



Agency Board Meeting 26 July 2022

Board Report Number: SEPA 31/22

Water Scarcity

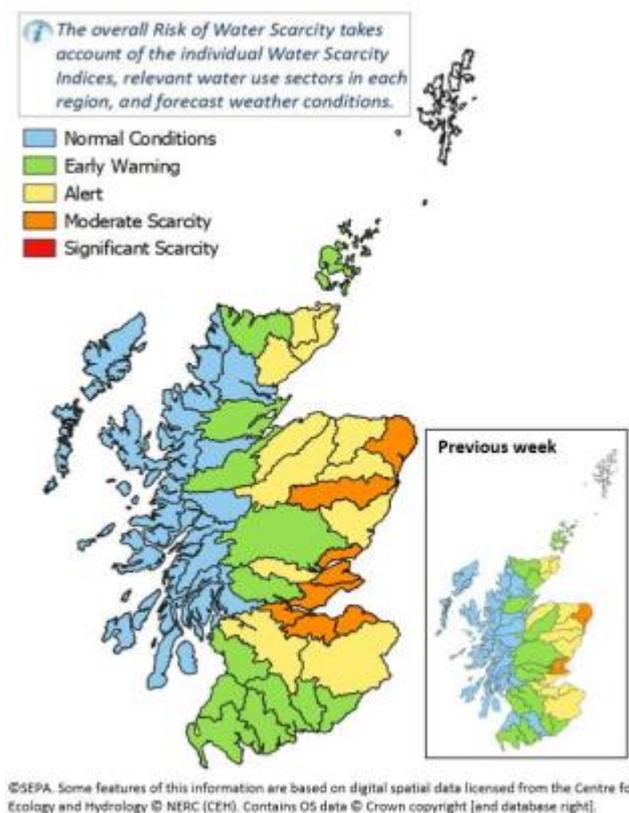
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| Summary: | Scotland is experiencing water scarcity. We are likely to take regulatory action in some areas. Longer-term, water scarcity will be a regular occurrence, and we are working to help Scotland adapt. |
| Risks: | Unable to resource effective regulation |
| Resource and Staffing Implications: | Given resource constraints, implementing the National Water Scarcity Plan will be challenging. |
| Equalities: | None |
| Environmental and Carbon Impact: | None |
| Purpose and audience of the report: | For noting and strategic input Agency Board, Scottish Government and Public |
| Report Author: | Nathan Critchlow-Watton, Head of Water and Planning Janine Hensman, Senior Manager, Hydrology Brian Roxburgh, Principal Compliance Officer, Water Industry, Water Economy Unit |
| Appendices: | None |

1. Introduction

- 1.1. SEPA is responsible for managing water resources in Scotland.
- 1.2. There are droughts across Europe, and around half of Scotland is experiencing water scarcity issues.
- 1.3. This session is to:
 - inform the board of the situation;
 - outline the steps we are taking to manage water resources and;
 - discuss how we intend to help Scotland adapt to future water scarcity.

2. Background

- 2.1. On the east coast we have had the driest January since 1940; six out of the last eight months have seen below-average rainfall.
- 2.2. We publish weekly assessments of water scarcity reports on [our website](#). The report for the [14th of July](#) shows that around half of Scotland is experiencing water scarcity:



- 2.3. Seven areas are currently at “moderate scarcity”; most of these areas are likely to move into “significant scarcity” in the next few weeks. Some areas will require significantly above-average rainfall for an extended period before they return to normal.
- 2.4. We are following our [National Water Scarcity Plan](#) (NWSP) which sets-out the actions we will take.

3. The Issues

- 3.1. Climate change has already increased the chance of seeing a summer as hot as the summer of 2018 to between 12 and 25%.
- 3.2. By 2050 hot summers are likely to occur every other year.
- 3.3. Water scarcity will impact on biodiversity and the environment. It will also exacerbate other environmental issues (such as blue-green algae blooms, pollution impacts etc.).
- 3.4. Businesses that use water will also be affected and in some parts of the country existing businesses will no longer be viable.
- 3.5. SEPA consulted on a [revised approach to water resource management](#); the consultation closed in June 2021.
- 3.6. This sets-out short and medium-term actions around three themes:
 - Responsible and efficient water use
 - Effective communication and engagement
 - Clear regulation and triggers for action

4. Recommendations

- 4.1. The Board is asked to:
 - **Note** the worsening water scarcity situation
 - **Note** SEPA's approach to managing the situation

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