

Environmental Standards Scotland

Business Plan

2023/24 - 2024/25

April 2024

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1. Introduction

1.1 Environmental Standards Scotland (ESS) formally became a corporate body on 1 October 2021, as a new Non-Ministerial Office under the UK Withdrawal from the European Union (Continuity) (Scotland) Act 2021 (the Continuity Act). This is the date that ESS vested and became a statutory body, able to exercise its full functions and powers.

1.2 ESS has been established to help Scotland achieve the highest environmental standards. Our role is to scrutinise and deliver improvements to public authorities' compliance with environmental law, alongside the effectiveness of environmental law and the way it is being implemented and applied.

1.3 To deliver on these responsibilities we have published our [Strategic Plan 2022-25](#) setting out our overarching approach. This, our third Business Plan published since our launch, sets out our ongoing work and key priorities for the organisation through to March 2025.

2. Strategic Plan

Public bodies specific duties

2.1 As required by the Continuity Act, our proposed Strategic Plan for 2022-25 was submitted to the Scottish Parliament on 30 September 2022 for consideration. The proposed Plan was approved by the Parliament on 24 November 2022 and the final Plan published on our website on 1 December 2022.

2.2 Our Strategic Plan sets out how we will work as an organisation to deliver a series of strategic outcomes which, together, will help us progress towards achieving our Vision. The Plan details how we will approach each aspect of our role and how we will measure our performance and contribution to environmental protection and improvement.

2.3 We monitor progress against the Strategic Plan and report publicly through these Business Plans, and through our [Annual Report and Accounts](#) each year. We update Parliament directly on our progress with [videos](#), Committee appearances and written [correspondence](#), all of which we publish on the [ESS website](#).

2.4 As set out in the 'Our work' section below, a review of the Strategic Plan will begin in 2024/25 with a view to publishing the next Plan in 2025/26.

3. Governance arrangements

3.1 [Our Board](#) meets regularly and the [minutes](#) of its meetings are available on our [Publications](#) page, as are the [minutes](#) of the Audit and Risk Committee.

3.2 ESS is accountable to the Scottish Parliament and has a legal duty to report on its activities each year. As a body corporate, ESS operates in line with the Public Finance and Accountability (Scotland) Act 2000 and has a duty to produce annual accounts in line with the Government Financial Reporting Manual. The first set of [accounts](#) was published in October 2023, for the 18-month period October 2021 to March 2023.

3.3 The ESS Chief Executive Officer (CEO), Mark Roberts, is the Accountable Officer for ESS. The CEO is responsible to the Scottish Parliament for: the propriety and regularity of ESS' finances; the economical, efficient and effective use of the resources placed at its disposal; and for signing ESS' accounts.

3.4 Deloitte LLP provide the external audit function for ESS, on behalf of Audit Scotland. Scottish Government Internal Audit provides an audit advisory service to the Accountable Officer and the Audit and Risk Committee.

4. Our work in 2023/24

4.1 Following a period of set-up in 2021/22, ESS' first [Business Plan](#) was published in January 2021 covering a period of 18 months. ESS' second [Business Plan](#) was published in March 2023, containing planning for the financial year April 2023 to March 2024.

4.2 Set out below are the key pieces of work which were identified for the financial year 2023/24. A progress update is included alongside each item.

	Key piece of work set out in the 2023/24 Business Plan	Progress on key pieces of work
Ensuring compliance and effectiveness	Where, through our investigations, we identify failures to comply with environmental law, we will pursue these issues with the relevant public authorities and take the action needed to improve compliance.	ESS has identified areas of non-compliance with environmental law. We have worked, and continue to work, with the public bodies concerned to ensure that the improvements required are implemented in full and on schedule.
	We will seek to resolve matters by agreement with the relevant public authorities where possible within a reasonable timescale.	ESS has been actively engaged with several public authorities and has reached informal resolution on a range of issues relating to compliance with, and implementation of, environmental law. Full details of the cases where we have reached informal resolution can be found at: Investigations - Environmental Standards Scotland
	Where needed, we will use ESS' statutory powers to secure changes and remedial actions	No compliance failures requiring formal enforcement action have been identified to date.

	Key piece of work set out in the 2023/24 Business Plan	Progress on key pieces of work
	to address poor compliance and address environmental risks.	
	Where our investigations identify patterns of compliance failure, or areas where the law is ineffective in protecting the environment or public health, we will pursue this directly with the relevant parts of the Scottish Government.	In December 2023, ESS completed its investigation into the effectiveness of the support given to local authorities in their duty to contribute to the delivery of climate change targets . ESS took enforcement action to clarify and strengthen the support available to local authorities in this connection.
	Where possible, we will seek to resolve matters and secure the necessary changes and improvements by agreement with the Scottish Government.	During its investigation into the support given to local authorities in their duty to contribute to the delivery of climate change targets, ESS reached resolution with the Scottish Government. This was in respect of improvements to: the delivery of climate change targets; the support that is available to local authorities to this end; and the reporting and monitoring of performance.

	Key piece of work set out in the 2023/24 Business Plan	Progress on key pieces of work
	<p>Where this is not possible within a reasonable timescale, we will use ESS' statutory powers and take formal action by preparing and issuing improvement reports to the Scottish Parliament.</p>	<p>In September 2022, ESS' first improvement report was laid before the Scottish Parliament, setting out the changes and improvements considered necessary to strengthen the operational and governance arrangements around air quality management. In December 2023, ESS laid its second improvement report before the Scottish Parliament setting out the changes and improvements considered necessary to strengthen the requirements placed on local authorities in their emissions reporting.</p>
<p>Investigating environmental concerns</p>	<p>We will actively support parties submitting representations, particularly where they are unfamiliar with ESS processes, to ensure their concerns are accurately captured.</p>	<p>In accordance with ESS' service standards, a Senior Investigator is appointed to deal with each environmental concern that is raised with the organisation. This ensures that dedicated and ongoing support is available to everyone who submits representations to us.</p>

	Key piece of work set out in the 2023/24 Business Plan	Progress on key pieces of work
		ESS' service standards can be found here: Our Service Standards - Environmental Standards Scotland .
	We will carefully review and assess all representations to identify candidates for investigation and advise on alternative routes for cases not suitable for investigation.	The outcome of the representations received is published on ESS' website. Representations Received - Environmental Standards Scotland
	We will regularly review and publish our forward work programme, so that we are investigating the most important environmental concerns.	All ongoing and completed casework has been published. Ongoing and Completed Casework - Environmental Standards Scotland

	Key piece of work set out in the 2023/24 Business Plan	Progress on key pieces of work
	We will regularly update our publicly available register of investigations and carry out these investigations.	A webpage detailing all ongoing and completed casework has been published. Ongoing and Completed Casework - Environmental Standards Scotland
	We will keep those who have made representations informed about our consideration and investigation of their matter of concern.	Those submitting representations are kept updated on the representations they bring to ESS and the outcome is published as set out above.
	We will publish reports about the issues we have investigated and the actions that have been taken.	A webpage detailing all ongoing and completed casework has been published. Ongoing and Completed Casework - Environmental Standards Scotland

	Key piece of work set out in the 2023/24 Business Plan	Progress on key pieces of work
	<p>We will continuously assess our systems and processes, to ensure the effectiveness of our investigations.</p>	<p>These systems are assessed on an annual basis. A positive internal audit review of systems and processes was carried out in 2022/23.</p>
<p>Monitoring and evaluating environmental performance and change in Scotland</p>	<p>We will deliver a programme of analytical work on priority issues identified in ESS' approved Strategic Plan, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • air quality targets/standards for particulate matter • biodiversity decline • sewage discharge into the aquatic environment 	<p>On 1 February 2024, ESS published a report analysing progress against existing standards for particulate matter air pollution and the prospect of meeting tighter standards recommended by the World Health Organisation.</p> <p>The report made several recommendations for the Scottish Government and the Scottish Environmental Protection Agency.</p> <p>The findings of scoping work on biodiversity decline were presented to the ESS Board in August 2023 and a decision was taken to proceed with work on the topic of Invasive Non-native</p>

	Key piece of work set out in the 2023/24 Business Plan	Progress on key pieces of work
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • antimicrobial resistance • threats to the marine environment 	<p>Species as a result. A fixed-term appointment was made in November 2023 to take forward this work.</p> <p>Analysis on the scale and nature of sewage discharges from storm overflows has been undertaken and a report on this will be published in spring 2024.</p> <p>On 29 January 2024, ESS published a commissioned literature review on anti-microbial resistance in the environment. A fixed-term appointment was made to take forward work on threats to the marine environment. This work includes: marine litter; damage to the seabed; and cumulative impacts of marine developments. The results of this work will be published in the next financial year 2024/25.</p>

	Key piece of work set out in the 2023/24 Business Plan	Progress on key pieces of work
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • soil health • illegal disposal and management of waste 	<p>Scoping work on threats to soil health has been undertaken. The results of this work will be published in summer 2024.</p> <p>Work on illegal disposal and management of waste was postponed due to other priorities and limited potential for added value during this reporting period.</p>
	<p>We will monitor data and evidence on environmental performance and undertake a regular review of ESS' analytical priorities to identify emerging issues of concern.</p>	<p>Data and evidence on environmental performance is regularly monitored and the results are considered as part of the six-monthly review of analytical priorities. The outcome of a regular review of priorities was reported to the ESS Board in May and November 2023.</p>

	Key piece of work set out in the 2023/24 Business Plan	Progress on key pieces of work
	<p>We will develop and maintain effective systems for monitoring Scotland’s comparative environmental performance and for identifying relevant developments in European and international law and regulation.</p>	<p>Systems for monitoring comparative performance and developments in European and International law have been established.</p> <p>The International Advisory Panel was established and met for the first time on 28 February 2024.</p>
	<p>We will develop and maintain effective working relationships with a range of organisations involved in collating, analysing and publishing data and evidence on environmental performance in Scotland.</p>	<p>Regular liaison is undertaken with a range of organisations including the Scottish Government, the SEFARI Gateway, the Joint Nature Conservation Committee, and the Centre for Ecology and Hydrology.</p> <p>A Memorandum of Understanding with the Committee on Climate Change was published on 13 April 2023.</p>

	Key piece of work set out in the 2023/24 Business Plan	Progress on key pieces of work
	<p>We will respond to the Scottish Government’s consultation on their report into the effectiveness of environmental governance arrangements following EU withdrawal (as required by the Continuity Act).</p>	<p>ESS’ response to the review of environmental governance was submitted on 11 October 2023. In addition, responses were submitted to consultations by the Scottish Government on the:</p> <p>Scottish Parliament Net Zero Committee’s call for evidence on the Circular Economy Bill (August 2023)</p> <p>Human Rights Bill (October 2023), Scotland’s Strategic Framework for Biodiversity (December 2023)</p> <p>Wellbeing and Sustainable Development Bill (February 2024)</p> <p>Circular Economy Routemap (March 2024)</p> <p>Integrated Authorisation Framework consultation (March 2024)</p>

	Key piece of work set out in the 2023/24 Business Plan	Progress on key pieces of work
<p>Engaging and communicating effectively about our role and how to raise concerns</p>	<p>We will actively promote an understanding of our role and how people can make representations to us about matters of concern.</p>	<p>All correspondence to Scottish Parliament and ministers is made publicly available.</p> <p>A programme of community and stakeholder engagement is underway.</p> <p>Online engagement tools, including new six monthly video blogs, are now regularly part of ESS' ongoing work. These have been developed in collaboration with ESS' new public relations provider called Smarts.</p>
	<p>We will deliver the programme of digital communication work identified in the Communication and Engagement Strategy.</p>	<p>An external and internal consultation programme is now underway to improve this digital communication work further, including the use of imagery and the approach to social media.</p>

	Key piece of work set out in the 2023/24 Business Plan	Progress on key pieces of work
	<p>All our communication and engagement activity will follow the latest accessibility guidelines and standards.</p>	<p>The ESS website has now been redesigned and moved to an online platform which meets the Public Sector Bodies (Websites and Mobile Applications) (No. 2) Accessibility Regulations 2018.</p> <p>ESS staff have undertaken Publishing Scotland proofing and accessibility training.</p> <p>The colour palette used by ESS in our publications has been accessibility checked and improved.</p> <p>Organisation-wide report templates are used to ensure accessibility across ESS' written communications.</p> <p>A new style guide has been created to encourage the consistent use of plain English both internally and externally.</p>

	Key piece of work set out in the 2023/24 Business Plan	Progress on key pieces of work
	We will develop and deliver the ESS community and stakeholder engagement programme set out in the Communication and Engagement Strategy.	<p>This outreach programme is underway. Introductory meetings have been held, engagements scoped and a wide range of stakeholders identified.</p> <p>ESS staff have undertaken training on effective approaches to community engagement.</p>
	We will update the ESS website to ensure it complies fully with the Public Sector Bodies (Websites and Mobile Applications) Accessibility Regulations 2018.	<p>The ESS website has now been updated to sit on a platform that complies fully with these regulations.</p> <p>About Us - Environmental Standards Scotland</p>
	We will report publicly to Scottish Parliament on our progress.	All correspondence and video blogs are published on an ongoing basis.

	Key piece of work set out in the 2023/24 Business Plan	Progress on key pieces of work
	<p>We will continuously assess our systems and processes, to ensure the effectiveness and accessibility of our approach.</p>	<p>A programme of standard policy review is in place and has been carried out to schedule. All standard operating procedures are updated as required. Updates are reported to the Board and external audit where required.</p> <p>An internal audit of Strategy and Analysis procedures has taken place. A reasonable assurance rating has been provided.</p>
<p>An effective and efficient organisation</p>	<p>We will strengthen the capacity of the Board through the recruitment of two new members.</p>	<p>Two new members were recruited, Morag Sheppard and Chris Spray. The Chair of ESS, Jim Martin, announced that they would be stepping down on 31 March and Dr Richard Dixon will take over as Acting Chair until a permanent appointment is made. The recruitment process is now underway.</p>

	Key piece of work set out in the 2023/24 Business Plan	Progress on key pieces of work
	<p>We will review the performance of the Board and Audit and Risk Committee through self-assessment.</p>	<p>The Board and Audit and Risk Committee undertook self-assessments.</p> <p>Both processes were supported through independent evaluation carried out by Glen Shuraig Consulting.</p>
	<p>We will develop a People Strategy for the organisation. It will include a focus on the culture of the organisation, equalities, and learning and development.</p>	<p>A People Strategy has been developed focusing on key areas of work to: help build the ESS culture; attract and retain great people; maximise our learning and development programme; continue to value diversity; and enable great performance and delivery.</p> <p>The ESS Fair Work First statement has been published.</p>
	<p>We will build on the experience of ESS' internal audit reviews and take part in our first external audit to provide independent assurance that</p>	<p>ESS' first annual audit report is available on the Audit Scotland website.</p>

	Key piece of work set out in the 2023/24 Business Plan	Progress on key pieces of work
	public funding is being spent properly, efficiently and effectively.	This positive report on ESS' first external audit, alongside supportive internal audit reviews, provides assurance that ESS is operating effectively.
	We will prepare and publish our first Annual Report and submit this to Scottish Parliament.	ESS' first Annual Report and Accounts , detailing our activities from vesting on 1 October 2021 to 31 March 2023, was published in October 2023.
	We will deliver on our corporate reporting requirements to publicly demonstrate our performance across a range of indicators, including delivery of our equalities action plan.	<p>All corporate reporting requirements have been delivered in full and to deadlines.</p> <p>ESS' Equality and Diversity Policy has been published, alongside the associated equality impact assessment.</p> <p>The mainstreaming equalities action plan has been published.</p>

	Key piece of work set out in the 2023/24 Business Plan	Progress on key pieces of work
	We will review our IT and finance systems through an independent IT Roadmap exercise.	ESS' internal audit provision has evaluated and reported on our cyber security risks and their management.
	We will work towards the integration of the new Oracle Cloud finance system in 2024.	The team has fulfilled all data migration and planning requirements for the integration of the new finance system on 1 October 2024.
	We will implement the processes and policies for monitoring and minimising ESS' impact on the environment as set out in our Sustainability Plan.	The Sustainability Plan is available on the ESS website. All work plan targets for 2023/24 have been met.

5. Our work in 2024/25

5.1 The sections below set out the key priorities and outputs that will be delivered from April 2024 to March 2025. These will be reviewed quarterly and updated as required.

5.2 During 2024/25 we will begin a review of our Strategic Plan. We will engage with stakeholders as part of this review. Consultation will then take place on a draft revised Strategic Plan during 2025. A revised Strategic Plan will then be presented to Scottish Parliament for approval by December 2025.

5.3 All related policies and procedures will be reviewed and revised alongside this programme of work. For example, this will include performance management indicators and the Communication and Engagement Strategy.

Ensuring compliance and effectiveness

5.4 In the ESS Strategic Plan, the strategic outcome set against ensuring compliance and effectiveness is: 'we have taken effective action to ensure public authorities' compliance with environmental law and to improve the effectiveness of the law'.

5.5 In the Plan we set out our intention to:

- seek to work constructively with public authorities where possible to reach informal resolution
- use our statutory powers to prevent further harm to, or reduce the risks to, the environment or public health
- issue a compliance notice where we consider that: there has been a failure by a public authority to comply with environmental law; harm to the environment has been caused, is continuing to be caused, or is at risk of being caused as a result
- prepare an improvement report where we consider that: there is a failure by one or more public authorities to comply with the law, or where a systemic change is required by the public authority(s) concerned to improve compliance with, and/or the effectiveness of, environmental law

- consider the use of our power to make an application for judicial review, or intervene in civil proceedings taken by another party

Key pieces of work 2024/25

5.6 We will:

- pursue identified failures to comply with environmental law with the relevant public authorities
- continue to resolve matters by agreement with the relevant public authorities where possible, within a reasonable timescale
- use ESS' statutory powers to secure changes and remedial actions to address poor compliance and address environmental risks
- where our investigations identify systemic patterns of compliance failure, or areas where the law is ineffective in protecting the environment or public health, pursue this directly with the relevant parts of the Scottish Government
- seek to resolve matters and secure the necessary improvements by agreement with the Scottish Government, and where this is not possible within a reasonable timescale, use ESS' statutory powers to prepare and issue improvement reports to the Scottish Parliament'

Investigate environmental concerns

5.7 The strategic outcome set against investigating environmental concerns in the ESS Strategic Plan is: 'we have prioritised and investigated the most important matters of concern and identified the action needed to rectify problems and improve compliance and effectiveness'.

5.8 In the Plan we set out our intention to:

- assess whether representations made to us may trigger an immediate investigation due to importance, neglect or added value
- take into account importance, scope and nature, neglect and added value when prioritising our work
- notify the public authority(s) and relevant parties of our decision where we decide to investigate a matter of concern

- gather information from the public authority(s) concerned through the issuing of Information Notices
- work quickly and efficiently throughout our investigations, providing relevant parties with updates and an estimate of the completion date of each investigation in line with service standards

Key pieces of work 2024/25

5.9 We will:

- carefully review and assess all representations to identify candidates for investigation and advise on alternative routes for cases not suitable for investigation
- regularly review and publish our forward work programme so that we are investigating the most important environmental concerns
- regularly update our publicly available register of investigations and carry out these investigations
- continue to actively support parties submitting representations, particularly where they are unfamiliar with ESS processes, to ensure their concerns are accurately captured
- keep those who have made representations informed about our consideration and investigation of their matter of concern
- publish reports about the issues we have investigated and the actions that have been taken
- continue to assess our systems and processes to ensure the effectiveness of our investigations

Monitoring and analysis

5.10 The strategic outcome set against monitoring and analysis in the ESS Strategic Plan is: ‘we have built knowledge on environmental performance, are well informed about developments in EU and international standards and practice, and have formed effective partnerships with bodies collecting, collating and scrutinising environmental data’.

5.11 In the Plan we set out our intention to:

- collate, synthesise and assess the evidence about potential matters of concern (including matters of public concern) against a range of criteria, including: impact; nature and scope; neglect; and added value
- cast our net widely, identifying and interrogating data, reports, submissions and intelligence from partners and stakeholders that can help us identify instances of non-compliance or ineffective implementation of the law
- quality assure the evidence we use to ensure it is robust, reliable and objective
- progress our monitoring and analysis work through a series of stages, from horizon scanning to identify high-level areas of concern, through a deepening analysis and understanding of how things are changing in that area, the causes of this, and how policy and regulatory decisions affect this
- continue to monitor environmental performance more widely to assess whether any other matters of concern should be prioritised. We will also undertake horizon scanning to identify emerging matters of concern and relevant improvements in environmental law elsewhere

Key pieces of work 2024/25

5.12 We will:

- deliver a programme of analytical work on priority issues identified in ESS’ approved Strategic Plan, including:
 - sewage discharge into the aquatic environment
 - soil health
 - threats to the marine environment
 - Invasive Non-native Species (INNS)

- water quality and progress against river basin management plan objectives
- respond to relevant consultations and will contribute to parliamentary scrutiny of proposed changes to environmental law, including:
 - the Scottish Government's response to the consultation on their review of the effectiveness of environmental governance arrangements following EU withdrawal
 - the Circular Economy Bill
 - the Human Rights Bill
 - the Natural Environment Bill
- monitor relevant developments in European and international law and regulation to support our assessment of whether Scotland is maintaining alignment with the European Union on environmental law
- further develop and maintain effective systems for monitoring data and evidence on environmental performance, including Scotland's comparative performance, and will undertake a regular review of ESS' analytical priorities to identify emerging issues of concern
- develop and maintain effective working relationships with a range of organisations involved in collating, analysing and publishing data and evidence on environmental performance in Scotland

Engaging and communicating effectively

5.13 The strategic outcome set against engaging and communicating effectively in the ESS Strategic Plan is 'our role is widely understood and individuals, groups and organisations are confident raising concerns with us. We are regularly engaged in work to improve compliance, the effectiveness of environmental law and how it is applied'.

5.14 In the Plan we set out our intention to:

- be accountable through reporting annually to Scottish Parliament on our activities and liaise with relevant committees to provide updates on our work and avoid unintentional overlap in work programmes

- liaise with other oversight and scrutiny bodies to ensure that we add value and avoid unnecessary overlap in our functions
- be open to anyone raising a concern with us about compliance with, or the effectiveness of, environmental law in Scotland
- regularly publish information on our website of our live investigations, pre-investigation casework and frequently asked questions
- continue to develop our communication with stakeholders in the public, private and voluntary sectors, and develop our Communications Strategy to broaden our reach, in particular to marginalised or disadvantaged communities and groups to increase awareness of our role and how to raise concerns

Key pieces of work 2024/25

5.15 We will:

- continue to proactively promote an understanding of our role and how people can raise matters of environmental concern with us
- continue to develop and deliver the ESS community and stakeholder engagement programme
- consult externally on our communication systems and processes to ensure the effectiveness and accessibility of our approach
- utilise the convening power of ESS to bring together stakeholders to raise the profile of the organisation within the environmental governance sector
- proactively engage with the Scottish Parliament Net Zero, Energy and Transport Committee, including six-monthly updates on our work in February and August each year
- build on our programme of digital communication work identified in the Communication and Engagement Strategy and continue to improve our approach through commissioning new videos, graphics and animations
- act on a programme of external and internal consultation to continue improving access to information on the ESS website and ensuring full compliance with the Public Sector Bodies (Websites and Mobile Applications) Accessibility Regulations 2018
- continue our programme of organisation-wide accessibility and engagement training, following the latest accessibility guidelines and standards

- continue to develop and improve our internal communications approach through delivery of the People Strategy Action Plan

Developing a high-performing organisation

5.16 The strategic outcome set against developing a high performing organisation in the ESS Strategic Plan is: 'we are an effective and efficient organisation'.

5.17 In the Plan we set out our intention to:

- ensure our plans and operational activity are regularly reviewed and accountable
- continue to maintain a clear approach to how we allocate and prioritise our spending to ensure best value
- regularly assess ESS' necessary staffing complement to ensure we can perform our functions effectively
- prioritise the development of our team by implementing our learning and development programme, pulse surveys and events to build our organisational culture, with a particular focus on equalities and wellbeing
- establish our core internal communications policy and continue to create an inclusive culture where team members are consulted and involved in the development of key policy areas

Key pieces of work 2024/25

5.18 We will:

- support the Minister and Parliamentary process to appoint a new ESS Chair to lead the organisation through the next stage of its strategic development
- build on the experience of ESS' 2023/24 internal and external audit reviews and deliver resulting recommendations to provide independent assurance that public funding is spent properly, efficiently and effectively
- complete a programme of: internal audit reviews on performance management indicators and risks; ESS' external audit; and publishing ESS' second Annual Report and Accounts

- complete the ESS office's retrofit in Thistle House, Edinburgh, co-locate with Consumer Scotland, and further assess opportunities for Public Services Reform efficiencies and collaborations
- on-board the new Oracle Cloud finance system
- complete a deep dive into our third-party service support and assess opportunities for Public Services Reform efficiencies and collaborations
- finalise the People Strategy action plan and deliver the Equalities Policy action plan recommendations set against 2024/25
- develop an enhanced mandatory equalities training programme for both staff and Board members as part of our Equalities Policy Action Plan
- implement the processes and policies for monitoring and minimising ESS' impact on the environment as set out in our Sustainability Plan
- build on our data management, governance and legal processes across the organisation, including fulfilling our first archiving requirements and reviewing our Scottish Government framework agreement
- build on our current governance arrangements by consolidating all our delegations of authority into one document and reviewing any gaps
- strive to ensure decision-making is delegated to the point they are made most efficiently and effectively, with staff feeling empowered to make them at an appropriate level
- develop a central database of the principal pieces of primary, secondary and EU legislation that fall within our remit, together with: the corresponding obligations; the responsible public body; and anything that might have a bearing on their interpretation, scope or other implications

6. Performance monitoring

6.1 Our general performance and progress towards our strategic outcomes are monitored through a suite of performance and management indicators as set out below. These have been developed and agreed as part of the consultation on our 2022-25 Strategic Plan. They will be reported against in the ESS Annual Report to Scottish Parliament each year.

6.2 Performance indicators:

Actions	Outputs	Intermediate Outputs	Long-term Outcome
Number of investigations completed	Number of investigations resulting in: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Compliance Notice; • Improvement Report; • Judicial Review 	Percentage of compliance notices implemented in full, on schedule	ESS' assessment of Scotland's progress against environmental indicators
Number of analysis projects completed		Percentage of recommendations implemented from improvement reports	
Number of representations considered	Number and proportion of issues resolved informally	Percentage of recommendations/actions implemented in full, on schedule from informal resolution	

6.3 Management indicators:

Engaging and communicating effectively about our role and how to raise concerns	An efficient and effective organisation
Number attending public/stakeholder engagement sessions	Service standards met
Percentage of feedback positive from public/stakeholder engagement sessions	Percentage of corporate reporting requirements delivered to schedule

Engaging and communicating effectively about our role and how to raise concerns	An efficient and effective organisation
Number of citations in parliamentary reports or meetings	Number of complaints received
Number of social media followers	Board and staff diversity information
Number of new and returning visits to ESS website	Staff engagement
Stakeholder perception of ESS role	Organisational carbon emissions (tonnes of CO2 equivalent)

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