



The Scottish Parliament  
Pàrlamaid na h-Alba

## Net Zero, Energy and Transport Committee

Nicole Paterson  
Chief Executive Officer  
Scottish Environment Protection Agency (SEPA)

**04 June 2025**

Dear Nicole,

### Water scarcity and drought preparedness

As you will be aware, Scotland's exceptionally dry spring and the warnings from [SEPA's drought risk assessment tool](#) of 'moderate scarcity' in many of Scotland's rivers at this early stage of the summer has caused worry for many members of the public. Farmers and the 3.5% of the Scottish population who use a private water supply and may be more vulnerable to water scarcity are perhaps most likely to be concerned.

The Committee is writing to enquire about SEPA's preparedness for drought conditions and the actions you have already taken and are considering taking to address the situation. I am writing in similar terms to Scottish Water.

### Response

It is heartening [to read that the public responded](#) to [Scottish Water's public appeal](#) to use supplies sparingly by reducing daily water use by 60 million litres. However, should drought conditions worsen over the summer, we are aware that further action may need to be taken by SEPA and Scottish Water, which could have more significant impacts on agriculture and the wider public.

I would be grateful therefore for a response to this letter setting out:

1. SEPA's [Winter water situation report 2025](#) identified drier than normal conditions in autumn and winter with potential increased risk of water scarcity in the spring/summer. What actions were taken in response to this report and how did SEPA, the Scottish Government and Scottish Water coordinate work to prepare for the increased risk of water scarcity?
2. What actions are you considering taking should drought conditions worsen over the summer?
3. What formal and informal structures are in place to ensure effective communication with Scottish Water, and are these sufficient?

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Contact: Net Zero, Energy and Transport Committee, The Scottish Parliament, Edinburgh, EH99 1SP. Email [netzero.committee@parliament.scot](mailto:netzero.committee@parliament.scot). We welcome calls through Relay UK and in BSL through Contact Scotland BSL.

4. How is SEPA working with Local Authorities to identify private water supply users most at risk of water scarcity and mitigate against potential impacts?
5. What communication has SEPA had with the agriculture sector and any other groups (demographic, sectoral or geographic) that appear to you to be vulnerable to the impacts of water scarcity on their preparedness for drought over the summer?
6. How are you feeding lessons learned from this year's water scarcity and considering the increased risk of extreme weather conditions from climate change into the Scottish Government's review of water industry policy, which was committed to in the 2023-24 Programme for Government?

To allow Members to consider your response before the Scottish Parliament's summer recess, the Committee would welcome a response by Wednesday 18 June.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Edward Mountain".

**Edward Mountain MSP**  
**Convener**