

About Environmental Standards Scotland (ESS)

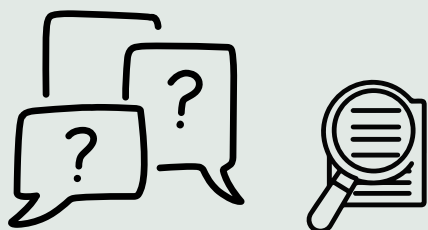
What is ESS?

The UK Withdrawal from the European Union (Continuity) (Scotland) Act 2021 established ESS. It began operating on 1 October 2021. It is a non-ministerial office, independent of the Scottish Government and is accountable to the Scottish Parliament.

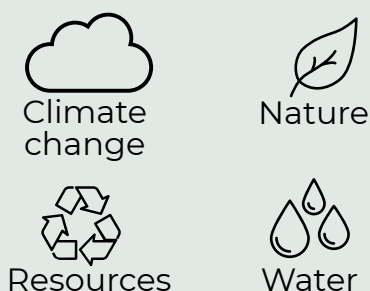
What does ESS do?

ESS' job is to scrutinise public authorities' compliance with environmental law and how effectively they are implementing it. It also evaluates the effectiveness of environmental law.

ESS can receive representations raising concerns about environmental law from individual members of the public or from organisations. **ESS decides whether to investigate these concerns.**



ESS also conducts work based on its **horizon-scanning, monitoring and intelligence gathering** about environmental policy and legislation. This work falls under four priority areas:



New duties from 2026:

1. Scrutinising local authorities' delivery and reporting of their statutory climate change duties
2. Acting as the Independent Review Body scrutinising progress towards delivery of Scotland's statutory targets for nature recovery

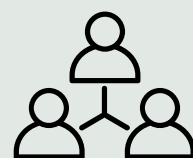
ESS can make recommendations for change following its investigative and scrutiny work. **ESS has significant enforcement powers** including issuing: an information notice, an improvement report, a compliance notice or seeking a judicial review.

Who are ESS?

ESS' Board oversees its work and operations. The Board has seven members and is chaired by Dr Richard Dixon. Scottish Ministers appoint ESS Board members, following the approval of the Scottish Parliament.



ESS currently has a staff of 33 led by Chief Executive Mark Roberts, and, in 2026/27, a budget of £3.7 million. Its staff are based across Scotland and work on a hybrid basis from an office in Edinburgh shared with other public bodies.



What does ESS not do?

ESS is not an appeals body for individual regulatory decisions made by other organisations (for example, relating to planning decisions, environmental licences or permits or regulatory enforcement in specific cases).