

Environmental Standards Scotland

Communication and Engagement Strategy

December 2022

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Version Control

Version	Author	Purpose	Date
0.1	NM	First completed draft version for consideration at the December 2022 Board meeting.	16/11/2022
0.2	NM/RP	Final version approved by the Board	02/12/2022

1. Purpose and overview

- 1.1 This document is the Communication and Engagement Strategy for Environmental Standards Scotland (ESS). It sits beneath the ESS Strategic Plan and sets out our overall approach to communicating and engaging, externally and internally, in a clear and accurate way.
- 1.2 This Strategy will support the delivery of the Strategic Plan outcomes and guiding principles. In addition, it links directly to Section 7 of our Strategic Plan, 'Engaging and Communicating Effectively', setting out how we will ensure our role is widely understood.
- 1.3 The document is split into four key sections: the background to where we have got to; our approach to external engagement and our communication methodology; our approach to internal engagement and our communication methodology; and finally how we will measure success. Annexed to this document are the initial objectives we have set for this work.
- 1.4 This Strategy will be a live document, that will be updated on a regular basis as the organisation develops. It will also be a public document, that will be published on ESS' website.
- 1.5 All our communications and engagement work will follow the latest accessibility guidelines and standards, to ensure our communications are accessible to our diverse audiences, including: members of the public; Scottish Parliament; stakeholders; our Board; and our team.
- 1.6 The key items of work related to this Strategy will be set out each year in the ESS Business Plan. The effectiveness of this work will then be measured through a set of performance and management indicators, as set out in the Strategic Plan, and reported each year through the Annual Report to Parliament.

2. Background

2.1 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).

- 2.2 ESS was set up by the Scottish Government to undertake an environmental oversight role, which was previously delivered by the European Union (EU).
- 2.3 An Interim Strategic Plan was published at the point the organisation launched and an updated Strategic Plan was approved by Parliament in November 2022. An interim Communications and Engagement Strategy was developed to support our first year of development, and this Strategy now replaces the earlier document in order to deliver the new Strategic Plan ambitions.
- 2.4 This Strategy has at its core the ESS Mission Statement, Vision and Values, as set out in the Strategic Plan and listed below in full:

Mission Statement

2.5 'We will ensure that Scotland's environmental laws and standards are complied with, and their effectiveness improved to achieve Scotland's ambitious targets for the environment, nature and climate change.'

Vision

2.6 'Scotland's people and nature benefit from a high-quality environment and are protected from harm through the consistent application of effective environmental laws, which are recognised internationally as setting high standards.'

Values

2.7 The values we will strive to be judged by are:

We are	Our staff feel
Independent	Respected
Transparent	Included
Trusted	Innovative
Effective	Collaborative

Strategic outcomes

2.8 As an organisation we aim to achieve our Mission and Vision through the following five strategic outcomes:

Outcome 1: We have taken effective action to ensure public authorities' compliance with environmental law and to improve the effectiveness of the law.

Outcome 2: We have prioritised and investigated the most important matters of concern and identified the action needed to rectify problems and improve compliance and effectiveness.

Outcome 3: We have engaged in building 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.

Outcome 4: Our role is widely understood and we are regularly engaged in work to improve compliance and the effectiveness of environmental law and how it is applied.

Outcome 5: We are an effective and efficient organisation.

Key guiding principles

2.9 Our Principles will inform how we approach our work:

Principle 1: We will target our efforts and resources where we can add most value – focusing where our contribution is needed most or will make most difference.

Principle 2: We will seek to resolve issues through agreement wherever possible – having recourse to our formal powers where we judge it is necessary to deliver the outcome expected.

Principle 3: We will be evidence driven – seeking a wide range of inputs and expertise to inform our work and to support our decisions and advice.

- Principle 4: We will be open and transparent keeping people informed about the progress of our work and providing opportunities to input to and influence it.
- Principle 5: We will seek opportunities to work in partnership with others working closely with all relevant stakeholders to ensure that our collective efforts deliver benefits for environmental protection and enhancement.
- 2.10 This Communications and Engagement Strategy focuses primarily on delivering on Outcomes 4 and 5, and guiding Principles 4 and 5. However, as with all ESS policies and procedures, all the Outcomes and Principles are key to our work.

3. External Engagement

Why we need to communicate

- 3.1 Through effective communication and engagement, we can position ourselves as an organisation that is independent, strong and trusted in the field of environmental regulation. We can also manage, motivate, influence, explain and create the right conditions to grow and maintain a positive perception of ESS as an organisation that can and will effect change.
- 3.2 This Strategy focuses on ensuring target audiences recognise:
 - What our role is and how it fits into the regulatory landscape;
 - Why the work we will do is important to the people of Scotland;
 - How we will deliver on being a robust, independent environmental scrutiny body.

Where we are now

- 3.3 Social media channels and a website have been established and engagement is steadily increasing between the organisation, and members of the public and stakeholders.
- 3.4 Work has been carried out to identify our key stakeholders. The Strategy and Analysis Team has held several consultative information sessions for stakeholders, and members of the public, to inform our Interim and final Strategic Plans.

3.5 ESS representatives have also now appeared in the Scottish Parliament and a range of publicly available correspondence has been sent to stakeholders including MSPs, other public bodies and interested stakeholders.

Where we want to be

- 3.6 As referenced by the Strategic Outcomes in the Strategic Plan, we will be an organisation which will:
 - Take effective action to ensure public authorities' compliance with environmental law and improve the effectiveness of the law;
 - Build knowledge on environmental performance and form effective partnerships with bodies collecting, collating and scrutinising environmental data;
 - Develop specialist partnerships to ensure we are well informed about developments in EU and international standards and practice;
 - Be an organisation whose role is widely understood and individuals, groups and organisations will be confident in raising concerns.

How we will get there

- 3.7 We will continue to develop our communication with stakeholders in the public, private and voluntary sectors and build on this approach to broaden our reach.
- 3.8 A stakeholder engagement plan has been developed, which will enable oversight of key meetings, identify lead team members for organisations where required, and collate any shared learning that has taken place.
- 3.9 Informal arrangements are in place with a range of organisations. Where required, formal protocols and Memorandums of Understanding (MOUs) have been or will be established, for example, with the Scottish Government and Climate Change Committee.

4. Communication Methodology - External

What we will do

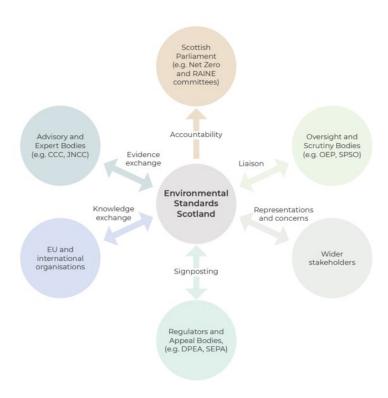
- 4.1 Our communication with external stakeholders and members of the public will be:
 - Clear and concise we will tailor our approaches to the needs of our audiences. We will use Plain English in our communication, using everyday language and eliminate jargon where possible;
 - Credible we will communicate in line with agreed key messages;
 - Relevant we will tailor our approaches based on insight and evaluation to meet the needs of our audiences;
 - Consistent we will strive for consistency of communication, messages, and engagement to all our audiences;
 - Timely we will strive for timely communication and engagement to increase levels of trust and the sense of reliability in ESS;
 - Accessible we will strive to embed best practice in all our communications and ensure accessibility guidance and standards are achieved so that our communications are accessible to all.
- 4.2 In addition, a set of publicly available <u>frequently asked questions</u> has been established and this will be regularly reviewed to ensure messages remain consistent, current and relevant.

How we will achieve this

- 4.3 We will use the following communications methods to deliver on our ambtions:
 - Community and stakeholder engagement, including feedback questionnaires, events and focus groups;
 - Scottish Parliament engagement;
 - Press and public relations activity;
 - Proactive social media;
 - Proactive website content updates;
 - Appropriate and dynamic imagery;
 - Engaging digital communications vlogs, blogs and videos.

Community and Stakeholder Engagement

- 4.4 A strong and positive relationship with members of the public and stakeholders (including public bodies, non-governmental organisations, ministers, politicians, civil servants, UK-wide regulators, community groups and communities) is essential for ESS. We are committed to inclusive, open and transparent communication and engagement.
- 4.5 We are developing a community and stakeholder community programme, which will map out our approach, relationships, communication and interactions between ESS and members of the public and our stakeholders. In particular, this work will focus on marginalised or disadvantaged communities and groups, to ensure they are aware of our role and how to raise concerns with us. We will identify these groups through working with partners such as Regional Equality Councils, the Ethic Minority Environmental Network and others.
- 4.6 This will build on our broader stakeholder map, which is set out in the Strategic Plan and included below for reference.



- 4.7 Alongside this targeted community based work, the ESS team will also continue to meet with stakeholders in the public, private and voluntary sectors to broaden our reach.
- 4.8 We will also continue to build good working relationships with a wide range of public bodies though:
 - Creating a centralised stakeholder management resource;
 - Develop messaging to raise awareness of information sessions;
 - Gathering feedback from public sessions, as part of our continuing improvement approach and key management indicator reporting.

Scottish Parliament

- 4.9 We are accountable to the Scottish Parliament and have a legal duty to report on our activities each year. To ensure a good working relationship with our key Committee (the Net Zero, Energy and Transport Committee (NZET)) and others as appropriate, the Chair, Chief Executive Officer and relevant team members have been attending the NZET Committee on request.
- 4.10 This has been in response to a range of published items, such as the Strategic Plan and investigation recommendations. The Chair and CEO have also actively written to the NZET Committee to update on ESS activity, to build good relations and clear communication channels. Correspondence to Committee(s) is published on the ESS website to promote transparency and accountability.

Press and Public Relations

- 4.11 The media is one of the most visible and audible communications tools available to us as an organisation, but also one where we do not control the messaging.
- 4.12 We need to communicate effectively through the media and encourage public/community engagement by promoting our work in clear, timely and easy-to-understand language. This is an important way of encouraging people to access information about our work and highlighting our successes. We also need to be able to provide a robust response to any false claims that are being made about ESS.

- 4.13 Print, online and broadcast media will be key channels for us to engage with the general public and provide an opportunity to get important messages across.
- 4.14 We have our own press office function co-ordinated in-house. Press office contact details are available on our website to capture all media enquiries.
- 4.15 The press office function will be supported by an ongoing contract with a third-party communications and public relations provider. This contract covers additional support if required, alongside the facility to commission videos and other social media content.
- 4.16 The ESS Senior Communications Officer has a fundamental role to play as the gateway to all media outlets and is responsible for building strong relationships with the media. A rolling programme of press releases will be prepared to highlight ESS' work. This could include, but is not limited to:
 - Investigation announcements;
 - Key outcome/findings from our analytical work;
 - Senior appointments; and
 - Annual and Strategic reports.
- 4.17 Press releases and key lines to media will be approved by the Chair and CEO before release. A media contacts database has also been created and will be developed to support this work.
- 4.18 A media cuttings service has been developed and is shared with the wider ESS team. Planning is in place to create an organisational resource for horizon scanning that will match media coverage to our key analytical priorities.
- 4.19 Subject-specific template communication plans have also now been established, where we are laying documents with the Scottish Parliament, or publishing investigations reports. These include timings, contacts, processes and standard approaches to be followed.

Social Media

- 4.20 Social media is an integral part of the communications approach for most organisations. For ESS, it will be an additional channel to disseminate news and information.
- 4.21 While it is important that the audience grows and engages with the content, it is not intended to be a channel through which people directly communicate with ESS, for example, asking for advice or raising issues.
- 4.22 Our social media content will:
 - Inform followers on our role and remit;
 - Demonstrate the progress and impact of our work;
 - Reinforce why we are needed as an organisation and why effective environmental regulation is important;
 - Signpost followers to our website, or other relevant resources.
- 4.23 We will continue to use the current social media channels we have set up on Twitter and LinkedIn and will manage this through a social media management tool, which will allow us to schedule posts and keep track of any activity on ESS related social media.
- 4.24 We have developed an ESS Social Media Policy and social media awareness training has been delivered to current team members.
- 4.25 A social media calendar will be created and developed to ensure a continued rolling release of posts throughout the year. This will also tie in with any events happening throughout the year that we might want to post, or retweet.

Website

4.26 Our website will be the first port of call for many people, including stakeholders, members of the public, or media who want to engage with us.

- 4.27 Our website has written and video guidance on how to make a representation and also contains important publications such as our Annual Report, Strategic Plan and Business Plan. This general information will be built upon to ensure the website remains a valuable hub of information on environmental regulation, positioning ESS as a leading voice in this field.
- 4.28 In 2023 the website will be migrated to a new front-end system, which will ensure it complies with The Public Bodies (Websites and Mobile Applications)

 Accessibilty Regulations 2018.

Imagery

- 4.29 Images play an important role in telling the story of the organisation and will be used in all our publications such as the Annual and Strategic Reports, as well as on ESS' website and social media.
- 4.30 An image bank will be built, and accessiblity information for images will always be included on social media and website updates as appropriate.

Digital Communications

- 4.31 We are fast moving towards a remote-first society. Because of this, it is important to find new ways to communicate and engage with our audiences. Videos, video blogs (vlogs) and general blogs are communications tools, which will allow people to build a connection with ESS. This will also be an opportunity for us to tell our story in a more creative and visual way.
- 4.32 ESS will continue to commission bespoke videos and vlogs from the ESS communications contractor where required. These videos will build on the existing content hosted on the ESS YouTube Channel and posted on our website. Accessibility will always be considered with digital communications, including subtitles and the use of sign language.

5. Internal Engagement

Why we need to communicate

- 5.1 Good communication across the organistion (including the team, Board, coopted Committee members and third-party service providers) is the cornerstone of success for every organisation, so it is important to get it right. We are a relatively small organisation, therefore good communications practice will be ingrained into every aspect of the working day.
- 5.2 This section of the Communication and Engagement Strategy will focus on ESS team members, but the principles included will be reflected in our wider practice with the Board and others.
- 5.3 Every team member of ESS is an ambassador for the organisation and it is vital that they: have the information they need to do their jobs; know how their role contributes to the overall priorities of ESS; and understand how their behaviour affects the way that the organisation is perceived alongside its reputation.

Where we are now

- 5.4 A substantial amount of work has been undertaken across the last year to establish a baseline on internal communications.
- 5.5 We use the 'Pathways' system to share information with staff. This acts as an intranet for the organisation, enabling information to be easily found and organised into sections such as: wellbeing; HR, training; health and safety; and team specific guidance and procedures.
- 5.6 Information in general is currently shared via email, or Miscrosoft Teams, by the Corporate Services and Communications Team, and then made available thereafter on Pathways. In addition, team members share information across the organisation where there is a shared interest.
- 5.7 The full ESS team meets every week online to share information on our individual work plans and individual teams also meet weekly on an in-person, or hybrid basis, to progress initiatives.

- 5.8 Full ESS team sessions are held every two months, on a pre-planned basis, to share information on: our work and priorties; how we will work together; and personal development. Our third party HR advice provider supports these ambitions and works closely with the team to help us embed best practice and ensure we put equalities at the heart of everything we do.
- 5.9 Feedback is gathered through Pulse Surveys, which are issued every two months on a range of subject areas. Actions from these are then quicky developed, and fed back at the weekly meetings to ensure the wider team feel engaged and listened to.

Where we want to be

5.10 We aim to continue to have all team members feel respected, included, innovative and collaborative, as per our Values set out at 2.7 in this Plan. The role of internal communications is to support these values and to increase trust, build good working relationships and ensure that we are viewed as a great place to work.

How we will get there

5.1 Our internal enagement methodology will continue to be refined and improved through feedback and research into best practice. In addition, in 2023, a new People Strategy will be developed, which will draw together all related activity of this type into one policy. This will set out our culture, wellbeing support and other human resources-related intiatives and policies.

6. Communications Methodology – Internal

What we will do

- 6.1 In order to deliver on these ambtions, we will adopt the following communications principles:
 - Clear and concise We will use Plain English in our communication, using everyday language and eliminate jargon where possible;
 - Credible We will deliver important messages face-to-face via the CEO,
 Executive Team, or line managers;
 - Relevant we will always look for opportunities to create dialogue and engage with staff and managers;
 - Consistent we will provide targeted communications to ESS staff and Board members;
 - Timely we will strive for timely communication and engagement to increase levels of trust and the sense of reliability;
 - Accessible we will strive to embed best practice in all our communications and ensure accessibility guidance and standards are achieved so that our communications are accessible to all.

How we will achieve this

- 6.2 We will use the following communications methods to deliver on our ambtions:
 - Pathways;
 - Quarterly staff newsletters;
 - Bi-monthly pulse surveys;
 - Bi-monthly all-team days, as a minimum;
 - Weekly all-team hybrid meetings;
 - Regular all-staff emails;
 - Wellbeing initiatives;
 - Ongoing training and learning and development (L&D) support.

Pathways

6.3 Our use of Pathways will be developed to act as a collection point for internal messaging and news. It will also be home to our policies and procedures, style and accessibility guides, Executive Team updates, forms, HR processes and training information. This will be updated and maintained regularly.

Staff Newsletter

6.4 We will aim to produce a quarterly staff newsletter. Following feedback from the wider team, it will have a more personal focus, as well as featuring corporate updates about the organisation. This will also offer the opportunity for subject specific champions across the organisation, for example related to wellbeing and sustainability, to share information about their work.

Pulse Surveys

6.5 Unlike all-encompassing annual staff surveys, pulse surveys can be used to focus on one particular aspect of employee engagement. We will continue to use this methodology to gather feedback from staff to help measure feelings and status around particular topics, and inform future strategies. This use of this approach will be kept under review.

All-Team Days

6.6 All-team days will continue to be planned and delivered. This will provide learning and development for the wider team, as well as providing an opportunity for those who work remotely to meet with colleagues. These events will also allow each department to host in-person workshops with the rest of the organisation to share projects they have been working on and assist with collaboration on ideas. The all-team days are planned to run every two months, and quarterly as a minimum.

Weekly All-Team Meetings

6.7 The weekly hybrid staff meeting will continue to help develop inter-team relationships, as well as provide an opportunity for those working remotely to share what they are working on.

All-Staff Emails

6.8 All-staff emails will be sent out regularly on a range of subject areas in a coordinated manner. The Executive Team will also provide email updates, following the weekly Executive meetings, to relay important information. Post-Board meeting information is shared to ensure all staff are updated on our priorities and objectives.

Wellbeing Initiatives

- 6.9 The biggest reward arising from wellbeing initiatives is a healthy and happy workforce. The benefits of wellbeing initiatives in the workplace include:
 - Improved focus at work;
 - Reduction of stress;
 - Increased job satisfaction and positive outlook;
 - Physically healthier and improved general wellbeing;
 - Reduced absenteeism and presenteeism;
 - Boosted productivity.
- 6.10 Regular wellbeing initiatives will be developed and delivered throughout the year by promoting activies and opportunities on Pathways, alongside team emails and all-staff events.

Training and Learning and Development

6.11 Initial training when joining the organisation will be carried out through induction-style learning, to help individuals work effectively in their role at ESS. Further departmental-specific training will be provided by line managers to help individuals understand how their role functions within the organisation.

- 6.12 Line managers will take initiative to inspire forward thinking around learning and development through one-to-one conversations held monthly. Where staff prefer to have conversations regarding learning and development with someone outwith their line manager, they can benefit from coaching sessions with our third-party HR representative.
- 6.13 There are various platforms staff can utilise to undertake their preferred learning and development. These include, but are not limited to: Government Campus, Government Commercial College, FutureLearn, Pathways, Civil Service Learning, as well as a range of conferences, courses, webinars and events.

7. Measuring Our Success

- 7.1 In order to measure the success of our external and internal planning and delivery, a set of Key Management Indicators has been established, as part of the development of the Strategic Plan.
- 7.2 The Communication and Engagement Strategy will focus on the Strategic Plan management indicators set out below:

Engaging and Communicating Effectively About Our Role and How to Raise Concerns

- Number attending public/stakeholder engagement sessions
- Percentage of feedback positive from public/stakeholder engagement sessions
- Number of citations in Parliamentary reports or meetings
- Number of social media followers
- Number of new and return visits to ESS website
- Stakeholder perception of ESS role

An Efficient and Effective Organisation

- Service standards met
- Number of complaints received
- Staff engagement

7.3 Data is gathered on these indicators on an ongoing basis and assessed to ensure progress and improvements can be made. Our performance against these will be publicised through our Annual and Corporate Reporting processes, to ensure ESS is meeting set standards and being transparent in our effectiveness.

Annexes

- 7.4 Our Communications and Engagement Strategy objectives are set out Annex 1 (External) and 2 (Internal) below. These pull together the work described in this strategy into an overview plan, linking to our Strategic Plan Principles.
- 7.5 These tables will be built upon across the year to develop a more detailed plan of activity.

Annex 1: External Communications Objectives

Objectives	Strategic Plan Principle	Method
1. We will build and maintain a momentum of creative communications to inform and educate people about the role of ESS.	We will be open and transparent – keeping people informed about the progress of our work and providing opportunities to input and influence it.	 Development of general stakeholder engagement plan Development of community engagement plan Update FAQs online Press and PR activity Proactive social media and website updates, with the use of dynamic imagery Use of digital communications, vlogs etc. Rolling programme of press releases Targeted information sharing, for example in partnership with organisations such as Scotland Europa
2. We will develop a programme of ESS driven events for stakeholder organisations and participate in other organisations' events to increase awareness in ESS' work.	We will seek opportunities to work in partnership with others – working closely with all relevant stakeholders to ensure that our collective efforts deliver benefits for environmental protection and enhancement.	 Development of general stakeholder engagement plan Development of community engagement plan Regular stakeholder meetings and events Awareness raising at public events Develop programme of community events Report to Parliament on progress in person Gather feedback from stakeholder events External learning events will be considered in future
3. We will inform the public on how they can make a representation.	We will be open and transparent – keeping people informed about the	 Awareness raising at public events Development of community engagement plan Develop programme of community events

ор	ogress of our work and providing oportunities to input to and influence it.	 Update FAQs online Press and PR activity Proactive social media and website updates, with the use of dynamic imagery Use of digital communications, vlogs etc. Social media posts on LinkedIn and Twitter pointing to website page "How to make a representation." Video on how to make a representation on ESS website. Social media posts signposting to the website page about "How to make a representation."
champion of the environment and communities and will build trust in ESS as an	re will seek to resolve issues through greement wherever possible – having course to our formal powers where we dge it is necessary to deliver the atcome expected.	 Regular stakeholder meetings and events Awareness raising at public events Develop programme of community events Report to Parliament on progress in person or through correspondence Press and PR activity Proactive social media and website updates, with the use of dynamic imagery Use of digital communications, vlogs etc. Rolling programme of press releases External learning events will be considered in future Targeted information sharing, for example in partnership with organisations such as Scotland Europa

Annex 2: Internal Engagement Objectives

Objectives	Strategic Plan Principle	Method
1. We will keep ESS staff informed and enable ESS staff to connect their role to the aims and visions of the organisation. 2. We will equip staff to be advocates for ESS when they meet the public and stakeholders.	We will be open and transparent – keeping	 Pathways updates Regular staff newsletter Regular all-team Days All-Staff Emails Training and L&D Key ESS message document regularly updated Media and presentation training Pulse surveys People strategy development Regular staff newsletter Regular all-team Days All-Staff Emails
3. We will create two-way dialogue with staff and measure engagement around particular topics.	We will seek opportunities to work in partnership with others – working closely with all relevant stakeholders to ensure that our collective efforts deliver benefits for environmental protection and enhancement.	 Training and L&D Key ESS message document regularly updated Media and presentation training People strategy development Regular all-team Days Training and L&D Wellbeing initiatives



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