

Promoting sustainable economic growth during 2017-2018

The [purpose](#) of the Scottish Government is 'to focus government and public services on creating a more successful country, with opportunities for all of Scotland to flourish through increasing sustainable economic growth'.

SEPA's primary role is to protect and improve the environment. Except where inconsistent with this primary purpose, our role includes improving the health and well-being of the people of Scotland, and making an important contribution to sustainable economic growth. We contribute to this by protecting Scotland's high quality environment which is vital for industries such as fishing, farming, forestry, whisky, renewable energy, mineral extraction, tourism, shellfish and fish-farming.

In 2007 the Scottish Government launched the first National Performance Framework. To support its purpose, the Scottish Government identified [five strategic objectives](#) and [sixteen national outcomes](#). We make a direct contribution to nine national outcomes, as shown in the diagram below. More information about how we contribute to the Scottish Government's purpose and the National Performance Framework can be found in the latest [Corporate Plan 2017-2022](#) on our website. (Since the year-end the 2007 Framework has been replaced with a [revised version](#) with a new set of national outcomes).



| National outcome | How we will contribute to this outcome |
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| <p><i>We live in a Scotland that is the most attractive place for doing business in Europe.</i></p> | <p>We are committed to establishing SEPA as a genuinely world-leading environment protection agency fit for the challenges and opportunities of the 21st century. We have set out our approach to achieving that ambition in our Corporate Plan 2017-2022. We believe it will help Scotland powerfully deliver environmental success in ways that also create economic and social benefits. Our performance in 2017-2018 was an important step in that direction.</p> <p>In August 2016 we published our regulatory strategy: One Planet Prosperity, a unique and visionary blueprint for how we will tackle environmental crime, support operators in driving up compliance, and help those who want to go beyond compliance to realise the many benefits of environmental excellence. We also outlined to the public how Sector Plans would become a critical tool in delivering our strategy, and how Sustainable Growth Agreements would be used to help regulated businesses to go “beyond compliance”. These voluntary, non-legally binding, formal agreements between us and an organisation or business focus on practical actions to deliver environmental outcomes. We launched our first Sustainable Growth Agreement with Superglass in March 2017, and added two more during the year (Venture Trust and Climate 2050).</p> <p>By the end of the year we had drafted three sector plans which had been released for public consultation. Three further plans were close to completing their final stages in the first half of this year. Further detail is documented in our 2017-2018 Annual Review of Performance.</p> <p>We ensure that pollution of land, air and water is controlled so that businesses can rely on the high quality of our environment. We provide advice and guidance to help businesses meet their environmental obligations, and gain the economic benefits of good environmental performance. By enforcing compliance with environmental regulations we create equal opportunities for businesses to succeed.</p> <p>Last year our compliance performance measures focussed on those sites remaining non-compliant for over two years and those that remained classed as “very poor” at the start of the year. We made good progress on these measures and continued to see a reduction in the overall non-compliance rate, as documented in our Annual Review of Performance. Our performance measures this year will continue this focus on long-term non-compliant sites and those licenses classed as very poor.</p> |
| <p><i>We live longer, healthier lives.</i></p> | <p>Our statutory purpose is to protect and improve the environment in ways that, as far as possible, also help create health and well-being benefits and sustainable economic growth. We promote compliance with environmental regulations, and tackle environmental crimes, to prevent dangerous pollution and protect human health. We will increase our understanding of how the environment impacts on human health and will promote the benefits of a good environment for health and well-being.</p> <p>We continue to operate a number of public warning services to ensure the potential impacts of environmental hazards are well known in advance.</p> |

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| | <p>These services include: our flood warning guidance; water quality at official bathing beaches; emergency air quality warning systems through our Air Hazard Emergency Response Service and our Highlands and Islands Air Monitoring Network giving early warning of pollution from overseas volcanic eruptions.</p> |
| <p><i>We live our lives safe from crime, disorder and danger.</i></p> | <p>The focus of our work on environmental crime is promoting compliance and enforcing environmental law. We work with other agencies such as Police Scotland, Crown Office and Procurator Fiscal Service and Border Force to deal with environmental crime. We contributed to the establishment of the Environmental Crime Task Force, which was chaired by one of our executive directors, and we will continue to be a key partner in delivering the work of the group.</p> <p>Through INTERPOL we are working with organisations from around the world on environmental compliance and enforcement, sharing information and intelligence to the benefit of the global enforcement community, particularly in relation to waste crime. Last year we participated in the INTERPOL 30 Days of Action international waste crime initiative in June, and in November hosted INTERPOL's Environmental Compliance and Enforcement Committee conference in Edinburgh.</p> <p>We are a key partner in the LIFE SMART Waste project and progressed a number of projects in 2017-2018 including publishing the results of a survey into the perceptions of those within the waste sector in relation to criminality within their industry.</p> <p>We will continue to work closely with the Scottish Government on the implementation of the Better Environmental Regulation programme. We will continue to make use of our new enforcement tools to engage as early as possible. This should avoid significant compliance issues emerging in the first place, tackle poor performance and thus reduce environmental crime.</p> <p>Phased implementation of the new enforcement measures, such as fixed and variable monetary penalties, started in June 2016, working alongside our existing enforcement tools (i.e. advice and guidance, final warning letters, enforcement notices and reports to the Procurator Fiscal).</p> <p>We announced our first major enforcement undertaking agreement with the construction company building the Aberdeen bypass. Under the new powers we received in 2016 we can accept offers of voluntary contributions rather than impose fixed or variable financial penalties. The £280,000 voluntary contribution is being divided between eight community initiatives as a penalty for the disruption and environmental impact. Over half goes to the Dee District Salmon Fishery Board with the rest going mainly to conservation, community and angling groups.</p> <p>Our new charging scheme launched in April 2016 should encourage greater compliance to licence conditions. It aims to increase the effectiveness of cost recovery and to allocate charges fairly between operators and sectors. The new charging scheme has a compliance element in the cost of licences. This will ultimately encourage operators to improve their compliance and incentivise reductions in emissions, abstractions or waste disposal.</p> |

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| <p><i>We live in well-designed, sustainable places where we are able to access the amenities and services we need.</i></p> | <p>Scotland’s planning system aims to protect the quality of Scotland’s natural and built environment, both to ensure the attractiveness of our communities as places to live and work and as an asset for sustainable economic growth.</p> <p>We will continue to provide formal environmental advice in relation to development plans and proposals across Scotland, on a range of topics including: flood risk; sustainable waste management; protection of the water environment; noise and odour from processes we regulate; protection of the marine environment and good air quality.</p> <p>We also provide local authorities, the Scottish Government and other agencies advice about individual planning applications. These range from the building of individual houses to power stations and windfarms, where there could be significant environmental impacts.</p> |
| <p><i>We have strong, resilient and supportive communities where people take responsibility for their own actions and how they affect others.</i></p> | <p>We will continue to engage with local authority community planning partnerships to assist with the delivery of their environmental objectives and monitor the implementation of the Community Empowerment (Scotland) Act 2015 that offer opportunities for us to work closer with community planning partnerships on environmental issues.</p> <p>We will continue to manage the Water Environment Fund, which provides funding and support to help local communities and interest groups make improvements to their water environment.</p> <p>We will further develop our flood risk and flood hazard maps that are used in the appraisal of the most sustainable actions to reduce flood risk. We will continue to run community events to raise awareness of flood risk and provide advice about the actions communities can take to make themselves more resilient to floods. We continue to extend the number of local flood warning schemes.</p> <p>Last year a total of 2,233 additional properties will now be covered by the new flood warning schemes developed during the year. The completion of Orkney and the Aberdeenshire and Angus coastal schemes is a major milestone for Scotland with the entire east coast now able to benefit from a flood warning service for coastal flooding.</p> <p>We will continue working with third sector organisations, such as community groups and charities, to help us engage with volunteers in order to understand better their local environment and respond to change. We will continue to promote Project Finder as a “one-stop-shop gateway” to help volunteers find projects of interest and allow projects to “advertise” for volunteers at a national and local level. This is through our continued support of Scotland’s Environment website, on which Project Finder is located. We are a key partner in this website, which is a shared environmental hub for RAFE (Rural Agriculture Food and Environment) organisations and other contributing organisations.</p> <p>Scotland’s Environment website relies on the expertise, knowledge, data and information provided by our valued partners. It provides an easy to use one-stop shop for everything communities or individuals may want to know about Scotland’s environment, bringing together environmental information and data in one place so that is easy to search and analyse.</p> |

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| <p><i>We value and enjoy our built and natural environment and protect it and enhance it for future generations.</i></p> | <p>We will continue to work with partners to co-ordinate Scotland’s environmental monitoring to enhance our understanding of environmental issues; we will continue to develop new communication tools to promote understanding of the importance of environmental protection.</p> <p>We will, for example, continue to work in partnership with Marine Scotland, Scottish Natural Heritage and Historic Scotland to deliver our joint vision for Scotland’s marine environment.</p> |
| <p><i>We take pride in a strong, fair and inclusive national identity.</i></p> | <p>Scotland’s national identity is bound up with its high quality environment - from our distinctive landscapes to our iconic national products such as food and drink - and attracts visitors from around the world. Under the policy described in One Planet Prosperity – Our Regulatory Strategy we are shifting our regulatory delivery from being grounded in the different regulatory regimes to being grounded in working across whole sectors.</p> <p>We have identified and we will encourage good practice across a range of sectors we regulate, as explained in our latest Annual Operating Plan 2018-2019.</p> <p>Some of the first sector plans we have concentrated on are important contributors to Scotland’s economy, or pose a threat to the quality of the environment. The strength of the “Made in Scotland” label is linked very much to the reality, and the perception, of Scotland boasting a clean and healthy environment. This is particularly true for two of the first sectors we have chosen under our new sector approach – the whisky and aquaculture sectors.</p> <p>Working closely with sector representatives is important to help us tackle non-compliance and to help us identify how we can help them to go further than mere compliance. We will progressively develop plans for each sector, working with them to identify areas where they might innovate to gain efficiency, and cut costs, and move to “beyond compliance”. Since the year-end we have announced the next set of ten sectors with a plan for each being drafted by the end of 2018-2019.</p> |
| <p><i>We reduce the local and global environmental impact of our consumption and production.</i></p> | <p>We want everybody to choose the most resource-efficient products and services. We will work with the Scottish Government and partners to provide clear environmental information and to develop the necessary policies to reduce waste and encourage the expansion of a circular economy,</p> <p>We recognise that the management of waste and resources affects every sector, as well as the waste management industry, as explained in our One Planet Prosperity - A Waste to Resources Framework, published in October 2016. This outlines how we intend to drive down waste production and keep valuable materials circulating for as long as possible, whilst preventing and tackling the harms associated with waste management and waste crime.</p> <p>These guiding principles form the basis of the framework and define SEPA’s approach to waste and resource management across all sectors of the economy. The primary method to deliver this framework will be through our sectoral approach. Every sector plan we develop will include clear actions to help industry make better use of resources and manage their waste more productively.</p> |

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| | <p>We work with industry and law enforcement partners to tackle waste crime. The reforms we are making to the way we regulate will help us to improve compliance with basic environmental standards for waste management more quickly; support businesses that want to tackle their resource use and prevent waste; and help them to introduce innovative approaches to do it.</p> <p>We also support the development of the low-carbon and resource-efficient economic sectors, through working with bodies such as the Green Growth Programme Board and Scotland's 2020 Climate Group to promote sustainable economic growth. We work in partnership with Zero Waste Scotland to deliver the Scottish Government's Zero waste plan, which sets the path towards recycling 70% of all waste in Scotland by 2025, and we will support the Scottish Government's programme aimed at embracing the principles of a circular economy.</p> |
| <p><i>Our public services are high quality, continually improving, efficient and responsive to local people's needs.</i></p> | <p>We are striving to become more flexible and responsive, and to demonstrate that we provide excellent services to protect and improve Scotland's environment, at best value for tax-payers and our charge payers. Our offices enable us to work across the whole of Scotland, from the Highlands and Islands to the Borders, delivering nationally consistent services that are also responsive to local people's needs.</p> <p>The Better Environmental Regulation Programme we are implementing in partnership with the Scottish Government was formalised in The Regulatory Reform (Scotland) Act 2014. It included powers for Scottish Ministers to issue a code of practice for regulators. SEPA was included on the working group consisting of representatives from regulators and business to draw up the Scottish Regulators' Code of Practice.</p> <p>We are committed to follow the five main principles of better regulation as described in the Code: regulation should be transparent, accountable, consistent, proportionate and targeted only where needed. This has been reflected in the extent of consultation we have consistently carried out, or are planning to carry out with our stakeholders, in relation to the four main stages in the Better Environmental Regulation programme. It is also demonstrated by our recent release of completed sector plans for public consultation, with the plans themselves the result of considerable consultation with all important stakeholders.</p> |