our regulatory toolkit, we deliver compliance and enforcement on landfill tax and manage Scotland's Landfill Communities Fund.

Areas of focus 2024-2025

- Deliver actions on digital disruption of illegal waste collection and fly-tipping.
- Prepare for the implementation of Extended Producer Responsibility reforms.
- Progress the implementation of digital waste tracking.

Business environmental performance

Securing high environmental performance from those that we regulate

What we do

We regulate businesses to protect and improve the environment. We provide advice and guidance, set standards, secure compliance and take appropriate action against those who do not comply with our legislation or authorisations.

We respond to, and investigate, environmental events and gather information from site inspections, environmental monitoring and operator reports.

We work in partnership, using our regulatory and other levers to tackle environmental criminal activity.

We monitor air quality as part of our regulatory oversight of Local Air Quality Management Plans and deliver actions towards the Cleaner Air for Scotland Strategy.

We monitor, authorise, verify compliance and provide advice and policy support for the regulation of radioactive substances.

Through our VIBES and NetRegs initiatives, we support innovation in the development of sustainable business practices and provide guidance, information and tools to enable environmentally responsible and compliant business practices.

Areas of focus 2024–2025

- Target interventions to disrupt, impact and reduce environmental crime.
- Consult on proposals for a new environmental performance assessment scheme.
- Progress the implementation of an integrated authorisation framework.

Our organisation

We are committed to reform, with a strong focus on delivering high-quality regulation and flooding services.

We will continue to innovate and deliver efficiencies that improve environmental outcomes for Scotland. Doing so will mean we not only improve our services but by making investments now, we can increase our resilience and save resources in future.

We will also continue to open our doors to allow organisations to work closely with us and enable communities and businesses to connect with us and help us to design the services they use.

Many of our services already deliver significant benefits for Scotland. Our work to protect and warn communities and businesses from flooding help them to take early and decisive action that can save lives and livelihoods as well as protecting critical infrastructure. Similarly, our work to protect air quality from pollution improves health outcomes which help to reduce burdens on the NHS.

To lead our transformation, we have developed our **One SEPA** programme that is evidence led and focuses on the key areas of **investing in our people, our systems, our regulation and our income**.



Our people are our greatest asset and drive our high levels of performance on a day-to-day basis – We need to have the right values, skills, support and resources for excellent service delivery.

We're progressing our values and our Employer Value Proposition for a strong and positive work environment.

Our systems enable use and access to our services – We are delivering digital transformation to drive operational efficiencies, be an enabler for an agile organisation and support partnership collaboration whilst providing high quality environmental and regulatory information to those who need it.

Our workspaces support our geographic footprint across Scotland – We are resetting our approach to our

workspaces and the way we work within them. This means seeking opportunities to share, optimising our estate so that we can collaborate, save money and save emissions.

Our regulation and flooding services are critical to tackling the climate and biodiversity crises – We are implementing new integrated and streamlined processes that support delivery of our duties for the people of Scotland. Our flooding services need to bolster resilience and accessibility to continue supporting communities against ever-increasing pressures.

Our income comes from a mixture of grants from the Scottish Government and licence fees – We ensure best value for the public purse and ensure full cost recovery of the regulatory activity we undertake.

Our areas of focus for 2024-2025

- Engage, consult and review our charging schemes.
- Enhance openness and transparency of our data and information with greater pro-active publication to meet the needs of our key stakeholders.
- Develop our corporate services to enhance and support our regulatory and flooding duties most effectively.
- Develop and implement our People Strategy and embed a future focused approach to working together.

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 of Scotland.

It's important that we have a strategic planning and performance framework that strengthens the golden thread running from Government priorities and policies, through our Corporate Plan and Annual Operating Plan and down to operational delivery. We must ensure our measures capture and represent the benefits of our work and, ultimately, ensure the right levels of progress are being made.

We know that we need to challenge ourselves to select indicators that drive change and that, to do so, we need to shift our approach, moving away from activities towards outcomes.

Over the next 12-18 months, we will shape our framework and approach, identifying key measures and milestones that will provide a line of sight from national strategies and our Corporate Plan through to service level agreements and delivery plans.

The small suite of measures for this Annual Operating Plan link to the strategic measures in our Corporate Plan and focus on where we will have an impact. They will help us monitor our progress and respond accordingly.

We will report our progress through our quarterly performance reports and our Annual Report and Accounts.



Our aims and how they will be measured

Table 1

Priority	Aim	Measured by	Trajectory
Net zero	Greenhouse gas emissions are reduced	Annual greenhouse gas emissions in the Scottish Pollutant Release Inventory .	Reducing
		Annual reports of greenhouse gas emission by SEPA .	Reducing
Climate resilience	The impact of flooding and water scarcity is reduced.	Number of flood warnings and alerts issued by SEPA.	Maintaining
		Proportion of developments approved in accordance with SEPA's advice on flood risk	Increasing
Water environment	The condition of the water environment is improving.	Classification of water bodies across Scotland.	Increasing
Resource efficiency	Resource efficiency is improved.	Rates of waste to landfill in annual Scottish household waste data .	Reducing
Business environmental performance	Interventions to tackle environmental crime are increasing.	Number of successful interventions per year.	Increasing
Our organisation	Enabling aims	Percentage of customer complaints responded to within statutory timescales.	Maintaining
		Number of vehicles in our fleet to electric and enhancing our EV charger facilities.	Increasing
		Percentage of Freedom of Information (FOI) requests and Environmental Information Requests (EIRs) responded to within statutory timescales.	Increasing
		Percentage efficiency savings.	Maintaining
		Percentage of invoices paid within 10 days.	Maintaining

Our resources

Our funding comprises of Grant in Aid of £46.2 million plus funding from our charging regimes of £52.9 million, recovering relevant costs of our regulatory activities and £2.4 million in other income. Together, this provides us with £101.5 million to invest in protecting and improving Scotland's environment. This investment will contribute to delivering our priorities and services.

Table 2

Income and expenditure for 2024–2025

Revenue income and expenditure account (excludes Capital)	Budget 2024–2025 £000's
Grant in Aid	46,191
Charging schemes	52,878
Other income	2,409
Total income	101,478
Staff costs	72,494
Other staff costs	382
Transport costs	1,179
Property costs	4,186
Supplies and services	16,957
Total expenditure	95,198
Depreciation / impairments	6,280
Total operating costs	101,478

Table 3

Other income for 2024–2025

Other income	Budget 2024–2025 £000's
Scottish Landfill Tax	450
Scottish Landfill Communities Fund	149
Facilities	157
Network access	115
Greenlist	578
NetRegs	60
Vibes	70
Aquaculture	19
Car Charge Points	20
Solar panels	25
Regulators' Pioneer Fund	605
British Geological Survey	25
Interest	136
Total other income	2,409

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 staff.

Our Equality Outcomes were introduced in 2022 and reflect our commitment to developing and promoting best practice.

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





For the future of our environment

If you would like this document in an accessible format, such as large print, audio recording or braille, please contact SEPA by emailing equalities@sepa.org.uk

sepa.org.uk