

Pupils hope to encourage a flood of volunteers to sign up with SEPA to measure rainfall

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SEPA is looking for volunteer rainfall observers to collect data daily at around 9am and submit the information online. There are currently 134 rainfall observers across Scotland who play an important part in collecting this valuable data for SEPA.

The information helps SEPA and the Met Office capture Scotland's complex rainfall patterns in addition to the figures collated from SEPA's 300 automated gauges. This data helps SEPA make informed decisions on water management, flood risk management, long term climate research as well as informing industry, agriculture and infrastructure development.

Grant Kennedy, Senior Specialist Scientist in Hydrology, at SEPA said: "Every day SEPA works to protect and enhance Scotland's environment and this is a great opportunity for any budding citizen scientists to get involved and make a valued contribution to our data research.

"We help Scotland prepare more powerfully for future increased flooding and the impacts of climate change. The data collected from rainfall observing contributes to our work around flood risk management so volunteers are playing an important role in that process.

"We would welcome new observers from anywhere across Scotland. We are particularly keen to get gauges located in area such as Dumfries and Galloway, The Western Isles, and all across the Highlands particularly in Lochaber and Caithness. Having two gauges close to each other is useful to verify unusual events and as our rainfall is so fickle, there can never be enough gauges to capture the patterns.

"Being a rainfall observer is a rewarding and interesting hobby for people of all ages with an interest in environmental science and there is a great potential for teachers to engage their students in maths, geography and science in a practical way."

Pupils in Primary 6 at Bridge of Allan Primary School, near Stirling, have signed up to join in the data collection and are excited to start their role as citizen scientists.

Lyndsay Macnair, Headteacher at Bridge of Allan Primary School, said: "We are delighted to be supporting SEPA with this project. It is an excellent opportunity for our pupils to develop skills in STEM whilst supporting SEPA. Primary 6 are looking forward to the challenge ahead."

Convener of Stirling Council's Children and Young People, Cllr Susan McGill said: "It's fantastic that our children and young people at Bridge of Allan Primary School are participating in this important project with SEPA. Not only will it help pupils develop key skills for the future, they will have the opportunity to learn about protecting and improving their local environment."

Vice Convener of the Committee, Margaret Brisley said: "This is a really fun and interesting way to engage pupils at the school in an important area of the curriculum and to learn about the environment and sustainability.

"I'm sure the work of our budding scientists at Bridge of Allan PS will encourage others across Scotland to get involved in this vital initiative."

For further information on how to become a rainfall observer visit www.envscot-csportal.org.uk/rainfallobs/about/ or to sign up please visit www.envscot-csportal.org.uk/rainfallobs/

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Notes to editor

Pictured left to right: Bridge of Allan Primary School P6 pupils Freya Huntly, Broden Daly, Lewis Wilson and Isla McKay with SEPA Hydrologist Grant Kennedy.

Rainfall Observing

- Rainfall observers took extra sampling to monitor valuable data of the volcanic ash fallout after Icelandic eruptions in 2011 and 2014.
- A number of rainfall observers have received awards for providing over 30 years of service with one clocking in their data since 1963. One observer at Doonholm in Ayrshire is continuing a family hobby that started in 1898.
- The most northern rainfall gauge is in Shetland and the highest (279 metres) is at Gladhouse Reservoir in Mid Lothian.

Some examples of the ways the rainfall data is used includes:

- Allows river flow modelling so SEPA can assess flood risk and inform development. River flow modelling helps inform the licensing of water abstraction for industry such as whisky distilling, crop irrigation, public supply and hydro-electric generation.
- Helps detect changing trends from climate change.
- Feeds into weather forecasting by calibrating weather prediction models and ground proofing rainfall radar.