



YOUR 2021-2022 INVOICE EXPLAINED AND FAQ'S

To help you understand why SEPA has invoiced you and provide you with answers to frequently asked questions regarding invoices.

For awareness - SEPA Service Status – delayed responses

SEPA was subject to a serious and complex Cyber-attack which has significantly impacted our contact centre, internal systems, processes and communications.

While for the time being we've lost access to most of our systems, we've adapted and continue to provide priority regulatory, monitoring, flood forecasting and warning services. In addition, our approach will continue to prioritise supporting Scotland's recovery.

While some systems and services may be badly affected for some time, step by step we are working to assess and consider how we recover. Please refer to our SEPA website for the up-to-date information on our [Cyber-attack, response and service status](#).

SEPA continues to operate and undertake its duties. It is true that we are operating in different ways both due to Covid and the Cyber-attack, but you can continue to contact us noting there will be a delay in response.

What is the best way to contact SEPA if I have any questions over the current period?

SEPA like many organisations have reduced capacity to answer calls. The best way to contact us is by email. We have identified the best email to use under each section so you get the quickest response. We will, if requested in your email, call you back.

Why have I received an invoice?

SEPA raises invoices to recover the costs it incurs regulating, monitoring and reporting the environmental impact of operators' activities as part of our statutory duty. These costs are referred to as subsistence costs and we are required to recover these costs from authorisation holders. This invoice is for annual subsistence charges related to your authorisation.

Spreading the cost of the invoice by a monthly standing order, who do I contact?

We are able to offer payment plans, by standing order, to help spread the cost of your annual charges. Please contact us to discuss this, or for more information, at invoices@sepa.org.uk.

Which site does it relate to?

Your invoice should contain the site detail. This is located in the **Your reference** section on the invoice. Please contact SEPA at charging@sepa.org.uk if the description does not have enough detail to clearly identify the site, or if this information is incorrect.

No one told me about SEPA charges when I bought the site/farm/premises and the previous owner is no longer here.

It is the purchaser's responsibility to check for any authorisation(s) that are held or should be held. Some authorisations (licences) apply to premises while others are to an individual or company. Non-payment of charges may mean you are operating illegally.

Why have my charges changed from 2020-21?

We have applied an inflationary increase to 2020/21 charges to arrive at the 2021/22 charges. This increase is included in the regulatory and environmental component of the charge. Your charges may also be impacted by applications for temporary cessation or of you activity commenced part way through part way through a year. If you have a query please contact charging@sepa.org.uk.

I am not carrying out the activity so why do I need to pay charges?

If you have stopped the authorised activity you should contact the Permitting team at charging@sepa.org.uk to discuss the authorisation surrender process. Information is also available on the SEPA website. Charges will cease from the date the surrender process is completed.

My licence has been surrendered or revoked. Why do I still need to pay?

If you have applied for a surrender or revocation and have still received an invoice, please contact the Permitting team at charging@sepa.org.uk to ensure that the application has been received and processed through our systems.

I was expecting to be notified in advance of invoicing so I could apply for temporary cessation reduction of charges?

Our initial thoughts were to contact operators who may apply for temporary cessation before the invoicing run. However, a combination of invoicing being later than expected and a significant number of temporary cessation applications already having been received, we decided it would be best to seek applications for temporary cessation at the same time as the invoices are being sent out. You can put in an application and we will amend and re-issue the invoice for any relevant period subject to the [normal rules](#) under section 6.11 of the charging guidance. Applications should be sent to charging@sepa.org.uk.

Why have I received an invoice when I have applied for a Mothballed/Fallow (non-operational) Exemption?

If you have applied for a mothballed/fallow exemption you will have received an invoice for 15% of the annual activity charge for the period. If the reduction is not shown then please contact charging@sepa.org.uk.

There are a large number of permits that cover activities that go through periods when they do not operate (for example fallow fish farms and irrigation permits) although ongoing work is still required for these licences.

There is a minimum of 6 months (12 months for irrigation or other seasonal licences¹) and a maximum of 2 years that can be mothballed at a time, although a further application to mothball a site can be made prior to the expiry of the previous one. Please see

¹ A seasonal licence is where the permit restricts which months that the activity is permitted. For example many irrigation licences are only allowed to abstract from April through to October.

https://www.sepa.org.uk/regulations/authorisations-and-permits/application-forms/#fee_waiver/
(located at bottom of the web page) for further information.

Why have I received an RSA related invoice?

All non-offshore RSA permits have been transitioned over to the new Environmental Authorisations (Scotland) Regulations (EAS) permits. If the invoice you have received makes reference to the RSA permit and this is not for an offshore permit, please contact SEPA at invoices@sepa.org.uk. You will subsequently receive a new EAS invoice and any adjustments relating to the invoice value will be dealt with at the same time.

The information on my invoice is incorrect, who do I contact?

If you have recently applied for a change (within the last few months) this may not have been reflected in this invoice since it was generated earlier in the year. We will be running an update so you may get a corrected invoice in the next week reflecting any changes.

However, if you want to check, or you think that any of the information on the invoice is incorrect, in the first instance please contact SEPA at invoices@sepa.org.uk. They will record the issue and pass on to the appropriate SEPA contact.

Non-payment of an invoice

Due to the current Covid-19 crisis our non-payment fee will be waived. Normally if an invoice is not paid within 30 days of the invoice date, or a payment plan has not been agreed by the payment date, you may be charged a late payment fee of £50. To arrange a payment plan please contact SEPA at invoices@sepa.org.uk.

I require a purchase order for this invoice, who do I contact?

The invoice is described as a statutory debt, this is any debt, other than debts relating to taxes that may be owed to a statutory body such as a government department, local authority, or court. We are issuing the invoice for this type of debt. We are NOT providing a service, we are undertaking our statutory duties and recovering our costs therefore no purchase order is required.

Where can I find out more information on Charging Schemes?

The charging scheme section of the SEPA website details how we interpret and apply charges. <https://www.sepa.org.uk/regulations/authorisations-and-permits/charging-schemes/charging-schemes-and-summary-charging-booklets/>

Surely SEPA is not operating so how can you charge?

SEPA is continuing to operate during the Covid-19 crisis delivering our key services responding to significant environmental incidents, undertaking essential regulatory field work, providing flood and drought warning, and carrying out enforcement action against deliberate illegal activity.

We continue to use a variety of means of checking and assessing compliance, including phone calls, issuing written advice, remotely managed technologies such as drones, targeted site and field visits, and other forms of intelligence gathering.

Our subsistence fees cover all this work and includes costs for running our support functions and networks.

Why are you sending an invoice now during this crisis and how does this relate to government statements of support for business?

We recognise these are extraordinary circumstances for individual businesses, the country, and the world, and as Scotland's environmental regulator, we are committed to helping Scottish businesses adapt to this next period.

We have discussed with Scottish Government how we approach invoicing this year.

We know some regulated businesses are experiencing difficulty. There are also many operators that are functioning well.

For information on accessing this document in an alternative format or language please contact SEPA by email at equalities@sepa.org.uk

If you are a user of British Sign Language (BSL) the Contact Scotland BSL service gives you access to an online interpreter enabling you to communicate with us using sign language.

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

www.sepa.org.uk

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