Agency Board Meeting
27 April 2021

Board Report Number: SEPA 09/21

Chief Executive's Report

1. Organisation

Our organisation workstream focuses on three key areas: supporting staff, restoring internal services, and enabling external services to be delivered.

1.1 Supporting Staff

We have continued to hold weekly Senior Leadership Team sessions and all Manager sessions to equip managers with the information they need to support staff through this period. Fortnightly meetings have also continued to be held for all staff providing regular updates again creating the opportunity for questions to be asked and answered. We have shared the running of these sessions between the Chief Executive, Chief Officer Circular Economy, Chief Officer People & Property, Head of Change and Head of Governance.

We have also regularly updated the table of Frequently Asked Questions that is available to staff.

We have continued to promote the services of our Employee Assistance Provider through the Business Continuity messaging service, during manager and staff sessions as appropriate and in the information available to all staff at present. Calls to the Employee Assistance Provider have, however, remained consistently lower than for comparable periods in previous years.

1.2 Microsoft 365 & lap top roll outs

One of the priorities identified after the cyber-attack was to ensure the organisation could communicate, access emails and have basic functionality to work on priority tasks. This would require the roll out of Microsoft 365, governance arrangements to be in place, the recall and configuration of existing SEPA laptops and providing equipment for staff.

On-Boarding

We developed an on-boarding process which set out the password policy, essential training, system do's and don'ts and information to keep our data and people safe. These on-boarding sessions were offered to all staff who could and were willing to use their own personal equipment. The functionality was tested and although it is limited, would provide people with the ability to communicate. As of the 19th April, we have completed the on-boarding session for 1070 members of staff.

Laptop Distribution

We agreed to provide all staff with access to a SEPA laptop. The main reason for this is that the functionality works significantly better through a dedicated SEPA laptop. Due to delays world-wide with the delivery of laptops, we were required to agree a prioritisation list for the first batch of 640 available. This prioritisation was based on several factors: people who did not have access to any equipment, people working on organisational priorities who required better functionality and lower grade members of staff.

As of 19th April, 120 laptops have been delivered with a further 100 planned by the end of this week. Over the next 3 weeks we will have delivered 640 laptops to staff.

We have also begun to issue other equipment required ie monitors. For those members of staff who indicated that they required assistive technologies, we are working directly with them to identify and meet the needs they have.

We are working with suppliers to get delivery times for the remaining back order of laptops, as soon as these have been delivered we can issue these to staff.

Existing Laptop Recall

At the same time, we are recalling existing SEPA laptops so they can be reconfigured. The pick-up of these laptops began on 19th April with over 100 expected to be recalled by the end of the week. These laptops will then be built with the new software and re-issued.

Communications

We have provided fortnightly all staff updates on this work, weekly managers and SLT updates to keep everyone informed of progress. We also developed a web-form where staff could input their requirements. Feedback on the process has been positive.

1.3 Flexible Deployment

We have developed a new method for deploying staff to business-critical priorities. This has been a key focus of the Organisation work stream and is a critical enabler for several projects. This method was successfully piloted for three projects:

- Exceptional Office Access Procedure

- Fleet Management

- Hydrometric Network

The project leads specify their needs in concise one-page documents which are then made available to managers. Managers review the specification documents and consider how their available staff meet the requirements, discussing this with relevant members of their team. Managers then put forward staff using the simple template provided.

This initiative is described in more detail in Agenda Item 10.

1.4 Stabilising our financial systems

A key deliverable in restoring our internal services is stabilising our financial systems. A key priority is to build a basic payroll system. This has two elements. First, as we build the new system, we are ensuring that we are paying staff each month and this is being achieved. In terms of building the new payroll and financial management system, a significant amount of work has been undertaken with the focus being on the topics of system build, information processing, testing and training on how to use the system and communications to staff. We are seeking to deploy extra resources to this project through the aforementioned flexibility project.

Following the cyber attack our ability to pay suppliers has gone through three phases:

- Immediately following the cyber attack there was no mechanism available to make payments for a period of approximately two weeks. Visibility over invoices was also low.
- Significant work was undertaken to enable payments directly through the bank in early January. Visibility over invoices remained low but payment of invoices we were aware of was quick.
- In late March, as access was restored to sepa.org.uk email addresses including supplier.invoices@sepa.org.uk, visibility of invoices has dramatically improved. These invoices are now being triaged for payment against key criteria including but not limited to the age of the debt and the perceived importance of the payment to the supplier.

Throughout this process, where it was proportionate to do so bearing in mind the risks associated with communications during an ongoing criminal investigation,

suppliers have been informed of the challenges we are currently facing in this area. It is expected that with significant process being made on the build of a new ERP system that the backlog of invoice payments will be cleared during Q1 2021/22.

1.5 COP26

Glasgow will host COP26 at the Scottish Event Campus from 1-12 November 2021.

This will be the biggest international summit the UK has ever hosted, bringing together 30,000 delegates including heads of state, climate experts and campaigners to agree upon co-ordinated action to tackle climate change. We are a fully committed partner in this event, and the aims and ambitions of COP26 correspond with our own ambition of delivering one planet prosperity. Our Resilience and Environmental Performance working groups are working closely with the UK Cabinet Office, COP26 Unit and key partner agencies to plan a successful event.

1.6 Agency Management Team Annual Resilience Exercise

In February 2021, the Resilience Team presented the 4th in a series of annual Agency Management Team strategic exercises.

This year's exercise targeted our ability to respond effectively to a major pollution incident, caused by an explosion and fire at a top tier COMAH[1] establishment. The exercise itself tested internal response arrangements whilst focusing on wider issues such as media and political interests, along with partnership working under the Civil Contingencies Act. The Scottish Fire and Rescue Service also participated in the event and the highly successful exercise produced a great deal of learning.

Lessons were captured and will feature in the exercise report, which in turn will help inform and improve our response arrangements going forward.

1.7 Future workspaces

The scope of work for the project on future workspaces has been developed and approved by AMT. As we have experienced throughout the pandemic, it is a challenge to invest the time to understand and design what we need for the long-term future while, at the same time, plan for and manage phased increased office access for staff in a Covid and cyber-secure way.

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[1] **The Control of Major Accident Hazards**

Now that we have the IT capabilities to interact with the vast majority of staff in a consistent way, we are embarking on a series of staff surveys about the future of work. These will be complemented by workshops and other discussions. A project team with cross-portfolio representation is being set up to support Fiona Mactaggart who is leading the project. We have done many things well since the start of the pandemic in terms of supporting and involving staff, but conducting staff surveys on the future of work is one area in which we have been slower than we would have liked. The AMT approval of the next steps and the establishment of a project team represent a major stepping up in this area of work.

In terms of current work arrangements, our Angus Smith Building is COVID secure with priority essential services able to operate safely from the building. AMT has taken the decision to reopen our Aberdeen lab to support the bathing water season. This will mean that both of our laboratories will soon be open and COVID secure to protect staff. As of the 6th of April, we have also significantly expanded the capacity for staff to engage in outdoor work activities such as inspections, event response and other field work. This reflects the medical evidence that outdoor working, if properly conducted, involves a low risk of covid transmission and also our year's experience in deploying our covid safety procedures. Statutory maintenance is in place in all our buildings so we can safely access to collect kit and equipment, and undertake short term activities (for example retrieving hard copy documentation) supported by appropriate risk assessments.

1.8 External communication

We publish an up-to-date service status on our website. This enables our customers to find the latest information on our current service status and recovery. We update this on a weekly basis so that customers are clear what they can expect and how we will prioritise progress. The latest update can be found here.

1.9 Earth Overshoot Day

In 2020, SEPA joined with the California based Global Footprint Network - one of the world's leading international sustainability organisations and the founder of Ecological Footprint and the globally recognised Earth Overshoot Day. The partnership saw SEPA and GFN lead a series of Scottish, UK and international events focused on shared strategic objectives and stakeholders. Specific events focused on Scottish business, Scottish media, Scottish political stakeholders and European regulators. Last year, the Global Footprint Network tracked over 5,100 media stories about Earth Overshoot Day in 86 countries.

In November, the eyes of the world will focus on Scotland as global leaders gather (virtually or in person) in Glasgow for the United National Climate Conference : COP26.
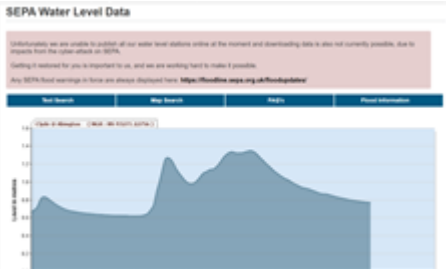
Scotland has a vision for global environmental leadership and a great story to tell. This year, SEPA will again join with the Global Footprint Network in a series of events and opportunities focused on shared strategic objectives and stakeholders. The events will firmly align with SEPA's programme of influence and engagement, working in partnership with public and private partners, NGO and community stakeholders.

2. Flooding

2.1 Restoration of our flood warning systems and service

As part of our Hydrology Flood and Incident Systems route map, we have made some significant steps to restore major systems and public services since the cyber-attack. The first milestone was the building of our flood forecasting system on a new cloud environment. An agile, focussed approach, alongside support from third party suppliers, enabled much of our flood warning decision making system to be re-built in five weeks. This system has been 'built back better' and already offers us improved resilience. Work is ongoing to restore further functionality and resilience.

Success has also been achieved in restoring vital public information services such as the water level and rainfall pages. Their absence was particularly noted by partners and the public during recent flood events, as the information they provide is used in conjunction with our flood warning service. We have received multiple commendations about these services being re-established.

Water levels webpage	Rainfall webpage

2.2 Hydrometric data service

Following the snow melt in February, we have been able to safely resume our maintenance programme to ensure that, as well as enabling our flood warning

services, we have the information needed for regulatory advice, bathing waters and droughts. While we carry out this essential work, we are also continuing to roll out the last of our signage which aims to explain to the public what the sites are and how they work.

2.3 Flood Risk Management Strategy

Flood Risk Management Strategies are produced every six years and set the national direction of future flood risk management, helping to target investment and coordinate actions across public bodies. We are currently in the process of producing the next six-year strategy, and the first phase of the associated consultation launched on 21 December 2020. This included background information on key flood management areas. We were due to launch the second phase of the consultation in March 2021, jointly with lead Local Authorities, but this was disrupted by the cyber-attack. Successful discussions with Scottish Government and Local Authorities mean we are now planning to launch phase two by the end of July. The emphasis of this phase has been streamlined, focussing on the detail of the proposed objectives and actions in target communities. The consultation will be open for three months as required by legislation, which means there are likely to be difficulties in publishing the final Flood Risk Management Strategy by the required date of 21 December 2021. As a result, we are exploring options for a staged delivery with Scottish Government and Local Authorities.

2.4 Inspiring the next generation

Mark Franklin, Hydrometry Unit Manager, gave a virtual guest lecture to the University of Hull Flood Risk MSc students, on Hydrometry and Flood Forecasting and Warning in Scotland. Particularly well received was the "a day in the life" section covering the many tasks our duty officers undertake every single day.

3. Regulation

3.1 Permitting

The Permitting Function is prioritising those applications that were in the system prior to the cyber-attack. It is currently only able to determine new applications where they are needed urgently, due to the limited extent of available systems. We are working hard to resolve this, and staff involved in permitting will be prioritised in the roll out of the new laptops, which will significantly improve productivity. We are, at the same time, taking the opportunity to streamline licence determination processes, focusing scrutiny on the most significant risks, and simplifying licences. Subject to the above, we expect to see continued improvements through May and June which will allow us to progressively increase the number and variety of new applications we can accept.

As we do all this work to deal with existing service delivery needs, we are doing it in a way that is designed to accelerate the creation of the reformed licensing and permitting regime that is part of our Phase 2 aims.

3.2 Compliance and environmental event response

We continue to have arrangements in place to respond to environmental events in and out of hours. On 6 April we updated our Covid Decision-Making Framework, to allow a greater range of field-based regulatory activity to be undertaken, including responding to environmental events, planned compliance checking and tackling non-compliance.

3.3 Geographical Information System

We have made progress in developing a set of principles and an approach to gather and make available the regulatory information needed to support short-term priorities. We have provided a Geographical Information System application which gives staff in their "office" and in the field basic details of all authorised activities. A similar application is available for science colleagues, providing basic information on sampling locations and classification. Access in the field is a significant improvement to what was available prior to the cyber-attack. Work is progressing to allow the secure capture of information gathered through regulatory activity in a simple way.

3.4 Land Use Planning

From 31 March, our Planning staff have been contacting Planning Authorities to start triaging and prioritising casework on the backlog of planning casework. This is a key activity under the approach to our planning system role that was presented at the Board Strategy meeting in March.

3.5 Waste water analysis for coronavirus' ribonucleic acid

We continue to analyse waste water samples provided by Scottish Water for fragments of coronavirus' ribonucleic acid. The Public Health Minister, Mairi Gougeon, recently confirmed funding for the programme to continue this year. We are currently analysing more than 180 samples per week from 98 waste water Treatment Works covering over 70% of the Scottish population. In March, Scottish Water started sampling from manholes in Aberdeen and Cumnock. These sites should give more targeted information on area within these conurbations as requested by Public Health Teams. Similar "sub-network" samples are planned for other towns and cities.

We work closely with both the Scottish Government Community Testing programme and Local Health Partnerships to ensure that the monitoring we are undertaking is targeted and informative. The results are provided via a secure portal to interested professionals and are available to the public at RNA monitoring. This work showcases the expertise and professionalism of our laboratories. Working closely with partners (Academia, Scottish Water and Health professionals) we took a method and technology from a university laboratory to an operational monitoring tool within four to six weeks, whilst working under the most challenging conditions.

3.6 Compliance and Enforcement

Commercial scale flytipping control strategy which delivers a swift, targeted, visible response to commercial scale flytipping / burning and illegal waste carrying which will send a deterrent message to those seeking to take advantage. A focussed control strategy encompassing both strategic and operational tactics, driven by intelligence with a ready-made toolkit allowing staff to mobilise, target & deliver enforcement action in hot spot areas of non-compliant activity.

3.7 Place-Making

Place-making is becoming a key means by which partners and stakeholders from across Scotland's public, private and third sectors are coming together to develop community led agendas for local service and infrastructure development. For SEPA, this presents a powerful opportunity to bring the influence of One Planet Prosperity to the definition and delivery of these agendas as well as creating the basis for determining future approaches where SEPA's range of compliance and flooding services will be delivered in a more innovative Phase 2 manner.

The current AOP has identified 6 pilot areas that offer a range of place making projects taking place across Scotland with which SEPA are actively engaged in. The pandemic and the cyberattack have impacted on these work pilot projects, but it is an area of activity in which we have been able to continue to make progress over since the cyberattack. A key example is that SEPA has been asked to play a leading role in the regulatory hub for the Grangemouth-Falkirk initiative.