



# Sustainable Growth Agreement

28th January 2022

**BE THE DIFFERENCE**





Stirling's Professor Andrew Tyler with a Forth ERA sensor.

## Sustainable Growth Agreement, January 2022, between:

**Scottish Environment Protection Agency (SEPA)**, a body corporate established under Section 20 of, and Schedule 6 to, the Environment Act 1995, having its Corporate Office at Strathallan House, Castle Business Park, Stirling FK9 4TZ.

And

**The University of Stirling**, a university established in Scotland by charter dated 14th December 1967 and registered as a charity in Scotland with registration number SC011159 and having its main administrative offices at Stirling, FK9 4LA.

("each a "Party" and together the Parties")



The Leven catchment. Image courtesy of SEPA.



# Statement of Purpose



Kincardine Bridge. Image courtesy of Clackmannanshire Council.

## Scottish Environment Protection Agency (SEPA)

SEPA is Scotland's environmental regulator and flood warning service provider. SEPA's statutory purpose is to protect and improve the environment (environmental success) in ways that, as far as possible, create:

- health and well-being benefits (social success); and
- sustainable economic growth (economic success).

Our regulatory strategy, **One Planet Prosperity**, sets out how we will regulate to meet the challenges of the 21st century including 1) taking a sector approach to regulating business to improve supply chains and support them in going beyond compliance, and 2) taking a place-based approach to regenerating areas across Scotland.

Our organisational characteristics set out how we carry out this work:

1. Producing information and evidence that people use to make decisions.
2. Helping people implement successful innovation, not minor improvements on 'business-as-usual'.
3. Helping communities see the environment as an opportunity to create social and economic success.
4. Routinely interacting with regulated businesses through their boardrooms and executive teams and owners.
5. An organisation that people are clamouring to work for.
6. Using partnerships as our principal way of delivering outcomes.

## The University of Stirling

The University of Stirling is world-leading in interdisciplinary research and education in the areas of conservation, environmental protection, environmental change, food security and heritage. Its vision is "To be recognised across the world as a University that addresses the needs of society through innovative interdisciplinary research; learning and teaching of the highest quality; and by sharing our knowledge with the world".

The University is leading the innovation investment theme in the Stirling and Clackmannanshire City Region Deal, including the development of Scotland's International Environment Centre (SIEC) and National Aquaculture Technology and Innovation Hub.

SIEC will create an 'innovation community' in the Forth Valley that will drive the creation of a net zero regional economy

providing a global exemplar. The centre will deliver transformational change in sustainable business practice, in order that the protection and enhancement of our natural resources becomes an enabler of economic prosperity, Just Transition, and wellbeing.

Stirling hosts The Scottish Water Hydro Nation Chair (HNC) which provides the leadership to forge the collaborative relationships required to deliver the solutions for sustainable water management in Scotland. This initiative, funded by Scottish Water in partnership with the Scottish Funding Council, is a catalyst for academic research and innovation specifically to support the Scottish water sector in delivering and going beyond net zero whilst delivering service excellence and offering great value and financial sustainability.



The Leven catchment. Image courtesy of SEPA.

## Joint Vision

Our vision is that Scotland will be a global leader in tackling the effects and impacts of climate change and its associated extremes and through partnerships we will find the solutions required to secure a sustainable, prosperous future.

The Sustainable Growth Agreement (SGA) will demonstrate through practical solutions how to maximise environmental, social and economic opportunities to enable and help deliver a just transition to net zero. Together we will create solutions that are easily scalable and replicable for Scotland and beyond. We will do this by working collaboratively to develop and empower our world class scientific and professional expertise, use cutting edge technologies and attract and encourage innovation in meeting both local environmental challenges and global climate extremes and biodiversity collapse.

The University of Stirling, through Scotland's International Environment Centre, will work alongside SEPA looking to deliver One Planet Prosperity through innovative regulatory approaches.



The River Leven. Image courtesy of SEPA.

The partnership will co-create, co-design and grow together to ensure:

- We co-develop a programme of work, prioritised and aligned to the strategic ambition of both partners
- Identify opportunities to look at flexible approaches to resources, data and expertise
- Work collaboratively on projects and build a joint approach to mitigating climate impacts whilst also seeing the environment as an enabler of prosperity
- Find workable solutions that can be scaled up and replicated nationally and internationally
- Explore joint investment opportunities
- Share outputs and insights that are of mutual value to organisational strategies
- Reduce duplication for each organisation but also for our 'customers'
- Collaborate across digital, technological, and scientific expertise for innovation, regulation and advice
- Help implement SEPA's Organisational Characteristic 1 which says that SEPA will produce "Information and evidence that people use to make decisions"
- Support the green recovery by promoting skills development, community wealth and inclusive growth
- We raise the profile of the protection and enhancement of Scotland's natural environment



The River Leven. Image courtesy of SEPA.

This vision will be delivered based on three principles:

### ◦ Early co-design

Dedicate a high level of interaction and resource at the early stages of projects to ensure co-design resulting in seamless operation throughout their lifetime.

### ◦ Partnerships

Bring in partners across multiple sectors that can help explore this collaborative approach resulting in better outcomes for the environment, economy, and society.

### ◦ Tomorrow's solutions

Combine our regulatory, digital, and scientific expertise to prevent the reliance on yesterday's solutions to solve problems of today and of the future.

## What are Sustainable Growth Agreements?

Sustainable Growth Agreements are voluntary, non-legally binding, formal agreements through which an organisation (or organisations) and SEPA can explore new and innovative ways of working that deliver environmental, social and economic success.

## What will we focus efforts on initially to embed long-term outcomes?

- Data innovation and environmental sensing for collaborative regulation and shared learning
- Data service provision, building on existing services in place that support Earth observation driven applications for SEPA, including high spatial and temporal resolution inland and coastal water quality monitoring.
- SIEC Data Centre providing secure data storage and high-performance computing to support both research, innovation and operational services

Priority projects we will focus on initially include:

### **SIEC Forth ERA and Data Centre: Co-development of a regional asset**

We will work collaboratively to support the co-development of Forth ERA and the data centre. Forth ERA will provide a living laboratory for the Forth Valley region, creating real time data sets to support decision making on a wide range of environmental case studies from peatlands, flooding, water and air quality as an example. This partnership will support the co-development and highlight priorities



and areas of duplication, support shared resources and investment and ensure value to SEPA and partner organisations.

The SIEC data centre will provide a co-developed cloud-based solution across key partners and multi users enabling next generation big data processing and service delivery. It will enable flexible, accessible and affordable solutions that ensures the environment is at the heart of decision-making supporting the green recovery. It will enable industry to go beyond compliance, optimal regulation, net zero targets to be achieved. Key outputs will be accessed through a visualisation and decision-making theatre. This partnership will support its co-development of the data centre and joint strategic deliverables to ensure the asset delivers maximum value.

### Leven Programme: Water Innovation

The University of Stirling is leading on the Water Innovation theme of the Leven Programme – a SEPA-led partnership aiming to regenerate the River Leven catchment. Similar to many locations across Scotland and globally, the water environment in the River Leven catchment has many challenges to overcome (as a result of legacy, current and future issues) as well as having many opportunities for regeneration and sustainability. As leads for the Water Innovation theme, the University of Stirling (with support and input from SEPA when needed) will coordinate the partnership approach to agree priorities, reduce duplication and add value.



Forth catchment, Clackmannanshire Council.

### Partnership and management of Scotland's Environment Web (SEWeb)

We will work with the SEWeb Management Group and Steering Group (EELIG Digital) to fundamentally redesign SEWeb. We will look for opportunities to work with national initiatives to improve data collection and management so as to inform the big decisions facing Scotland in its move to net zero and a circular economy. We will develop proposals for the future management of SEWeb for consideration by the Management and Steering Group.

### Flooding innovation: Dashboard Development

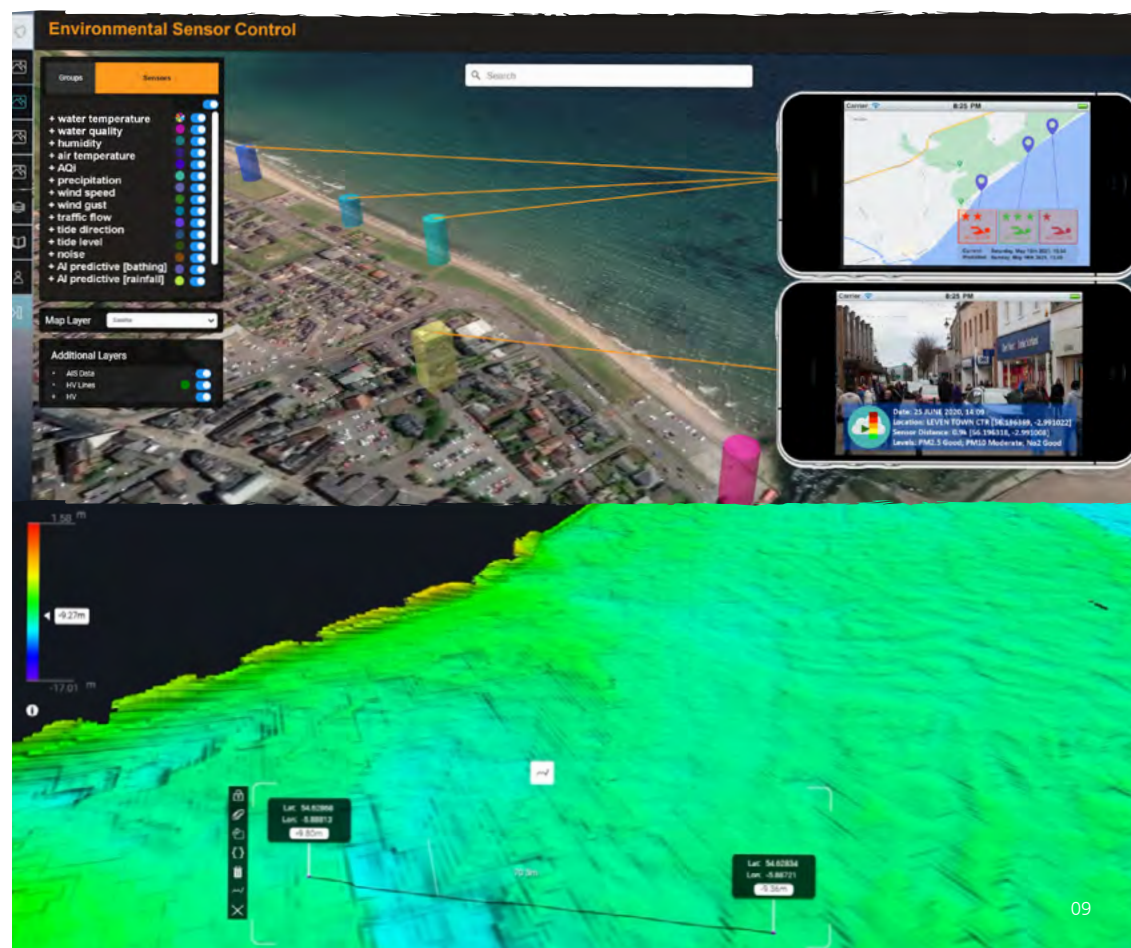
We aim to work in partnership to develop an innovative digital dashboard that combines earth, remotely sensed, citizen science and physical (hyper-local) observations, coupled with forecasts to support better and more informed decision-making around flooding. The desired outcome of this development is to result in improved flood resilience with responders and communities.

### Leven Programme: Data Innovation for Collaborative Regulation

We will explore what data, information and evidence is required to make informed and collective regulatory decisions between partners, including industry and communities. For example, under the Leven Programme, this will be used to develop a route map and prototype of a digital overview of the Leven catchment and will build synergies for future connectivity with Forth-ERA – a digital twin of the Firth of Forth catchment. The tested digital collaboration route map will aim to facilitate collective regulatory decision making for regeneration.

### Grangemouth: Net Zero Regulatory Hub

We will explore how our presence in the Forth Valley region through the Grangemouth Regulatory Hub and SIEC can work together in the transition to net zero. This will include drawing together evidence of the current baseline position, engaging with key stakeholders for strengthened relationships and identifying areas for improvement. The resultant framework for a regulatory hub aims to complement and collaborate with SIEC for better outcomes for the environment, businesses and people of Scotland.



Forth ERA data visualisations, courtesy of 3DEO.

# Management and Governance

This Sustainable Growth Agreement sets out a range of activities to help achieve the shared aims of SEPA and The University of Stirling. These activities and any developed in the future will be prioritised alongside other opportunities as they arise in order to achieve the best possible outcomes. The operation of the SGA will be undertaken in accordance with the following provisions.

1. A steering group will be established to oversee the operation of the Agreement, comprising representatives of both Parties.
2. All applicable laws continue to apply to the University and nothing in this Sustainable Growth Agreement is intended to, or shall be deemed to:
  - establish any partnership or joint venture between the Parties, constitute any Party as the agent of the other Party, nor authorise any of the Parties to make or enter into any commitments for or on behalf of the other Party; and
  - adversely affect or prejudice the ability of SEPA to act in its capacity as a regulator.
3. The Parties have agreed that this Sustainable Growth Agreement will remain in place for an initial period of three years from the date of signing this SGA. The SGA may be extended by mutual agreement between the Parties.
4. This Sustainable Growth Agreement is not legally binding and creates no legal rights or legal obligations between the Parties. Both Parties are accountable and responsible for honouring their

commitments under this Sustainable Growth Agreement.

5. For the purposes of any activities proposed or undertaken under this Agreement, the Parties may describe and represent themselves as working in partnership. Neither Party shall otherwise use the name of the other Party for any purpose without the express written consent of that Party.
6. Neither of the Parties will be held responsible or held liable for the actions of the other Party for any activity under this Agreement. Both Parties agree to maintain an appropriate level of insurance for their participation in activities undertaken under this Agreement.
7. Each Party will keep confidential any information provided to it by the other Party on a confidential basis, save where required to disclose the information for any statutory or legal purpose.
8. This Agreement will be made available to the public by both Parties (e.g. on SEPA and University websites).
9. The University and SEPA agree to review and document progress on a six monthly basis and report this to the SEPA and University Chief Executives.
10. Opportunities to promote the Sustainable Growth Agreement and its outcomes will be included in the six-monthly reporting to the SEPA and UoS Chief Executives.
11. There will be an Annual Review and joint Digital Annual Report prepared by SEPA and the University to assess progress against the commitments

set out in this Sustainable Growth Agreement and to assess success.

12. The Annual Review and joint Digital Annual Report can also identify areas of focus for the following year, possible amendments to the Sustainable Growth Agreement and opportunities to promote the Sustainable Growth Agreement.
13. The joint Digital Annual Report on this Sustainable Growth Agreement will be presented to the SEPA and University Boards and made available to the public.
14. All intellectual property belonging to a party before the commencement of this Agreement shall be owned by that Party. Any intellectual property solely conceived and/or developed by a party during the course of this Agreement shall be owned by that Party.
15. Intellectual property jointly conceived and/or developed by the Parties

shall be owned jointly by the Parties. Each Party may use such jointly owned intellectual property for research and scholarly purposes. The Parties agree to collaborate towards the protection and, where appropriate, application of such intellectual property for commercial or other purposes on mutually acceptable terms to be negotiated in good faith between the Parties.

16. Both parties reserve the right to withdraw from this Sustainable Growth Agreement if they believe it is no longer effectively promoting their aspirations. If a Party is considering withdrawing they will notify the other Party in writing of their intention. The Parties are committed to the expeditious resolution of any dispute that arises between them related to or arising from any aspect of this Agreement or either Party's performance of this Agreement.

## Signed for on behalf of SEPA of Stirling

Date:  
CEO, SEPA

### Further information

Scottish Environment Protection Agency  
[www.sepa.org.uk](http://www.sepa.org.uk)

Tel: 03000 99 66 99

Twitter: @ScottishEPA

[facebook.com/ScottishEnvironmentProtectionAgency](https://facebook.com/ScottishEnvironmentProtectionAgency)

## Signed for on behalf of The University

Date:  
University Secretary  
& Chief Operating Officer

### Further information

University of Stirling  
[www.stir.ac.uk](http://www.stir.ac.uk)

Tel: 01786 467041

Twitter: @Stir\_Research

# Alternative languages and formats

For information on accessing this document in an alternative format or language please contact SEPA by email to [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: [contactscotland-bsl.org](https://contactscotland-bsl.org)

University of Stirling  
Stirling FK9 4LA  
Scotland UK

[stir.ac.uk](https://stir.ac.uk)

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