

SEPA FACTS: WHO DOES WHAT? A guide to the protection of Scotland's environment

Introduction

There are many public bodies in Scotland responsible for protecting and improving our environment. This simple guide will help you find out about who does what when it comes to environmental matters, and SEPA's responsibilities in particular.

The overall framework for environmental legislation and policy in Scotland is provided by the Scottish Government. SEPA is responsible for regulating the following activities:

- › discharges of wastes to water;
- › emissions to air;
- › removal (abstraction) of water from surface water and groundwater;
- › waste sites (including landfill sites, recycling centres, waste transfer stations and waste contractors), the movement of waste and illegal waste disposal;
- › river engineering;
- › diffuse pollution;
- › impoundment;
- › noise at sites with a Pollution Prevention and Control (PPC) permit;
- › offshore oil and gas industry (radioactivity only);
- › Control of Major Accident Hazards (COMAH);
- › European Union Greenhouse Gas Emission Trading Scheme (EU-ETS);
- › use of radioactive material, storage of radioactive waste (except at nuclear licensed sites), and disposal of radioactive waste.

Beaches and bathing waters

We sample and report on bathing water quality. Local authorities are responsible for beach litter issues and public health.

Built heritage

Historic Scotland is responsible for safeguarding the nation's built heritage, and promoting its understanding and enjoyment.

Coastal waters

Pollution arising from shipping and offshore installations is the responsibility of the Marine Coastguard Agency.

Pollution arising from land is the responsibility of SEPA.

Activities involving the construction or deposition of materials upon the seabed are regulated by the Food and Environment Protection Act 1985 (FEPA). Under FEPA, all operations, including coast protection works, require a licence from the Scottish Government's Marine Laboratories.

Conservation

The designation of Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI), Special Areas of Conservation, Special Protection Areas and National Nature Reserves is carried out by Scottish Natural Heritage (SNH). Local Nature Reserves are designated by local authorities.

Contaminated land

Local authorities identify and assess contaminated sites, and arrange for them to be cleaned up. We are responsible for arranging and ensuring the clean up of all contaminated 'special sites'.

Drinking water

Scottish Water provides public drinking water supplies. Local authorities check private water supplies.

Environmental emergencies

The Civil Contingencies Act identifies a number of 'Category One' responders who work together in the event of an environmental emergency. These are:

- SEPA
- The Police
- The fire service
- The health service
- Local authorities

Flooding

We provide flood warnings to local authorities, the police and to the public through our Floodline service. We also provide guidance on how to prepare for flooding.

Local authorities are responsible for flood protection measures, including the provision of sandbags and emergency equipment. The emergency services are responsible for emergency flood response.

Noise

Other than from PPC sites regulated by SEPA, controlling noise is the responsibility of local authorities.

Planning

The land use planning system, including structure plans, local plans and granting planning permission (development control) is a local authority responsibility, although a number of organisations, including SEPA, provide specialist advice and information.

SEPA is also a statutory consultee for parts of the planning process.

Sewage and septic tanks

The treatment and disposal of sewage is a Scottish Water responsibility. We regulate any associated discharges to water. The local authority should be contacted about smell problems, unless they relate to a site with a PPC permit. We regulate septic tank discharges, while Scottish Water and some businesses empty septic tanks.

Smells and smoke

Local authorities are responsible for smell and smoke problems arising from vehicles and households.

Waste

Scotland's National and Area Waste Plans are facilitated by SEPA, in partnership with other organisations.

SEPA is responsible for licensing the storage, transport, treatment and disposal of waste.

The collection, recycling and disposal of household waste and the management of litter are local authority responsibilities.

More information

We have a statutory responsibility to report on the state of Scotland's environment. This guide does not include every area of environmental protection and is not intended to provide a detailed breakdown of legal responsibilities. For further information on environmental duties, powers and responsibilities, please contact the relevant organisation.

Contact us

SEPA
Strathallan House
Castle Business Park
Stirling
FK9 4TZ

Tel: 01786 457700

Fax: 01786 446885

www.sepa.org.uk