

# Seeking fresh, bold leadership

ADVERTISING FEATURE

SEPA seeks a new Chief Executive to take the agency forward, reports **Ken Mann**

**T**HE new Chief Executive of the Scottish Environment Protection Agency (SEPA) can expect to deal with some big numbers: responsibility for more than 1,200 staff with expertise including chemistry, ecology, regulation, hydrology, engineering, quality, planning, communications, digital technology and project management based in 22 locations across the length and breadth of Scotland, and a budget of around £77 million among them. A six-figure package awaits the right candidate, who, when selected, will be based in Stirling.

A good quality environment is essential to a nation's health and well-being, as well as to a successful economy; it's the job of SEPA to help provide that fundamental platform.

A non-departmental public body, accountable through Scottish Ministers to the Scottish Parliament, SEPA has now been advising Scottish ministers, regulated businesses, industry and the public on environmental best practice for nearly two decades.

It is additionally responsible for delivering Scotland's flood warning system, helping to deliver Scotland's Zero Waste ambitions, and controlling, with the Health and Safety Executive, the risk of major accidents at industrial sites.

In terms of sampling alone, in a typical year, the Agency collects around 50,000 samples and delivers 700,000 determinations in supporting SEPA's statutory monitoring (EC directives) and its general duty to assess and report on the state of Scotland's environment.

"Our environment provides the raw materials, energy, and a

range of services on which we all depend," says SEPA Chairman David Sigsworth. "The value of those environmental services, such as dispersing and breaking down pollutants, is conservatively estimated to be around £23bn per year to Scotland. So protecting our environment is a big deal, and Chief Executive of SEPA is a big job."

When Sigsworth became Chairman in 2008 he stated that he saw an opportunity for SEPA to change. "I wanted us to become a more flexible and responsive organisation, using the best approaches and with a clear culture focused on achieving the best outcomes," he adds.

The objective was deceptively simple: to become a smaller, fitter and smarter organisation, doing better for the environment, for the economy, and for communities, but with less.

Since then, SEPA has achieved some notable successes: transforming its contribution to land use planning, fundamentally reformed its science set-up, made unprecedented amounts of environmental information publicly available, and developed a Citizen Science approach to engage the public in both monitoring and protecting their environment. And following the passing of the Regulatory Reform Act, in which SEPA was instrumental, it

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**EVOLUTION:** SEPA's extensive network of programmes means the new chief executive must have a broad range of expertise. Picture: Scottish Environment Protection Agency

is now hard at work setting out a new framework of environmental regulations and enforcement tools, and a funding model to support its new approach.

"We now have three clear outcomes on which to focus," Sigsworth continues. "To protect and improve Scotland's environment and, in doing so, also to enhance the health and well-being of the people of Scotland, and contribute to a successful economy."

SEPA is currently undertaking a major review of how it is set up to deliver effectively on those outcomes.

"We need to make the best use of evidence to identify the most important environmental issues, then use the best techniques

to resolve them," its chairman adds. "As Scotland's principal environmental regulator we are developing a new, proportionate approach, prioritising those activities which present the greatest environmental risks, and using effective enforcement to ensure that the serious problem of environmental crime doesn't pay."

"We must also protect people from the risks our environment sometimes presents, particularly through our role as Scotland's flood warning authority and through flood-risk management."

"And we will increasingly work through partnerships; with Government, with other public bodies, with businesses,

with NGOs, and with communities. We all depend on a good quality environment, so it's in everybody's interests to help protect and improve it."

"Our people are at the heart of those changes. We are committed to building and retaining a highly

**'I'm looking for someone who will bring fresh ideas, combined with enthusiasm and energy'**

professional, well-trained, motivated and effective workforce, working seamlessly together to identify and resolve the most important environmental issues, and to provide excellent services which meet the needs and expectations of our many customers."

SEPA's current Chief Executive, Professor James Curran, will be leaving the Agency early next year after three years at the helm.

"James has steered SEPA through some of the most dramatic changes since it was established in 1996," says Sigsworth.

"But he's decided it's time to move on to other things, so we're now seeking a new Chief Executive.

"I'm looking for someone who can maintain the momentum and direction of change we have established, but I'm also looking for someone who will bring further fresh ideas, new perspectives and different approaches, combined with the enthusiasm and energy to make sure we achieve our visions for SEPA and for Scotland's environment."

"It's my ambition to firmly establish SEPA as a world-leading environment protection agency, and we need a Chief Executive who can realise that ambition."

"Yes, it's a big job," Sigsworth confirms.

"But I think it must be one of the most exciting, interesting and worthwhile jobs in Scotland."