



Agency Board Meeting

27 July 2021

Board Report Number: SEPA 18/21

Chief Executive's Report

Summary:	This report provides updates for the Board on some of the key work happening in the organisation.
Risks:	There are no risks highlighted in this report.
Resource and Staffing Implications:	There are staff updates in section 4.
Equality:	There are no equality issues highlighted in this report.
Environmental and Carbon Impact:	There is an update on page17 about Regenerative SEPA.
Purpose and audience of the report:	Agency Board to note this report.
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Chief Executive's Report

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<http://contactscotland-bsl.org/>

www.sepa.org.uk

1. Introduction

It is now seven months since the cyberattack on Christmas Eve 2020. During that period, we have moved from immediate emergency response, through initial recovery work into the work we are now doing to continue our recovery in a way that fast-tracks building a Phase 2 EPA.

I am extremely proud of what SEPA has achieved over the past seven months. The outstanding efforts of our workforce come through in this July CEO Report. To cite some examples: we have largely cleared the backlog of planning applications, we have issued over 3,000 determinations, worked with other enforcement agencies to close down 25 illegal activities, issued all flood warnings and alerts accurately and on time, found ways to reinstate scientific monitoring and assessment activities and established and run a variety of learning and development activities.

These achievements speak to the commitment and skill of SEPA staff and the way in which we they have worked together to tackle the challenges thrown up by the pandemic and the cyberattack.

The report shows that we have stabilised the organisation, delivered critical services and started building our new ways of working. There remains much more work ahead, but as we start delivering against the 2021-22 AOP that the Board recently approved, we can be confident that we make significant progress throughout the remainder of 2021-22.

Terry A'Hearn
Chief Executive

July 2021

2. Regulation

2.1 Mossmorran

Our regulation of the ExxonMobil Fife Ethylene Plant at Mossmorran continues with the focus being the plant's restart following an extended offline period. This offline period of work was scheduled to deliver a £140 million investment at the site. This should improve reliability, meaning less flaring. Specifically, under our requirements, the work included the fitting of a noise reducing flare tip and enabling works for a new totally enclosed ground flare.

We reviewed the start-up plan and monitored the start-up over several weeks, with regular deployment of resources in the community, including regulatory noise and air monitoring.

The restart concluded successfully on 12 July. Early indications are that there has been limited community and environmental impact from minor planned flaring resulting from the restart. Our teams are currently evaluating the information collected over this period.

2.2 Permitting

The Permitting Service continues to make excellent progress during this challenging time. Since the cyber-attack, over 3,000 applications have been determined. Details can be found in Table 1. New ways of working, particularly the cross-functional cells, are significantly helping decision-making and determination.

The cyber-attack restricted our access to the business systems we normally use to support the permitting work. This means that the work is significantly more manual than it was, leading to some parts of the process taking longer. The service reform work using the 'Systems Thinking' approach has restarted and will now play a significant role in ongoing recovery.

Table 1 Status of applications

Cell	Granted	Pending determination
PPC ¹ A Energy from Waste	1	7
PPC ¹ A Intensive Agriculture	2	1
PPC ¹ A (Other)	0	32
PPC ¹ B	26	15
Landfill (PPC ¹ & WML ²)	2	12
WML ² (waste)	26	28
WMX ³ (registrations)	127	24
WMX ³ (renewals)	195	20
CAR ⁴ Engineering	109	34
CAR ⁴ Aquaculture	60	22
CAR ⁴ Point Source (licence)	42	61
CAR ⁴ Point Source (registration)	41	10
CAR ⁴ Water Resources	18	44
CAR ⁴ Construction Site Licences	22	21
CAR ⁴ Septic Tanks (excluding online apps)	28	4
CAR ⁴ Septic tanks (Online)	1,109	0
Waste carriers (online)	568	0
Transfrontier shipment notifications	29	31
Packaging direct reg	67	0
Batteries approvals	4	0
Packaging approvals	24	0
Waste Electrical and Electronic Equipment approvals	28	0
Rad Subs	33	14
Reservoirs (Registrations)	0	11
Reservoirs (Variations)	0	1
Emissions Trading Scheme	124	47
	Advice given	Advice pending
National planning consultation	668	162
TOTAL 08/07/21	3353	601

¹ Pollution Prevention and Control

² Waste Management Licence

³ Waste Management Exemption

⁴ Controlled Activities Regulations

2.3 Digital licensing

Two of our four online registration services have gone live on our website:

- for [simple waste management exemptions](#); and
- for [radioactive substances notifications](#).

For customers, the services will look identical to before the cyber-attack. They will fill in details on the simple online form, click 'submit' and receive their email with registration details included. This is a massive breakthrough as a lot of the problems faced in releasing this digital service have now been resolved, meaning that subsequent releases will be a lot easier.

We have also been recreating the septic tank and waste carrier services. These are more complex as their development involves third parties, so they will take more time.

This work is an example of what will become common place over the next two years. We are building a completely new IT system under which we will make our services digital. This will reduce a huge amount of internal bureaucracy and administration, freeing us up to spend more time delivering for the environment.

2.4 Forth and Clyde canal

The Forth and Clyde canal was significantly impacted earlier in June due to a failure in the key abstraction feed, the 'Monkland Pipes'.

The Monkland Pipes provide the Forth and Clyde canal with 70% of its water. These pipes are not a Scottish Canals asset but are an ageing asset managed by Transport Scotland, located under the M8 in central Glasgow.



Image 1. Forth and Clyde canal

This failure caused a serious loss of water from the canal system (see Image 1), resulting in potential impacts to canal ecology and the physical integrity of the canal structure, which is a national monument. It could also have caused houseboats at either end to become grounded, leading to people having to abandon their homes. Another impact was that the canal had to close to recreational water users just days after it had re-opened for the season.

Scottish Canals alerted us to the significance of the issue on 7 June and requested immediate support to mitigate the impacts to ecology, canal structure and homes through alternative abstraction points.

Our staff came together at short notice, providing support and expertise to collaboratively tackle the issue. We provided swift regulatory support to Scottish Canals to help resolve the issue in a way that secured the ongoing protection of Scotland's water environment.

We were able to approve a temporary abstraction from the River Kelvin in Glasgow, using emergency powers under the Controlled Activities Regulations. Full water resources and ecological checks were undertaken prior to, during and following the works which took place over 27 hours.

We will be engaging with senior Transport Scotland staff to discuss the action required to improve the resilience of these assets to prevent an incident of this nature in future.

2.5 Variable Monetary Penalties

Variable monetary penalties enable us to levy financial penalties up to £40,000. Following consultation on the calculation of the penalty, preparation of guidance, internal documentation and supporting material, we are now ready to begin using the penalties and expect to have them available in late summer as part of our enforcement toolkit. Having another tool to tackle offending is a significant step forward for us. We intend to publish any use of Variable Monetary Penalties on our website in due course.

2.6 Tackling non-compliance

Over the last year we have developed a more targeted, cross-organisational approach to tackling environmental crime that directly impacts local communities and the environment. In recent weeks, we have been able to confirm that 25 illegal sites or activities have ceased. Several of these closures are a direct result of our own work, and some have occurred through joint-working with partners. The activities that have been closed down are spread across different regulatory regimes and across Scotland. Examples include the following:

- Mixed waste illegally deposited at a site in Falkirk was cleared through partnership work with Police Scotland, Falkirk Council and the Department of Transport.
- Mixed waste illegally deposited in a warehouse at a Fife industrial estate was removed by the landowner after advice from SEPA.
- An unlicensed abstraction from a river in Perth has stopped and a Fixed Monetary Penalty has been issued.
- A Lanarkshire Farm with inappropriate silage storage complied with the requirements of a statutory notice.

With COVID restrictions easing, we are increasing our presence in local communities across Scotland, enabling issues to be identified and action taken.

2.7 Fixed Monetary Penalties – Slurry Storage

We recently received payment of £1,200 for two Fixed Monetary Penalties served on a farming partnership near Stranraer.

The penalties were served following persistent non-compliance, particularly in relation to slurry and silage effluent entering the water environment. These pollution incidents arose due to slurry overflowing storage structures (due to a lack of storage capacity), slurry running off after land spreading, and by silage effluent being discharged to local watercourses because of poor farming practices. We received numerous complaints from the public about this pollution.

We served an Enforcement Notice requiring steps to be taken to stop these unauthorised discharges of slurry, silage effluent and contaminated yard effluent to the water environment. We also issued a Works Notice requiring steps to be taken in relation to the silage pit and slurry storage at the farm. Unfortunately, these Notices were not fully complied with, and further pollution events then occurred, leading to us serving the two Fixed Monetary Penalties on 23 November 2020.

2.8 Leven Programme – Climate Beacons

It was recently announced that Fife and the Leven area has been selected to be a COP26 [Climate Beacon](#). The Leven Programme, led by SEPA, has been a huge part of making that possible.

The [Leven Programme](#), [ONFife](#) and [Levenmouth Academy](#) are coming together with others to channel the arts and build on climate action in the area. The Fife Beacon is eager to share stories of the proud industrial heritage and show the world how we can transform to a resilient, low-carbon community of the future.

2.9 Blue-green algae

Blue-green algae, known as cyanobacteria, are naturally present in freshwater lochs and streams. Under certain conditions, including warm and sunny conditions, the algae can become abundant. When this occurs, the blue-green algae can form blooms. Some of these blooms can be harmful to people or animals when touched, swallowed, or when airborne droplets are inhaled.

As part of Scotland's blue-green algae strategy, we provide scientific information and advice to support public health bodies in keeping people and livestock safe from potentially toxic algal blooms in lochs and rivers. We started our annual blue-green algae programme in June. This involves analysing water samples in our Angus Smith Building and Aberdeen laboratories, as well as remotely screening possible blooms from pictures received using the citizen science [Bloomin' algae app](#).

We have agreed a core programme of regular analysis with local authorities, focused on high amenity lochs (e.g. Loch Lomond and Loch Morlich), which are popular for

water sports and where use may be even greater than normal this summer. In addition to this core surveillance network, we support local authorities where we can by analysing ad hoc samples from suspected blue-green blooms in other high-risk locations.

We expect requests for analysis work to increase as the summer progresses. We are working closely with local authority environmental health teams to understand where we can help with the logistics of sample collection and delivery to our labs, recognising that many environmental health teams remain stretched.

2.10 Bathing waters

Staff from across the organisation have made an outstanding effort to allow us to fully deliver our duties under the Bathing Water (Scotland) Regulations 2008 for the whole of the 2021 bathing season which started on 1 June.

This included establishing the season's monitoring plan and restoring COVID-safe laboratory analysis and result reporting capability. We also rebuilt our water quality prediction models using our established rain gauge network through a new Spotfire data handling tool. Additionally, we established a method to post the daily predictions to our website and reconnected operating software for our electronic beach signage, thereby providing timely and accurate information to the public and beach users.

We have been carrying out a programme of compliance checks, as well as responding to any reports of pollution. These field deployments are proving to be very effective in verifying performance and reassuring local communities.

Significant investments have been made in Ayrshire by Scottish Water in constructing new assets, and by the agricultural community to reduce the risks of pollution.

Regular and targeted communications and responses to media enquiries are also playing a vital role in putting messages across to key sectors as well as to the public, so that they can safely use bathing waters across Scotland.

2.11 Web form for recording samples

The cyber-attack interrupted our laboratory ability to record and track water samples. This had a potentially critical impact on the priority sampling and analysis work that we must carry out. Restoration of a recording system was also vital to the retention of our laboratory accreditation.

To address this problem, we have created a temporary system from scratch in the space of only a few weeks. The web-based system allows laboratory staff to record and track sample and analysis results.

Information is stored centrally and securely with a full audit trail. The system is adaptable and rapidly reconfigurable to the changing needs of staff. The data collected is also available to assist work planning, regulatory reporting and strategic decision making.

2.12 Air quality

Every year, air pollution contributes to an estimated 36,000 deaths in the UK and is regarded as one of the largest environmental health risks we face today. The Scottish Government has a commitment to introduce Low Emission Zones across Aberdeen, Dundee, Edinburgh, and Glasgow by March 2022. Through the National Modelling Framework, as set out in the Scottish Government's Cleaner Air for Scotland Strategy, we have worked in partnership with Transport Scotland to support the four local authorities and build the evidence-base for Low Emission Zones.

The cyber-attack impacted our ability to undertake air quality modelling and deliver our National Modelling Framework obligations. The Low Emission Zone process was nearing the final stages, with assessment reports planned for submission to local authority committees in Spring 2021. Through the Low Emission Zone Leadership Group, we were directed by the Cabinet Secretaries to agree an interim solution with all partners. This involved developing a solution under extreme time constraints, building our modelling capabilities, developing an IT system that would facilitate our specialist software and manage resources, to meet Scottish Government timescales for delivery of the zones.

Since late March, we have built up our modelling capabilities, providing emissions modelling to complement the traffic models, creating bespoke visualisation tools and assisted local authorities in finalising the Low Emission Zone proposals. We submitted all four emission reports to the local authorities within agreed timescales and provided further assistance in the lead-up to their committee meetings. Over the past few weeks, we have met with councillors across all parties, providing question and answer sessions on specific aspects of each of the Low Emission Zone proposals, such as:

- Glasgow's Low Emission Zone will result in minimum traffic displacement, while reducing traffic emissions within the city centre by 53%, with some of the more polluted bus corridors seeing reductions of up to 80%.
- Edinburgh is still considering two options, with the smaller Low Emission Zone extending current exceedances along Lothian Road, while the larger Zone reducing emissions by 55% could potentially create issues around the edge of the boundary.
- Dundee is excluding Lochee Road from the Low Emission Zone boundary, due to traffic displacement, while achieving a 78% reduction in emissions through focus on bus improvements.
- Aberdeen is introducing a City Centre Master Plan in combination with the Low Emission Zone, maximising emission reductions within the city centre, especially along Union Street where bus priority and Spaces for People were proposed, to deliver air quality compliance.

We continue to have an excellent working relationship with Low Emission Zone stakeholders. We are trusted to provide the impartial and transparent scientific evidence which underpins the need for, and extent of, these zones in Scotland's four largest cities. As we expand on our modelling capabilities, supporting local authorities throughout the statutory consultation period, we will provide further modelling evidence for ministerial approval at the beginning of 2022.

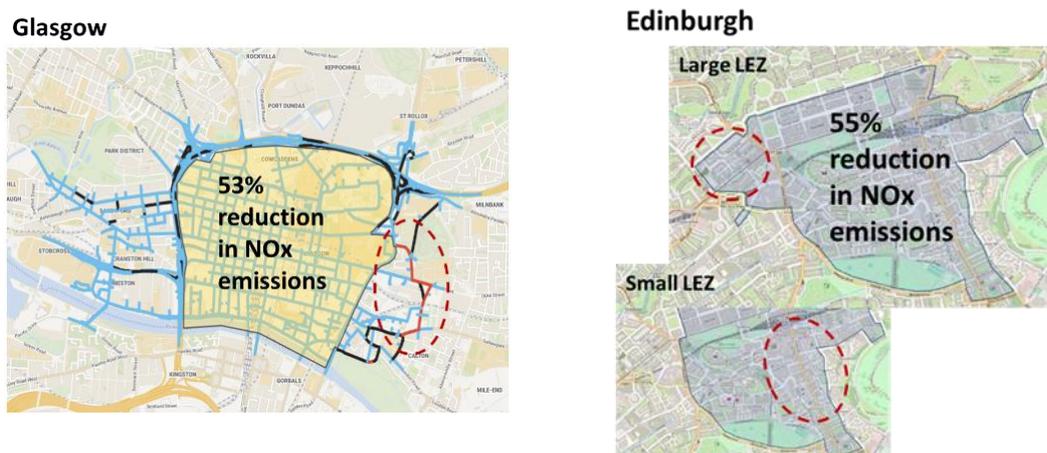


Image 2. Impacts of proposed Low Emission Zones in Glasgow and Edinburgh

Climate change regulation

We continue to act as the regulator for the Emissions Trading Scheme in Scotland, and successfully transitioned from the EU Emissions Trading Scheme to the UK Emissions Trading Scheme in January 2021. The UK version is a cap-and-trade scheme which controls greenhouse gas emissions from the largest industrial facilities and aircraft operators across the UK. We regulate these operators by granting permits and undertaking compliance checks, issuing substantial financial penalties where appropriate.

The UK Emissions Trading Scheme requires operators to surrender allowances for each tonne of CO₂ equivalent emitted. The price of allowances has doubled since last year and has stabilised to around £50 per tonne. This increased price is largely due to a much-reduced availability, with allowances continuing to become more scarce year on year. While the UK scheme has only just begun, we anticipate that this increased price and increasing scarcity will force operators to seriously consider decarbonisation measures. Early evidence indicates this could already be starting to happen.

The UK scheme is designed to be a robust market within a framework that promotes expansion and innovation. On 14 December 2020, the UK government published its Energy White Paper which affirmed the UK's intention to expand the scope of the scheme to include two-thirds of the UK's emissions which currently fall outside of its

remit. In addition to expanding its industry coverage, discussions are underway as to how the scheme can be used to incentivise the development of emissions reduction technologies. We anticipate a consultation later this year.

We are also continuing our regulatory role assessing the containment and release of Fluorinated gases (F-gas). These materials have extremely high global warming potential and even if a small amount is released it can have a significant impact on climate change. This year we have begun work to investigate the suspected illegal trade of fluorinated gases in Scotland and will provide a further update in the future.

2.14 Water Environment Fund

2.14.1 Lyne Burn, Dunfermline, Fife

In partnership with Fife Council, groundworks began on the [restoration of the Lyne Burn](#) within urban Dunfermline in May 2021. The canalised river channel will be returned to a more natural meandering course with an improved environment, new access, greenspace and community engagement opportunities to follow after construction. The work has been funded by the Water Environment Fund and Fife Council.

2.14.2 Tollcross Burn, Sandhills Park, Glasgow

In partnership with Glasgow City Council, work to de-culvert the once buried Tollcross Burn at Sandyhills, Glasgow has been [successfully completed](#). “Daylighting” this burn reduces flood risk, builds climate resilience and increases biodiversity. It also provides improved footpaths, cycling opportunities and attractive landscaping to the community. The project was funded by Water Environment Fund and Glasgow City Council.

2.14.3 Garrel Burn, Kilsyth, North Lanarkshire

In partnership with North Lanarkshire Council, the second phase of groundworks to re-meander and naturalise the currently canalised Garrel Burn at Kilsyth are underway. Two new fish passes are also being installed on weirs within the town to allow native fish to migrate upstream. This once industrial zone is now a local nature reserve which will be further enhanced by allowing flood waters to recharge the

marshland, as well as provision of new and improved walking and cycling routes for local communities and visitors.

2.15 Producer responsibility

The UK Government and devolved administrations are in the process of reforming the UK packaging producer responsibility system. This is the first time Producer Responsibility for packaging has been reformed since the start of the scheme over 20 years ago.

A consultation has taken place on proposals that aim to incentivise producers to design packaging that is easy to recycle, making compliance more costly for producers of difficult to recycle packaging and ensure that they pay the full net cost of managing this material once it becomes waste. This is consistent with the 'polluter pays' principle by targeting those best placed to influence the design of packaging. It is intended that the costs incurred by local authorities for managing packaging waste will be paid for by these obligated producers. More ambitious targets and clear and consistent labelling for recyclability are all being considered as part of the reform. The aim of this work is to improve the quality of material collected for recycling, encourage more domestic reprocessing and fewer exports of poor quality and contaminated packaging for recycling.

As the regulator of Producer Responsibility in Scotland, these reform proposals will have a significant impact on SEPA. We are therefore actively participating through input into the Scottish Government led Extended Producer Responsibility Management Group, which represents Scottish policy aspirations. We are also working directly with the other UK regulators in various workstreams including the development of a consistent compliance monitoring and enforcement system and supporting digital systems.

3 Flooding

3.1 Intense rainfall events on 3 and 4 July

The beginning of July saw a break from the dry weather experienced in June. A series of intense rainfall events hit Scotland over the first week of the month, overwhelming local drainage systems and causing flooding to a small number of homes and businesses, as well as disruption to transport.

Impacts were worst in parts of Edinburgh and Glasgow, where the rainfall was particularly intense over urbanised areas. The Royal Botanic Gardens rain gauge in Edinburgh saw over 40mm of rainfall in just one hour.

We received positive feedback on our handling of the events with Flood Alerts in place and the Flood Guidance Statement flagging the risk of impacts to emergency responders. A series of media interviews were carried out with the BBC, Good Morning Scotland, and STV, and social media messaging was provided throughout.

3.2 Training of new Flood Warning Duty Officers

In July, we completed an intense six-month period of training for over 30 new Duty Officers who will soon be able to join our 24/7/365 flood warning service. This is part of a structured programme initiated last year to improve the resilience of our flooding rotas. It is also an action in line with the outcome of an audit reported to the Audit Committee last year.

Despite the restrictions caused by the pandemic and cyber-attack, high quality training was developed both internally and externally and delivered through a series of virtual group and one-to-one sessions tailored to the needs of each flooding rota and duty role. In total, over 60 formal training sessions have been delivered. We also partnered with Dr Andrew Black of the University of Dundee, a leading expert on flooding in Scotland. His one-day session, 'Introduction to flooding in Scotland', was recorded and is accessible as e-learning to all duty staff.

3.3 Speaking at flooding conferences

During June, our staff attended a number of conferences to speak on flooding in Scotland.

- On 29 June, Ruth Ellis represented SEPA at a panel discussion as part of the Environment Agency's annual Flood and Coast Conference.
- On 24 June, Vincent Fitzsimons spoke about building flooding into the green recovery at the New Civil Engineer Future of Floods Conference.
- On 3 June, Vincent Fitzsimons spoke about the importance of collaboration in mitigating flood risk at the Scotland Policy Conference Keynote Seminar: Next Steps for climate change policy in Scotland.

4 Organisation

4.1 Regenerative SEPA

We have made great progress so far reducing the organisation's greenhouse gas emissions by 53% since 2007. Building on this, the Agency Management Team and Board agreed in June that, as we build back following COVID and the cyber-attack, we should be doing much more to be a leader in this area and to target all environmental impacts, not just greenhouse gas emissions.

We will set targets not just to be a net zero organisation, but to become net positive - thereby regenerating the environment. A work programme is underway which will:

- identify the scope of what we will include in our emissions and impacts
- propose targets for reducing these emissions and impacts
- involve our staff in developing and implementing the work programme
- develop a decision-making framework to build regenerative considerations into key decisions
- build regenerative considerations into some of our priority recovery projects.

We plan to put draft targets to the Agency Management Team and Board in September.

4.2 Integrated Authorisation Framework

The Scottish Government has confirmed that it is now able to prioritise the policy and legal work needed to bring waste, water and Pollution Prevention and Control into the Environmental Authorisations (Scotland) Regulations 2018. In 2018, the common framework was developed in the Regulations, which provide an integrated authorisation and enforcement framework for the main regimes for which we are the regulator. In 2018, the radioactive substances regulation was brought into the Regulations with the intention that the other three main regimes would quickly follow. The plan was delayed by the huge amount of policy and legal work needed to amend the legislative framework in preparation for leaving the EU.

This development is significant as it enables us to build back one system and set of processes and procedures for regulation under our One Planet Prosperity strategy. We can now practically deliver this through having an integrated legislative framework for the four main regulatory regimes providing efficiencies for us and those that we regulate.

4.3 Future of work

As a first step to understanding staff workspace preferences, we issued a survey to all staff on 24 June 2021. It has had a 70% response so far. The first survey is focused on collating basic information about staff workspace preferences and workstyle profiles. The feedback will help us design workshops, team discussions, and other mechanisms to develop our ideas and ultimately, make decisions on the future of our work.

We are also working with the Agency Management Team to define our vision for the future of work and consolidate a clear understanding of our current position and opportunities (estate, Regenerative SEPA etc). Another way we are helping to inform Agency Management Team and Board decision-making is by looking at what other organisations around the world are doing in relation to this opportunity.

4.4 Safe and compliant buildings

We have confirmed with staff that working from home will remain the default for most until October, at which time it will be reviewed. We will keep this position under review. Our Angus Smith Building is COVID-secure with priority essential services operating there when authorised. The laboratories in our Aberdeen office are also COVID-secure, specifically to support the bathing water season and an expansion of our work on wastewater COVID testing. All our buildings are being statutorily maintained. Safe exceptional access to collect kit, equipment or undertake short term activities in support of priority essential services, field work and our recovery is in place. We are in the process of making our stores and workshops COVID-secure to support priority essential services.

We will continue to align with Scottish Government workplace guidance which is subject to review.

4.5 Keeping our people safe

We have established a cross-portfolio senior leadership group and delivery team to recover key Health and Safety guidance, policies and risk assessments and identify and schedule Health and Safety training to keep our staff safe while undertaking priority essential services. A significant number of key policies, guidance and high priority risk assessments have been produced and made available to staff.

Critical COVID guidance to keep staff safe while working in the field, laboratories, COVID secure buildings and at home is in place and accessible by staff. Generic Risk Assessments for priority essential work are being developed. Managers are assessing the training and competency of their staff before staff are deployed.

Statutory First Aid training courses have been held as well as high-risk training (swift water and sea survival). Interim Health and Safety procedures are in place and access to e-learning is available.

The cross-portfolio approach to this work is ensuring that we are building solid Health and Safety culture foundations with shared ownership and responsibility for Health and Safety across the organisation.

4.6 Supporting our staff

Equipping our managers with the information needed and skills to support staff has continued to be an essential activity. To achieve this, we have continued to hold weekly sessions for all members of the strategic leadership team, as well as weekly all manager briefing sessions throughout this period. Staff sessions have been held fortnightly providing an opportunity to brief staff and answer questions raised.

Informal weekly meetings have also taken place with the UNISON branch so that any additional issues impacting on staff can be swiftly identified and addressed.

The Management Development Programme has been refocused so that it supports managers to:

- Look after themselves
- Look after staff
- Deliver SEPA's work programme

The Management Development Programme and Flexible Deployment project teams collaborated to run workshops for managers which demonstrated how working flexibly can support managers and staff and contribute to delivering priority work. Using the expertise of external consultants, we have run sessions on creating and managing head space in times of pressure. These voluntary sessions were well attended, and further sessions are planned for July and August.

We have continued to deliver virtual training sessions to provide staff with tools and techniques to help them support themselves and their colleagues in Developing Personal Resilience. By the end of June, nine events had taken place. Feedback has been positive with all delegates who completed the evaluation survey advising that they had learned something which they could use to support themselves and others, and 90% saying they would recommend the event to a colleague. We have further events running in August after the school holiday break and are currently exploring options for the ongoing delivery of this type of learning.

Recognising that the success of some of these sessions come from bringing people together in a "safe space" to share their own challenges and coping strategies, colleagues are exploring alternative ways to create more of these opportunities.

A new Occupational Health portal went live on 5 July 2021 with users receiving training on the portal before then. The online portal is dedicated to users of the Scottish Government Occupational Health Framework contract and then tailored to suit each organisation. It will provide a secure way of referring and receiving Occupational Health reports.

4.7 Recruitment

Since the cyber-attack, there has been a small number of business-critical posts which have been approved for recruitment. To move quickly, we adopted a recruitment portal Talent Link which is supported by our Scottish Government Framework recruiting advertising partners TMP. While this has been successful on the whole, we are now in the process of reinstating our bespoke Applicant Tracker System, Engage, which will ensure a better candidate experience for internal and external applicants.

With the expansion of the Flexible Deployment initiative to meet short-term resource requirements, the volume of recruitment is expected to remain low. Only business-critical posts which are deemed to aid our recovery will be approved for recruitment. These will only be advertised internally unless there are exceptional circumstances.

4.8 Finance

4.8.1 Procurement and contract management

Significant work continues to be undertaken to ensure that the appropriate contracts are put in place to support our recovery from the cyber-attack. Implementation of the procurement and purchase to pay modules in Agresso is also underway and in test. These are essential to enable the processing of backlog invoices which have accumulated following the attack.

There is expected to be a delay in the publication of our contracts register procurement strategy and annual report. This is due to significant resource pressures and the temporary loss of required information.

Procurements are progressing well for the following major projects:

- Job evaluation scheme and system
- Pluvial mapping and modelling
- Future flood incident and messaging system
- Next generation telemetry
- Bathing waters consultancy

Work is also due to commence on the 2021-2022 capital programme during July.

4.8.2 Agresso project

Phase 2 of the Agresso project is progressing well. A key part of the self-service function it provides is that all staff can access it through web services. Testing of this is ongoing and we plan to run user testing for a few weeks from 12 July. We are also considering how best Agresso is deployed to deliver customer billing in September.

In Phase 2 of the project, we will reinstate the systems workflows, removing the need for time consuming workarounds and releasing valuable finance resources to bring our records up to date.

The retrospective processing of payroll and finance records for 2020-2021 is moving forward. The challenge of reformatting the nine large files of data received from HMRC to reinstate the payroll for 2020-2021 is being met with some assistance from the flexible resources project.

On completion of the Phase 2 user testing, we will focus on the recreation of the 2020-2021 finance records and the 2020-2021 annual accounts preparation.

4.8.3 2021-2022 Financial management

The Board has approved the 2021-2022 budget. The reinstatement of Agresso will ensure budget managers can see the resources allocated to them and manage their people and finances effectively.

To use the capital resources allocated to us for investment this year we have allocated funds to projects that moved from or were paused in 2020-2021. We have also agreed to invest in priority one projects that we know we can support in 2021-2022.

We will regularly review our capital and revenue positions for the year to date and year end forecast to make sure we make the best use of our resources. Our aim is that normal financial reporting to the Agency Management Team and Board will resume in Quarter 2.