

# SEPA'S CHEMICAL FRAMEWORK

2022



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## Introduction

Every day SEPA works to protect and enhance Scotland's environment, helping communities and businesses thrive within the resources of our planet. We call this [One Planet Prosperity](#). There is a significant opportunity for SEPA to drive forward its One Planet Prosperity ambitions by taking a systems-thinking approach to our work on chemicals. Looking at chemicals holistically throughout their lifecycle in our environment; from manufacture through to disposal will ensure delivery of co-benefits across SEPA's Energy, Water and Waste to Resources Frameworks.

SEPA can achieve a great deal through the direct regulation of the production of chemicals and the disposal of articles and substances; however, through working in partnership and influencing business and industry we can achieve much more such as:

- discouraging the use of harmful products unless there are clear and demonstrable needs where less harmful chemicals or alternatives cannot be used
- encouraging the efficient use of chemicals that are safe by design and therefore enable a circular economy.

SEPA recognises there is a big challenge ahead of us to achieve these ambitions and understands there are complex regulatory, evidence-base and influencing landscapes associated with the life cycle of chemicals. This Chemicals Framework sets out our vision and what our aims will be to facilitate a more efficient, effective, and joined-up approach to our work in this area. Having a strong understanding and approach will help ensure that we can work with communities, businesses and industry, academia and other public bodies to facilitate the development and use of those chemicals that support:

- the precautionary principle
- energy and resource-efficient technologies, materials and products,

- the move away from those chemicals with the most hazardous properties that can cause harm to human health and the environment.

## Bigger Picture

Chemicals play an intrinsic part in modern living and the chemical manufacturing sector produces a huge range of products, many of which support other industries. These chemicals include pesticides, cleaning agents, acids, lubricants, cosmetics, medical diagnostic, pharmaceuticals and plastics. Some chemical products are specifically helping other sectors to decarbonise, for example providing coatings for solar panels, lightweight plastics to reduce transport impacts and insulating materials. The benefits of chemicals are significant, but the unintended environmental consequences, including contributing to global warming and release of greenhouse gas emissions (GHG), impacts on biodiversity and the water environment, and the direct impacts on health of chemical use in society are apparent. Some impacts are more visible than others, and general awareness on issues vary accordingly. The effects of plastic pollution, anti-microbial resistance (AMR) and the harmful effects of chemicals (for example, endocrine disruption) on ecosystems and human health will continue to pose significant challenges over the coming years, especially as new knowledge and evidence are gained.

There are many health, safety and environmental regulatory controls applied to the manufacturing, marketing, importing, use and disposal of chemicals internationally (e.g. UN, EU, nationally and domestically), often creating a complex regulatory landscape. A mixture of reserved and devolved policies and regulations apply. Environmental protection during manufacture, waste management at the end of product life and public health protection are devolved areas, whilst product standards, trade and health and safety are reserved.

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SEPA's Chemical Framework sets out our vision and desired aims to help us to work collaboratively within SEPA and with partners to better understand the impacts of chemicals in all parts of the environment and to prioritise areas where our involvement can make a positive change to the environment. Recognising the global, EU and UK chemical strategies and priorities we will use our regulatory tools and levers to influence chemical regulation and policy development in the future. This is crucial in reducing the amount of harmful chemicals in the environment and in supporting innovation across all sectors safeguarding against future negative impacts.

## Vision

It is SEPA's vision that:

The manufacturing, importing, marketing, use, storage and management of chemicals is undertaken in a way that prevents harm to people and the environment now and in the future and in a way that supports a circular economy.

What will this look like?

Businesses will have:

- Eliminated the need for harmful chemicals where possible
  - Minimised the impacts of chemicals where their use is necessary
  - Safely and sustainably used, recycled and disposed of chemicals
  - Prevented, and where necessary remediated, any environmental impacts from the lifecycle of the chemicals
  - Implemented decarbonisation and energy efficiency opportunities
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## What we will do

The following aims will help us to realise our vision:

Use our regulatory tools and levers to influence chemical regulations and policy development in the future.

Work in partnership with other agencies and organisations to facilitate a joined-up approach to regulation within SEPA and have a shared understanding of our priorities and aims, both internally and externally.

Protect the environment and human health using our regulatory tools and levers to ensure compliant, responsible and sustainable manufacture, use, storage, decommissioning and disposal of chemicals and products containing chemicals.

Support innovative alternatives to the most harmful chemicals and chemical-containing products/articles, whilst preventing undesirable substitution.

## Implementation

The Chemicals Framework informs SEPA's way of working and Annual Operating Plan to ensure the appropriate resources and delivery tools are in place to facilitate implementation of this framework.

For information on accessing this document in an alternative format or language please contact SEPA by emailing [equalities@sepa.org.uk](mailto: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](http://www.sepa.org.uk)