

SEPA's Chief Executive calls on Tayside youngsters to share flooding knowledge

✘ 25 September 2018

SEPA's Chief Executive, Terry A'Hearn, attended the Safe Taysiders event at Baluniefield Police Training Station in Dundee yesterday (Monday 24 September) to encourage young people to educate their friends and family on how they can be flood-prepared.

- The Scottish Environment Protection Agency (SEPA) is working with partners to raise awareness of flooding amongst young people
- Safe Taysiders is an annual event which helps young people to learn how they can be flood-prepared
- SEPA's Chief Executive attended Safe Taysiders to encourage young people to share what they have learned with friends and family

Safe Taysiders is an annual event, organised by Dundee City Council, which aims to increase awareness of how young people can stay safe in a number of different flooding situations. Over 1,500 pupils across Tayside are expected to take part in the event which runs from 17 September to 4 October.

All pupils complete a hazard perception activity to see if they can identify potential flooding risks, and are given the opportunity to put what they have learned into practice using SEPA's flood activity mat.

Mr A'Hearn said:

"Every day SEPA works to help Scotland prepare more powerfully for future increased flooding. Flooding affects us all but often young people don't initially think it is something that is relevant to them.

"The Safe Taysiders event is a great opportunity to help children learn about flooding, where it can come from and how it can be dangerous. I am very impressed with how quickly the children were able to identify the key sources of flooding and the potential hazards. We hope that the children will take what they have learned and use this knowledge to help spread the word to their friends and families on how they can be flood-prepared."

A host of information to help young people learn about how to be prepared for flooding, including a video on how to make a flood kit and fun games which teach children how to stay safe, is available on SEPA's [Floodline Kids](#) webpage.

If you would like to sign up to Floodline to receive Flood Alerts or Warnings for your areas you can do this [on-line](#) or by phone on 0345 988 1188.

Ends

Not so pretty vacant. Scottish Land Commission and SEPA target new uses for derelict and vacant land

📅 21 September 2018

Two of Scotland's leading land and environment bodies have set their sights on finding ways to bring thousands of acres of derelict and vacant land back into productive use.

The Scottish Land Commission and SEPA have today launched their [innovative partnership and taskforce](#) to transform Scotland's approach to vacant and derelict land. It will see the two organisations:

- Go beyond regulatory and planning compliance, to develop innovative approaches that will drive transformative – not piecemeal – change
- Challenge and change the way that Scotland deals with the issue of vacant and derelict land
- Work with local authorities, other public agencies and organisations in the private and social enterprise sectors to identify the causes and consequences of long-term land vacancy and dereliction
- Develop a 10 year strategy for eradicating the problem, setting ambitious targets supported at a local and national level.

The Scottish Vacant and Derelict Land Survey (SVDLS) was first set up 30 years ago, yet the amount of registered land has remained virtually static. There are currently around 11,600 hectares, two times the size of the City of Dundee, of derelict and urban vacant land in Scotland.

A new taskforce has been created, chaired by Steve Dunlop, Chief Executive Scottish Enterprise, to bring together leaders from the public, private and social enterprise sectors. The taskforce will challenge and reshape the approach to bringing sites back into use which will have both economic and social benefits for all of Scotland. Supported by the Land Commission and SEPA, the taskforce has the ambitious goal of halving the amount of Scotland's derelict land by 2025. The partnership and taskforce was launched today at the 'Unlocking Inclusive Growth: The Social Value Gathering' conference in Edinburgh.

Launching the partnership and taskforce, Land Reform Secretary, Roseanna Cunningham said:

Scotland has far too much unused, unproductive land. As the Programme for Government makes clear, land can play a major role in creating high-quality places that support Scotland's health,

wellbeing and prosperity. The Scottish Government fully support the Scottish Land Commission and SEPA in investigating how this land could be better utilised by communities across the country, and I am keen to see an ambitious and innovative approach to this stubborn problem.

“The ‘unlocking’ of vacant and derelict land touches on a number of important strands of work, including planning and regeneration. It is also another key strand of our ambitious land reform agenda, which includes a recent commitment to continue our £10 million annual funding of the Scottish Land Fund, the creation of a register of controlling interests in land, and we’re exploring the expansion of existing Community Right to Buy mechanisms.”

Chair of the Taskforce Steve Dunlop said:

In disadvantaged areas of Scotland it is estimated that three in every five people live within 500 metres of a vacant or derelict site. The taskforce will help drive practical action and look for innovative ways to make productive use of vacant and derelict land for housing, commercial and green space uses.

“Rejuvenating vacant and derelict land brings about long term regeneration and renewal – unlocking growth, reviving communities, increasing community empowerment, reducing inequalities and inspiring local pride and activities.”

Chief Executive of the Scottish Land Commission, Hamish Trench, said:

The partnership with SEPA and the creation of the Taskforce is a catalyst for change from across the sectors in our approach to vacant and derelict land. We want to identify what can be done with policy, legislation and action to release this land to benefit the communities living in and around it, making more of Scotland’s land do more for Scotland’s people.

“As part of that we, along with the taskforce, are looking at tools and mechanisms to address the problem of vacant and derelict land with scope for far more innovation in finding ways to bring the land back into productive use.

“There are already some inspiring – recent – examples of what can be achieved in our cities and we want to encourage more of these approaches.”

SEPA Chief Executive, Terry A’Hearn, said:

Climate change, marine plastics and extreme weather events show that we are putting too much pressure on the environment. We are over-using the planet. But we are under-using some of our land.

“This Sustainable Growth Agreement with Scottish Land Commission is designed to fix this problem. This innovative partnership will transform Scotland’s approach to bringing vacant and derelict land back into productive use by turning once dormant liabilities into national assets.”

Recent examples of transforming vacant or derelict land for productive use include:

- The [Shettleston Growing Project](#) in Glasgow which has created a thriving community garden on land previously used for storing building materials
- The recently completed [Social Bite Village](#) in Granton, Edinburgh to provide attractive accommodation for homeless people
- Scotland’s biggest and most ambitious regeneration programme [Clyde Gateway](#) has brought a number of large scale vacant derelict land sites back in to productive use, with the most recent being [Magenta](#).
- Regeneration of a 28-acre site, formerly the home of Johnnie Walker, generating inward investment and stimulating jobs at [HALO Kilmarnock](#)

ENDS

[New coastal flood warning schemes significantly enhance resilience of Scottish communities in face of climate change](#)

✘ 18 September 2018

Impact of climate change on Scotland’s most flood prone communities projected to place over 169,000 at risk of flooding by 2080. Estimated cost to Scottish economy £53 million annually from coastal flood damage. New Coastal Flood Warning Schemes for Orkney, Aberdeenshire and Angus covering 2589 properties, significantly enhances Scotland’s resilience to coastal flooding.

In the face of rising sea levels and the promise of more frequent extreme weather events, the impact of climate change on Scotland’s most flood prone communities is projected to place over 169,000 homes and businesses at risk of flooding by 2080.

Estimated to cost the Scottish economy £53 million annually from coastal flood damage, national resilience against the impact of flood events has been significantly enhanced with the addition of new coastal flood warning schemes, covering 19 priority areas across the Orkney Islands, Aberdeenshire and Angus.

The new flood warning areas, launched today (18 September, 2018), will extend the Scottish Environment Protection Agency's (SEPA) Floodline service to include almost the whole of the east coast of Scotland. This includes an additional 2589 properties and provide accurate, advanced warning to prepare communities against the impact of coastal flood events.

As Scotland's national authority for flood forecasting and warning, SEPA operates a 24-hour Flood forecasting and warning service to inform first responders, local authorities and emergency services of emerging flood events and the potential impact on local communities and critical infrastructure. Operating 365 days a year, over 300 Flood Alerts and 400 Flood Warnings are issued annually via Floodline directly to 26,944 customers nationwide, with many thousands more accessing them online.

The new warning areas for Orkney and the Northeast coast represents a significant investment and enhancement of Scotland's overall resilience to the impact of climate change and extreme weather.

Orkney Island's Coastal Flood Warning launch event

Improving the resilience of vulnerable communities formed the core theme at the official launch of the Orkney scheme in Kirkwall today, which included a gathering of representatives from local emergency responders and resilience partners.

With over 90% of flood risk in Orkney originating from the sea, the benefits of the new coastal flood warning scheme in providing advance warning of extreme weather events were emphasised by SEPA's Head of Hydrology and Flooding, Vincent Fitzsimons and Councillor Graham Sinclair from Orkney Island's Council, particularly in the wake of Storm Caroline in December 2017, which resulted in widespread flooding of coastal communities and travel disruption across Orkney. Real time forecasts will provide emergency partners and first responders with detailed information on the impact of potential flooding from wave over-topping and tidal surges and offer direct notification via SEPA's Floodline service to residents who sign up to the service.

Developed in close collaboration with flooding specialists from Orkney Island's Council and partner agencies within the Scottish Flood Forecasting Service, the new scheme uses 18 forecasting points to model coastal waters and the potential impact from elevated water levels on the most exposed communities and critical infrastructure. The launch marks the start of a week-long series of drop in sessions across the islands to raise awareness of the 11 priority areas, the benefit of the Floodline service and to encourage islanders to sign up to receive free advance warnings in the event of future coastal flooding.

Environment Secretary Roseanna Cunningham said:

“Scotland’s climate is changing, and this means extreme weather events, including floods, are expected to occur more frequently in the years ahead. The Scottish Government realises that it’s vital that we work alongside partners like SEPA and local authorities, to do everything in our powers to improve resilience against issues like flooding, in some of our most vulnerable communities.

“We have committed £420 million over 10 years to protect homes in many of Scotland’s most flood-prone communities, in places like the Orkneys, and North East of Scotland.

“We know that we can’t control the weather, but we can change how we respond to it. These coastal flood warning schemes provide an invaluable tool for doing that”

“Scotland needs to be prepared more powerfully for weather extremes and rising sea levels, which as we know, is only ever-increasing as a result of climate change,” said Vincent Fitzsimons, Head of Hydrology and Flooding Services at SEPA.

“As sea levels rise all around the UK coastline, it brings with it the risk of coastal erosion and more frequent flooding for Scotland’s exposed coastal communities. The Orkney Islands are one of three regions particularly at risk from the impact of coastal flooding and SEPA has spent two years developing the new coastal warning scheme in close partnership with Orkney Island Council to provide a state of the art system which will deliver accurate, real time warnings to those who need it most.

“As the Scottish flood forecasting, flood warning and strategic flood risk management authority, our work will continue with the latest National Flood Risk Assessment, due to be published in December, to ensure that Scotland remains resilient in the face of increased flooding.”

Councillor Graham Sinclair, Orkney Islands Council, Chair of the Council’s Development and Infrastructure Committee, said:

“SEPA’s Coastal Flood Warning Scheme offers our residents, business and road user’s valuable information in the lead up to bad weather. The additional and advance notification gives everyone extra time to take necessary precautions in terms of any potential risk to property, or in terms of planning their journeys.

“In periods of severe weather the SEPA flood warnings will come in advance of the Council’s own warnings about areas which could be impacted by coastal flooding, including potential Churchill Barrier closures.

“We welcome the introduction of this new warning system and hope that the greater notice it provides will give locals valuable extra time to plan in periods of severe weather. I’d urge everyone in Orkney to consider the warnings they should be signing up for.”

“Forewarned, is definitely forearmed” said, Sarah Taylor a resident of Stromness whose home was devastated in January 2005 by a sudden storm surge which left the ground floor of her sea front property under a metre of sea water.

“We didn’t have time to save any belongings on the ground floor, including Christmas presents or the food from our freezer, the sea just rose up and filled the house. Advance warning will be very worthwhile because it gives you the ability to plan ahead, move your valuables out of harm’s way

“We’re very lucky that we have such a strong, supportive community around us – we help each other when the worst weather hits, and with a day or two’s notice, it gives us ample time to check in on our more vulnerable locals and prepare for what might be coming.”

The Orkney Island scheme is complemented by the activation of a further 8 warning areas between Inverallochy in Aberdeenshire and Montrose in Angus, along Scotland’s tempestuous northeast coastline. Collectively spanning 147 miles, the new warning areas incorporate a further 1268 households and business premises from 17 communities into the Floodline service and bridges the gaps in SEPA’s coastal forecasting network to cover the entire length of Scotland’s east coast.

The Orkney and North East coastal schemes were earmarked as a priority for development in SEPA’s National Flood Risk Management Strategy in 2015. The strategies are developed and updated in close consultation with Scotland’s 32 local authorities. They set the national direction of future flood risk management, helping to target investment and coordinate actions across public bodies. Each strategy is developed using the National Flood Risk Assessment which identifies Potentially Vulnerable Areas with the greatest flood risk, the factors affecting flooding, as well as the impact on communities and critical infrastructure when flooding occurs.

Assessments are published in six year cycles and provide a solid foundation for informed decision-making across flood risk management organisations. Following a public consultation over the summer, the National Flood Risk Assessment (NFRA) is currently being formally reviewed and will be published on the SEPA website in December 2018. This comprehensive technical assessment will support work to priorities further flood warning schemes, under the second round of Flood Risk Management strategies, to deliver increased resilience to Scotland’s flood prone communities.

ENDS

[**A study of the fish population in Loch**](#)

Ken is published

✘ 11 September 2018

During 2016 and 2017, Galloway Fisheries Trust undertook a study of the fish, fisheries and anglers of Loch Ken. This was to assess the fish populations in the Loch and the extent to which angling around the loch assists the local economy.

This work sought to better understand the impact of the North American Signal Crayfish on the fish populations and identify recommendations for the future management of the coarse fishery.

The Study was commissioned by the Galloway Glens Landscape Partnership Scheme ('Galloway Glens Partnership') as part of the Partnership's development phase and was managed and funded by Scottish Natural Heritage (SNH), Scottish Environment Protection Agency (SEPA) and the Galloway Glens Partnership.

The report is published on the Galloway Glens Landscape Partnership Scheme [website](#), with the following headline points:

- Loch Ken continues to be a popular fishery particularly for visiting anglers from outwith Dumfries & Galloway, with most anglers stating they are 'satisfied' or 'very satisfied' with their angling experience on the loch. The loch provides good overall catches during much of the year. Many match anglers feel that if more suitable fishing sites were available, then more matches would be held.
- The presence of North American Signal Crayfish is felt to negatively impact on the angling, particularly through interference with baits. At present however, it appears that the coarse fish population in Loch Ken can support the fishery in spite of this presence.
- The main fish species being targeted by anglers on the loch are bream, roach, pike, perch and to a lesser extent dace and ruffe. Consideration of the overall health of these fish populations including growth rates suggested all were healthy.
- The population of large perch in Loch Ken is felt by anglers to have increased in recent years due to these fish feeding on juvenile signal crayfish. Examination of perch growth rates did find a large increase in growth rates in perch over four years old.
- Some degree of biosecurity is undertaken by over half of anglers on the loch to help reduce the risk of transfer of invasive non-native species.
- Information and data was collected via stake holder events, the distribution of an angler questionnaire, interviews with anglers fishing (creel surveys), seine netting and through angling matches.

A number of recommendations are provided regarding understanding the fish populations in the loch and the future development of Loch Ken as an important coarse fishery. These include:

- a) better promotion / increased accessibility (improving access at

angling areas, creation of new fishing pegs for angling matches,

b) future monitoring of fish populations (collection of data from matches, seine netting, creel surveys);

c) management of the fishery (improved governance through formation of Loch Ken Fisheries Management Group, production of a 5 year fishery management plan, improved enforcement),

Nick Chisholm, Galloway Glens Project Officer and leading on the activities around the loch in coming years, said:

Loch Ken is one of coarse angling's best kept secrets. A popular match fishing venue in the 80s and 90s which went into decline after it became synonymous with the colonisation of American signal crayfish in the early part of this century. The presence of crayfish is not ideal, but this report illustrates a healthy and self-sustaining fishery. On the mainland of the British Isles there are very few wild stillwater fisheries of this magnitude; an angler could spend weeks exploring by bank and boat and find something new on every visit. There are some key recommendations on this report that need to be taken forward so that Loch Ken can re-establish its rightful place as the UK's best large wild stillwater. The wider Galloway Glens scheme, with funding from the Heritage Lottery Fund and working with partners around the Loch including the Loch Ken Management Advisory Committee, gives us the opportunity to realise these ambitions."

Callum Sinclair from SNH, who managed the undertaking of the report on behalf of the funding partners, said:

The presence of American signal crayfish in Loch Ken and the surrounding catchment is clearly undesirable and unwelcome. However, there is no technically feasible means of eradicating or meaningfully controlling this infestation. Therefore, this study sought both to look at the actual health of the fish and fishery and capture the views and perspectives of anglers who use Loch Ken alongside the crayfish. The findings indicate a healthy fishery and a flexible and resilient set of anglers who have, in the main, adapted their techniques to minimise the crayfish impact on the enjoyment of their pastime. Whilst Loch Ken is already delivering significant local economic benefits to the area from angling there is potential to further develop and more effectively manage the fishery to increase these benefits and ensure that a valuable recreational resource is protected for the future and continues to support local communities, businesses and users of the loch."

John McCubbing from the New Galloway Angling Association, said:

The report is an interesting read and illustrates that there are a lot of fish in Loch Ken. The New Galloway Angling Association can use this report to publicize the quality of the fishing that is present. It is now time for the whole angling community to move forward and use the findings of this report to make everyone aware of how good Loch Ken is. There is now an opportunity with the Galloway Glens scheme to help us in these endeavours."

Jamie Ribbens, Senior Fisheries Biologist from Galloway Fisheries Trust who undertook the report, said:

This was an interesting piece of work to be involved in delivering and it was encouraging to see how healthy the coarse fish population of Loch Ken is. GFT would like to thank the many anglers and angling clubs who assisted us during this study. There are many opportunities to develop this fishery further for the benefit of the local community and anglers from around the UK and we look forward to working further with the Galloway Glens Scheme in the future."

Anne Connick, Planning Officer (Catchment Management) from the Scottish Environment Protection Agency's (SEPA) Dumfries and Galloway team, said:

Every day SEPA works to protect and enhance Scotland's environment, and we are committed to using partnerships as our principal way of delivering environmental outcomes. Loch Ken and the surrounding area is a valuable resource and a popular location for anglers and other visitors. It is very encouraging to see the results of this important study which indicates there is a healthy coarse fish population in Loch Ken. This is good news for the environment, and also for local and visiting anglers, and we will continue to work with our partners to help ensure the sustainable future of Loch Ken."

Karen Morley, Countryside Development Officer from Dumfries & Galloway Council added:

The Council's Environment service, part of the Economic Development Department, operates on and around Loch Ken and we also work to support the Loch Ken Management Advisory Committee which is made up of all the different user groups. Coarse angling is one of the many activities supported by the Loch, it is interesting to see the impressive size of some of the fish being caught around the Loch in recent years and we will be doing everything we can to make sure this amazing natural resource is used to drive economic activity and encourage more people to visit."

[SEPA to end exemptions for burning farm plastics](#)

✘ 31 August 2018

The Scottish Environment Protection Agency (SEPA) has announced its next steps to stem the plastic tide by confirming it will end exemptions for burning most types of agricultural waste from 1 January 2019.

- SEPA confirms its next steps to stem the plastic tide by announcing that burning farm plastics, and most types of agricultural waste, will not be allowed under exemption from 1 January 2019.
- Whilst a change in Scotland's environmental regulations in 2013 meant farmers could continue burning plastics only under an exemption, SEPA is moving to reduce the environmental impacts of farm waste.
- SEPA has engaged extensively with NFU Scotland and Zero Waste Scotland to support Scottish farmers through a simple set of online resources, including a list of Scottish recyclers who stand ready to help farmers get plastic waste sorted.

Whilst a change in Scotland's environmental regulations in 2013 meant farmers could continue burning plastics only under an exemption, the agency is moving to reduce the environmental impacts of farm waste.

The move, which will affect silage wrap, crop covers, fertiliser bags and containers, follows extensive engagement between SEPA and Zero Waste Scotland. SEPA has also worked closely with NFU Scotland to roll out the change which will feature ongoing dialogue with farmers and crofters over the coming months.

Ending the exemption will not only align with the legal requirement for all Scottish businesses to present plastics and other items separately for collection, but will help boost the Scottish market for recycled plastics.

SEPA's Gary Walker, Waste and Landfill Tax Manager, and Stephen Field, Land Unit Manager, and NFU Scotland Vice President Martin Kennedy and Director of Policy Jonathan Hall today (Friday 31 August) visited RPC bpi recycled products in Dumfries, one of the largest polythene film recyclers in Europe, which will help farmers as they join the global challenge to reduce their plastic usage.

The company has the scope and expertise to recycle up to 120,000 tonnes of plastic each year across Europe with plastics, including silage wrap and fertiliser bags, being recycled into refuse sacks and Plaswood lumber, made

from 100% recycled plastic. Plaswood can then be fabricated into products such as boardwalks, fencing, gates and garden furniture as part of a circular economy.

SEPA, NFU Scotland and Zero Waste Scotland have developed a simple set of resources for Scottish farmers, including a list of Scottish recyclers who stand ready to help farmers get plastic waste sorted. Further information is available from www.sepa.org.uk/farmplastics.

Speaking at RPC bpi recycled products' site in Dumfries, SEPA's Gary Walker, said:

Every day SEPA works to protect and enhance Scotland's environment and ending the exemption for burning farm plastics is an important next step in stemming the plastic tide by reducing the environmental impacts of farm waste.

"From 1 January 2019 farmers will no longer be able to burn plastic and most types of agricultural waste and, whilst many farmers have been recycling this type of waste for years, it is important that all farmers take steps now to ensure they are ready. By recycling farmers are once more doing their bit for the environment, supporting their local community and helping ensure that plastic materials are kept in use for as long as possible by maximising the value that can be extracted from them.

"Working with our partners a simple set of resources has been developed for Scottish farmers which will help them to get their plastic waste sorted. We will continue to work with farmers over the coming months as we move towards 1 January and SEPA officers are always here to help if farmers have any questions."

Mike Baxter, External Affairs Director for RPC bpi recycled products said:

We are absolutely delighted to be a partner in this joint stakeholder initiative. By increasing collection rates of farm plastics there are huge benefits for the environment and the Scottish Circular Economy. We have recycled used farm plastic films at our Dumfries factory since 1996. The plastic pellets we produce from our recycling process are used to manufacture second life products – such as Plaswood plastic lumber and furniture, refuse sacks used by Scottish NHS and at RPC bpi indupac, located in Ardeer, we manufacture heavy duty agricultural plastic films."

NFU Scotland Vice President Martin Kennedy said:

Recognising that the spotlight is focussed on plastics, it is incumbent on all stakeholders that we help farmers and crofters do

the right thing when dealing with the forthcoming ban on burning farm plastics.

“There is a short window for change but we have been working closely with SEPA and Zero Waste Scotland on clear messages and practical measures that farmers can follow. That involves meaningful, simple guidance on what can and can't be done; what is and what isn't recyclable, and what the options are for farm plastics deemed non-recyclable. We also want to ensure the collection centre network is as comprehensive as possible so those in more remote areas have realistic options to have this material disposed of properly in the future.

“Where there are gaps in information, guidance or disposal options, we will work quickly with others to fill them with solutions.”

ENDS

Notes to editors

If a land manager carries their own waste off site to another site for onward recycling or disposal then they need to register for FREE with SEPA as a Professional Collector and Transporter of Waste (PCT).

Online registration is available via sepa.org.uk/pctw, and a paper form can also be downloaded from the SEPA [website](#). This form must be completed and returned to your nearest SEPA Registry Office detailed on the form.

There is currently no fee for registration as a PCT and the registration is valid indefinitely unless it is cancelled.

If a land manager carries anybody's waste other than their own, even if it is from another land manager, then they must be a registered waste carrier (RWC).

Online registration is available via the SEPA [website](#) and a paper form can also be downloaded from the SEPA [website](#). This form must be completed and returned to your nearest SEPA Registry Office detailed on the form.

There is a fee payable for registration as a RWC. This is detailed in our Waste Management Fees and Charges (Scotland) Scheme available on the SEPA website on the current charging schemes page. The fee for 2018 is currently £210. Registrations are valid for three years unless revoked or cancelled.