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Convener
Net Zero, Energy and Transport Committee
c/o Clerk to the Committee
Room T3.40
The Scottish Parliament
Edinburgh EH99 1SP

Our Ref: OME:3767532
Your Ref:

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21 October 2025

By email: netzero.committee@parliament.scot

Dear Sir Edward,

Environmental Authorisations (Scotland) Regulations 2018 (EASR) – Implementation update

Thank you for your letter of 7th October 2025 on behalf of the Net Zero, Energy and Transport Committee in relation to the implementation of EASR. I welcome the opportunity to provide you with an update. You have asked two main questions which are addressed in turn below.

Through our scrutiny of these regulations, you highlighted SEPA's preparatory work for the new framework, as part of its wider digital transformation, and the establishment of a governance group to oversee implementation and monitor progress. The Committee agreed it would like an update on progress in the autumn of this year, as noted in our report.

- 1. I would be grateful if you could provide the Committee with an update on how the framework is progressing, and any issues that have been identified so far.**

As the Committee is aware, since we had the opportunity to speak to you about the Environmental Authorisations Regulations (Scotland) 2018 (EASR) last year we have
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continued to place the highest priority on readiness for EASR. This is transformational – it enables integrated system of regulation bringing four separate regimes with separate processes, tools and powers into a single common framework.

EASR implementation is part of SEPA's approach to future regulation and organisational transformation making us more effective and efficient. I am pleased to advise that the implementation of EASR is going well, and we will be able to accept EASR applications, determine and issue authorisations from 1st November 2025.

This is the significant milestone set out in EASR, when most waste, water and industrial activities transition into the new Regulations. To ensure that we and businesses are prepared for the transition we have successfully met all our major milestones and completed a significant amount of work. To date, we have:

- Worked with Scottish Government to ensure the streamlining of the regulatory system by replacing all or part of over 70 pieces of legislation and re-transposing all or part of 14 EU Directives.
- Listened to stakeholders through one-on-one sessions, bespoke sessions with industry sectors and held four public consultations resulting in 170 responses.
- Simplified and modernised our application forms and supporting guidance to make it easier for applicants to apply for activities. These were all published on 5th August as scheduled in our evidence to the Committee via a new easy to use section on our [website](#). Making this information available three months in advance was to give industry time to prepare for changes.
- Supported regulated businesses with a series of features in our [weekly newsletters](#) highlighting the changes coming, support available and where to get more information. These have reached over 30,000 subscribers across our email and LinkedIn platforms combined.
- Contacted 56 trade bodies, representatives of business or interest groups, and 27 partner organisations to share [toolkits](#) on navigating regulatory change that support industry groups in explaining changes to members and/or including updates through their own channels.

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- Profiled the changes across our social media channels and partner and stakeholder newsletters including [Netregs](#) and [Resource Management Association Scotland](#) (RMAS).
- Begun our awareness raising campaign as we head towards the transition in November, with a renewed focus on the requirements of compliance. The campaign will include a targeted campaign for industries most impacted by EASR and focus on the harder to reach audiences. Including a radio advertisement will ensure we are reaching those not online and industries who are typically on the move throughout the working day.
- Provided guidance and training to our staff, including over 60 internal training sessions to ensure that our staff are able to provide clear advice and support to regulated businesses while also ensuring that they are fully prepared to regulate and enforce against EASR.
- Produced an amended charging scheme that allows SEPA to recover its costs for those activities regulated under EASR.

We will be launching a new digital application system on Monday 3rd November where applicants will be able to digitally apply, submit and pay for their EASR applications, making it a simpler and quicker experience for them. Also, as part of our digital transformation, we have developed a digital system for small private sewage discharges which allows applicants to apply for their application, pay, and depending on the location, size and age of their treatment system they will receive their authorisation within minutes.

As the Committee heard from the Cabinet Secretary in her evidence on 25th March 2025, SEPA and Scottish Government established a joint Scottish Government/SEPA Liaison Group in March 2025 which meets monthly to share information, track progress and, where necessary, resolve any issues or risks to effective implementation. The committee will appreciate that a project of this size and complexity will have to manage risks and issues on a regular basis, and the establishment of this group has helped to ensure early exchange of information and highlighting potential issues. The Liaison Group will continue to meet for a short period after the introduction of EASR to provide a platform for resolving issues arising post implementation.

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As we move closer to the key implementation milestone of 1st November 2025 there are no significant issues to report. The only issue that we are aware of from external stakeholders is one waste operator who has raised concern that they will be unable to meet the new regulatory standards that will apply to their sector from 1st November. We are continuing discussions with them.

We are looking forward to further operationalising the framework and seeing the benefits that this will bring to SEPA, the environment and the regulated community.

In its report on the regulations, the Committee also urged the Scottish Government and SEPA to ensure high stakeholder awareness of the new General Binding Rules introduced by the Regulations, and sufficient resource for public information and communications campaigns about this.

2. Could you please also update the Committee on any work that has been undertaken in this respect?

General Binding Rules (GBRs) are mandatory rules that apply to low-risk activities. If an activity complies with the conditions set out in the relevant GBRs, no formal application or registration is required. GBRs are designed to simplify regulation while ensuring environmental protection. They have been used successfully for a range of activities before the introduction of EASR and sectors welcome the use of GBRs to control low risk activities. EASR introduces 6 new General Binding Rules (GBRs) which were consulted upon by Scottish Government in early 2024.

<https://consult.gov.scot/environment-forestry/easr-2018-proposed-amendments/>

These cover activities related to waste management, water environment and small-scale industrial activities. SEPA has raised awareness of these activities that will be regulated by GBRs as part of wider information campaigns with the specific sectors. The new GBRs are:

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Waste management

- Temporary storage of waste at the place of production.
- Temporary storage of waste at a place owned or occupied by the producer.
- Temporary storage of waste at a collection point.

The activities covered by the new GBRs have previously been authorised under the waste exemption regime. In addition to the communications activity detailed earlier in the response, SEPA have undertaken a wider awareness campaign to the waste sector highlighting that the exemption regime will be transitioned into EASR from 1st November 2025. We have sign-posted the sector to our website which has clear guidance on what the transition into EASR means for operators and produced a toolkit to help them understand the changes and be better prepared.

Water environment

- The discharge of hot tub effluent from a site with only one hot tub, to groundwater.
- installation and removal of:
 - temporary crossings and structures.
 - temporary works associated with activities covered by other water GBRs or for purpose of maintenance works on existing man-made structures.

These are very low risk activities. GBRs were spotlighted in this week's edition of the SEPA Update newsletter which focuses on the water environment, is clearly mapped out in the [toolkit](#), navigating regulatory change, and has been featured on our social media. Our paid media campaign will provide further opportunity to detail the changes to the relevant audiences.

Industrial activities

- Crushing and screening (of waste bricks, tiles or concrete).

This activity is currently regulated under a PPC Part B permit. In addition to our wider communications campaign, we have written to all current authorisation holders to support them through the changes, signposting to our toolkit and online information.

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I trust the above information is helpful, but should you wish to discuss the above matter further, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Yours sincerely,

Nicole Paterson
Chief Executive