

<b>Agenda Item</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>Report No</b>	<b>WRSL/14/25</b>

**Committee:** Wester Ross, Strathpeffer and Lochalsh

**Date:** 4 August 2025

**Report Title:** Environmental Health Annual Report and Activity 2024/25

**Report By:** Assistant Chief Executive – Place

## **1 Purpose/Executive Summary**

- 1.1 This report is to provide an update to Members on the Environmental Health team and provide an annual report on local activity during 2024/25.

## **2 Recommendations**

- 2.1 Members are asked to **note and provide** any feedback on:-

- i. The range and volume of work being undertaken locally by the Environmental Health team;
- ii. The Highland wide issues; and
- iii. The report format and content

## **3 Implications**

- 3.1 **Resource** – The resources available to Environmental Health must be prioritised, focusing on areas of greatest public health significance. The team continually explore ways of delivering services more efficiently and within budget, including reviewing associated income streams, working with the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities (COSLA) regarding resource allocation and seeking efficiencies in working practice and team structure.
- 3.2 **Legal** - As a regulatory service the Environmental Health team have a wide range of statutory duties. The team have an Enforcement Policy in place and officers follow the five principles of better regulation - regulation should be transparent, accountable, consistent, proportionate and targeted.

Please note that, for purposes of this report, no reference is made to individuals or businesses to ensure compliance with Data Protection and not to impact on any ongoing investigations or court proceedings.

- 3.3 **Risk** – There is current pressures on the environmental health profession and challenges in workforce planning. These challenges have been noted by COSLA and the Scottish Government. Work is ongoing with the Royal Environmental Health Institute of Scotland (REHIS) and the Society of Chief Officers of Environmental Health in Scotland (SoCOEHS) to increase resilience of the service and a sustainable workforce. A BSc course at University of the West of Scotland, which includes an integrated placement with Councils, has closed with a replacement course being planned. Currently there is no method of new entrants training to become an EHO in Scotland.

Environmental Health currently have three students already enrolled in the UWS course and one student will qualify in 2026, with two others qualifying in 2027. Two Food Safety Officers have recently completed their training and have successfully passed their professional qualifications. One of these officers is based in Dingwall, with an operational area that includes Wester Ross, Strathpeffer and Lochalsh.

- 3.4 **Health and Safety (risks arising from changes to plant, equipment, process, or people)** – There are no staff Health, Safety and Wellbeing implications arising from this report.
- 3.5 **Gaelic** - There are no Gaelic implications arising from this report.

## **4 Impacts**

- 4.1 In Highland, all policies, strategies or service changes are subject to an integrated screening for impact for Equalities, Poverty and Human Rights, Children's Rights and Wellbeing, Climate Change, Islands and Mainland Rural Communities, and Data Protection. Where identified as required, a full impact assessment will be undertaken.
- 4.2 Considering impacts is a core part of the decision-making process and needs to inform the decision-making process. When taking any decision, Members must give due regard to the findings of any assessment.
- 4.3 This is a monitoring or update report and therefore an impact assessment is not required.

## **5 Background**

- 5.1 Members may be aware that Environmental Health submit an annual operational plan for Member approval. The plan details the objectives for the whole of the Environmental Health team, including the priorities for the year ahead. The latest 2025/2026 plan was approved by the Communities and Place Committee on 22 May 2025 – link to report [here](#).
- 5.2 This operational plan gave a commitment to provide reports on Environmental Health Activity and performance to local committees. The purpose being to increase awareness of the activities covered locally by the Environmental Health team, and to seek feedback from local Members on both the work being carried out and/or any local issues going forward that they may wish to see prioritised.

- 5.3 Environmental Health conduct a wide range of statutory duties on behalf of the Council with the general remit to protect and improve public health; these include:-

**Public Health Protection**

This includes private water supplies, statutory nuisances (e.g. foul odours, smoke, premises in such a state etc), smoking in public places, port health, and communicable disease investigation (e.g. food-borne / waterborne disease, Legionnaires disease).

**Food Safety**

This includes an enforcement and advisory role in all aspects of food hygiene, food labelling and food export certification.

**Health and Safety**

This includes an enforcement and advisory role for all aspects of health and safety at work in Local Authority enforced premises, particularly the investigation of workplace accidents.

**Private Sector Housing**

This includes an enforcement and advisory role in sub-standard housing, closing and demolition orders, Houses of Multiple Occupation and housing defects; it also includes the administration of housing improvement and repairs grants.

**Pollution Control**

This includes an enforcement and advisory role in respect of noise control (commercial and domestic) and local air quality management.

**Contaminated Land**

This includes a regulatory and enforcement role for contaminated land prevention through development control. The team also provide an advisory role to other council services on asset transfer and development.

**Animal Health & Welfare**

This includes an enforcement and advisory role in all aspects of Animal Health legislation. For example, dealing with disposal of animal carcasses on farm and taking animals into possession in serious farm welfare cases.

**Licensing**

This includes a general enforcement and advisory role for activities licensed under the Civic Government legislation, including short term lets. The Environmental Health team also have an administrative and enforcement role in respect of the licensing of caravan sites, venison dealers, animal boarding establishments, pet shops, zoos, cinemas, riding establishments, sports grounds and dangerous wild animals.

**Dog Control,**

This includes an enforcement and advisory role in respect of stray dogs, dangerous/aggressive dogs, dog fouling and micro-chipping.

**Pest Control, Litter, Fly-tipping, Waste Duty of Care, Abandoned Vehicles.**

This includes a general enforcement and educational role regarding such issues. The team work closely with the Council's Waste team and SEPA regarding waste and fly tipping issues.

- 5.4 Much of the work is pro-active and preventative. The team has an important role in ensuring the Highlands maintains its reputation of a safe and healthy place in which to live, work and holiday. We aim to support local businesses by providing advice on appropriate regulations and ensuring any regulatory activity follows the five principles of better regulation:- Proportionate, Consistent, Accountable, Transparent and Targeted; this includes successfully adopting a '4 Es' approach - **E**ngage, **E**xplain, **E**ncourage and **E**nforce in responding to the vast majority of cases.
- 5.5 Environmental Health operate three operational areas: North, Mid and West, with the Wester Ross, Strathpeffer and Lochalsh area being covered by the Mid Team. The Mid Team has three Senior Environmental Health Officer (SEHO) who manage the wide range of officers that cover the different EH functions. One SEHO is based in Dingwall, with two other SEHOs based in Inverness. For the North and West teams, one SEHO manages each of the respective teams.

Officers within the mid-team will conduct duties throughout the Mid-area and will also undertake cross boundary work to support the North and West teams as and when necessary. The contaminated land officers cover the whole of Highland.

SEHOs also have a Highland wide functional lead role for key statutory areas of work; this functional lead role includes developing policy and operational guidance and supporting officers with significant/complex cases.

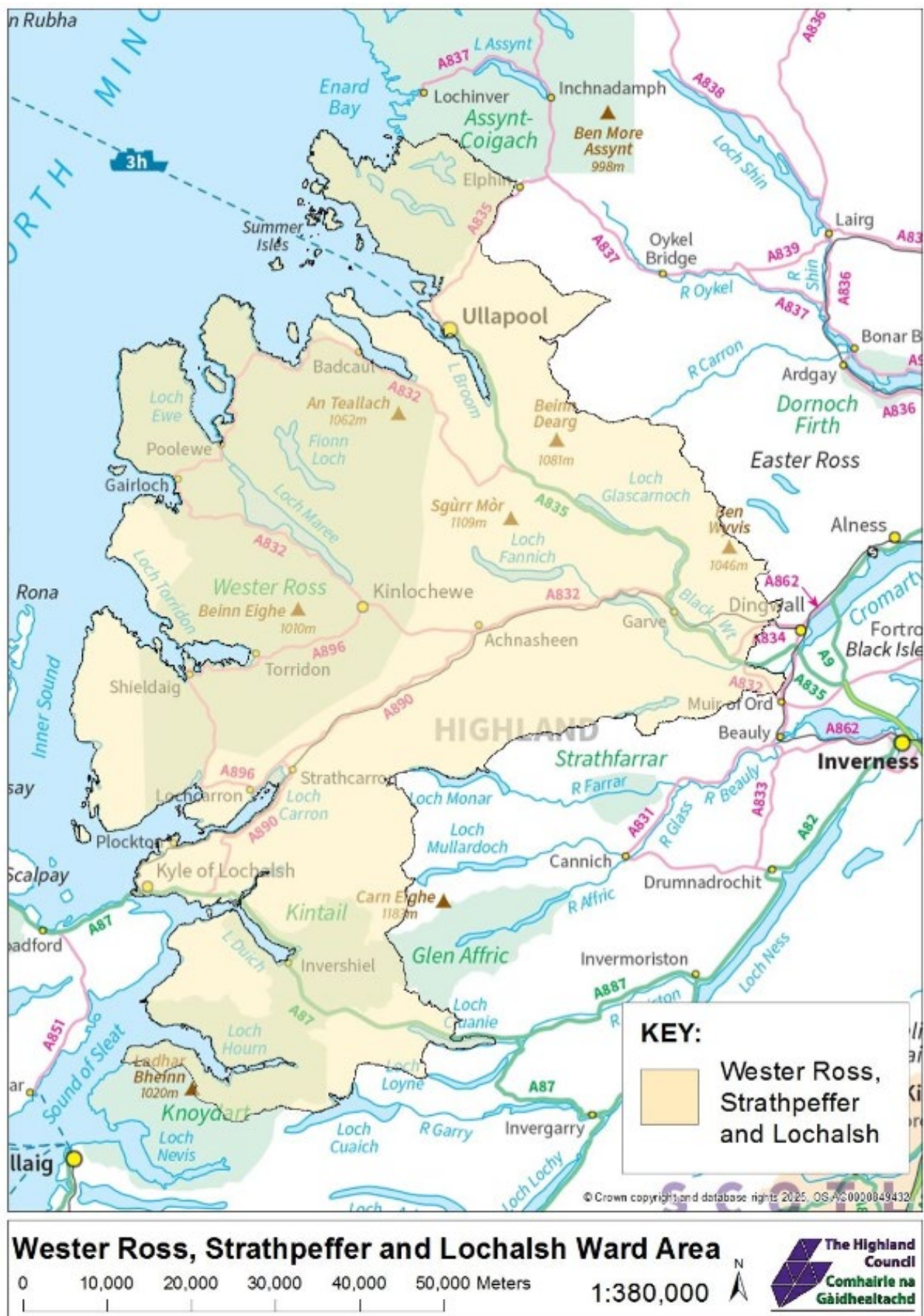
Additionally, several EH officers participate and contribute to several local, regional and national working/steering groups which enable the sharing of best practice and the development of new legislation and statutory guidance.

**Appendix 1** details the latest team structure for Environmental Health and includes a map of the relevant EH operational areas.

## **6 Summary of Environmental Health Activity/Local Issues**

- 6.1 For the purpose of this report, the Environmental Health activity has been split into three main areas; these are outlined below:-
- i) Reactive work (i.e. service requests);
  - ii) Pro-active/scheduled work (i.e. programmed inspections/visits); and
  - iii) Formal Enforcement Activity (i.e. Formal enforcement notices and reports to the Procurator Fiscal)

For each area of activity, the relevant figures have been obtained from our case management system and presented as a total figure for the Wester Ross, Strathpeffer and Lochalsh area (i.e. Ward 5). See Figure 1 below for ease of reference.



All data are for the period between 1 April 2024 – 31 March 2025.

## Reactive Work

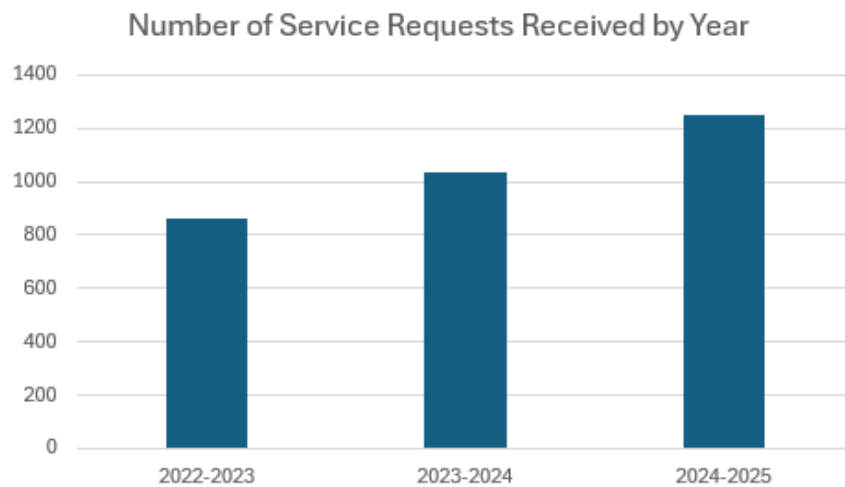
- 6.2 Table 1 below provides a summary of the main Service requests (i.e. complaints, requests for advice, consultations etc.) received by the Environmental Health team, broken down by the general type category. A more detailed breakdown within each of the general category types is contained within **Appendix 2**.

**Table 1: Number of Service Requests by General Category Type for Ward 5**

Category Type	Number of Service Requests 2024/2025
Short Term Let Licensing	575
Export Health Certificates	166
Water Supply (inc. PWS)	91
New Food Premises Registrations	79
Abandoned Vehicles	36
Housing	29
Noise	28
Planning Consultations	25
Civic Government Licensing	24
Statutory Nuisance	19
Food Safety	10
Fly Tipping/Waste/Trade Waste	7
Animal Health	6
HMO Licensing	5
Health & Safety	5
Pests (e.g. mice, rats, seagulls)	3
Dog Control	2
Litter	2
Miscellaneous Licensing	2
S50 National Assistance Burial (enquiry/request)	2

The total number of Service requests received by the Environmental Health team for this Ward was **1253**; this continues the trend of increased numbers of Service requests. There is a general trend of increasing numbers of Service requests across Highland. It reflects the increased statutory duties undertaken by the Service. Fig 1 illustrates.

**Fig 1 – Comparison of Service Request demand between 2020 – 2024 within Ward 5**



In addition, in 2024/2025 336 planning applications were screened by the Service's Contaminated Land Officers.

- 6.3 Table 2 below provides the number of Housing Scheme of Assistance and Private Water Supply Improvement Grants that have been approved during the period within Ward 5.

**Table 2 – Number and value of Approved Grants**

Type	Number	Total Value of Grants
Scheme of Assistance Housing Grant – <b>Adaptation</b> (for installation of stairlifts; level access showers and access ramps etc)	6	£62,072
Private Water Supply Grants (i.e. to improve the quality of private water supply)	6	£10,600

- 6.4 The Service demand shows a marginal increase over the summer, possibly associated with the number of visitors to the area. The annual Service demand is shown in Fig 1 below; this general trend is something we would expect to see continue but we note that that the rise in February 2025 relates to an increase in short term let and export health certificate requests.



**Fig 2 – Monthly breakdown of Service Request demand**



- 6.5 As well as being a statutory consultee for miscellaneous licences, Environmental Health also administer the issuing of these licences. Miscellaneous licensing includes animal boarding, breeding and selling, riding establishments, caravan sites, cinemas, dangerous wild animals, performing animals, venison dealers and zoos. Full details [here](#).

In Wester Ross, Strathpeffer and Lochalsh four such licences have been issued.

#### **Pro-Active/Scheduled Work**

- 6.6 The Environmental Health team conduct a range of programmed work, particularly in respect of food safety where a significant number of inspections are conducted of food businesses to check compliance. Such work is in addition to responding to Service requests.

A breakdown of the number of programmed inspections/visits that were undertaken for the period **1 April 2024 – 31 March 2025** within Ward 5 is detailed within Table 4 below.

**Table 4 - Pro-Active Inspections/Visits by Type**

Inspection/Visit Type	No of Inspections/Visits Conducted
Food Safety	40
Water Sampling	157
Miscellaneous Licensing	4

Please note that these figures **do not** include any reactive inspections/visits conducted in response to a Service Request (i.e. complaints).

There are **100 Regulated (commercial)** and **226 Exempt (domestic)** private water supplies in the Wester Ross, Strathpeffer and Lochalsh Ward area recorded on the Council's Private Water Supply register. All "Regulated" supplies must be annually monitored (sampled) and risk assessed (once every 5 years) by the Council.

There are eleven approved establishments in Wester Ross, Strathpeffer and Lochalsh. These are premises which are classified as food manufacturers and/ or processors and require an enhanced level of intervention at regular intervals throughout the year.



## Formal Enforcement Activity

- 6.7 Whilst the vast majority of service requests and issues identified by the Environmental Health team are satisfactorily resolved without the need to pursue formal enforcement action (i.e., by following the 4 Es approach), there are always a number of cases, due to their seriousness or failure of the duty holder to comply, where formal enforcement action is required.

A breakdown of the number and type of enforcement notices that have been served between 1 April 2023 and 31 March 2024 in Ward 5 are detailed in Table 5 below.

**Table 5 – Enforcement Notices Served between 1 April 2024 and 31 March 2025**

Notice Type	Number Served
<b>Food Safety</b>	
Remedial Action Notice	1
Shellfish Temporary Closure Notice	2
<b>Environmental Protection</b>	
Noise Abatement Notice	1

None of the notices have been breached.

## Local Matters

### 6.8 Short Term Let Licensing

A total of 575 consultations were carried out relating to short term let licensing; this equates to around 46% of the total service requests received in the Wester Ross, Strathpeffer and Lochalsh area. The demand for short term let licenses is reflective of the number of tourist properties in the area now.

### 6.9 Export Health Certificates

A total of 166 Export Health Certificates were certified by this Service from vessels landing in the Wester Ross, Strathpeffer and Lochalsh area. This certification supports the continued export of fish and fishery products to the EU by a number of operators since the UK exiting the EU.

### 6.10 Private Water Supplies

With 157 proactive samples collected and 91 reactive samples collected, private water supplies sampling remains a significant requirement for this service in the Wester Ross, Strathpeffer and Lochalsh area. The number of private water supplies requiring annual sampling is again indicative of the commercial nature (B&B, holiday rental etc.) of many of the more remote properties in the Ward.

### 6.11 Food Premises

There were 79 new food premises registered in the Wester Ross, Strathpeffer and Lochalsh area between 2024-2025 and 40 scheduled food premises inspections were undertaken. The Environmental Health team continue to undertake inspections of food businesses to verify legislative compliance.

## 6.12 **Abandoned Vehicles**

Thirty-six abandoned car reports were received by the Service for investigation; these reports take up a significant resource in investigating and following up and are often found not to be truly “abandoned” vehicles. The team have been working with colleagues in the Housing and Parking enforcement teams to continually improve the response to abandoned vehicles. Improvements are being made to the Council website, cost recovery and a pilot of a new approach to housing car park areas is being trialled in Easter Ross. Improvement work in this area will continue in 2025/26.

## **7 Highland Wide Issues/Service Priorities**

- 7.1 The short term lets licensing regime commenced on 1 October 2022. The team have a key role as a consultee on applications, assessing compliance at licensed premises and responding to complaints. The team across Highland responded to around 70-80 consultations per week. It is estimated that there could be up to 10,000 short term let properties within Highland. The implementation of the scheme will continue to be a priority and require significant resource going forward.
- 7.2 There have been new licensing requirements introduced for animal breeders (dog, cat and rabbit) and certain animal welfare establishments; this includes rehoming centres and animal sanctuaries. The new licensing schemes are in the process of being implemented. Following a Scottish Government consultation in 2023, the team are awaiting confirmed proposals on extending animal licensing to cover activities such as dog walking, dog grooming, livery services and canine fertility services. It is expected that canine fertility services will be licenced from April 2026 with no current planned date for the other activities, although an update on this is expected in the next year.
- 7.3 The Environmental Health team are continuing with EU exit related activities, including undertaking inspections/audits of exporting food businesses, to verify legislative compliance, provision of Export Health Certification and liaising with UK and Scottish Government on import controls, as well as assisting with the arrangement of audits by countries we export to.
- 7.4 The team is continuing with the implementation of a new national approach to inspection of approved food establishments – Official Control Verification (OCV); this approach, which is required across 11 establishments in Wester Ross, Strathpeffer and Lochalsh, has substantially increased the resourcing required to inspect such premises. Approved establishments are manufacturers of products of animal origin (i.e., fish processors, smokehouses, dairies, manufacturing butchers etc).
- 7.5 A consultation from the Scottish Government covering the regulation of non-surgical cosmetic procedures has just been completed. A new statutory instrument has been recommended which will introduce a licensing scheme for such premises, similar to that currently in place for tattooing and piercing; this is likely to bring additional work for Environmental Health as some of these procedures are likely to fall to us to enforce. It is not known how many of these premises are in operation in Wester Ross, Strathpeffer and Lochalsh.

- 7.6 SSEN Network Pathway to 2030 - SSEN Transmission is currently consulting on and undertaking significant work to upgrade the electricity transmission network across the North of Scotland. Officers from each of our three EH operational teams are involved in assessing and responding to consultations for overhead line and substation proposals. Such work has been ongoing throughout the last year and will continue through 2025/26 and beyond. Particular input is being required in respect of assessing complex noise assessments and any potential noise impacts arising from such developments.

## **8 Going Forward**

- 8.1 The local team will continue to follow the priorities as set by the Environmental Health Operational Plan and respond to any local emerging issues as and when they arise. Any urgent public health issues will always continue to be prioritised.
- 8.2 The local team would welcome feedback on this report, particularly regarding the usefulness and type of data presented, the report format and any information that Members would wish to see for future reports. Additionally, the local team would want to know if there are any local issues that Members consider should be prioritised or be given increased attention; we would welcome comments.

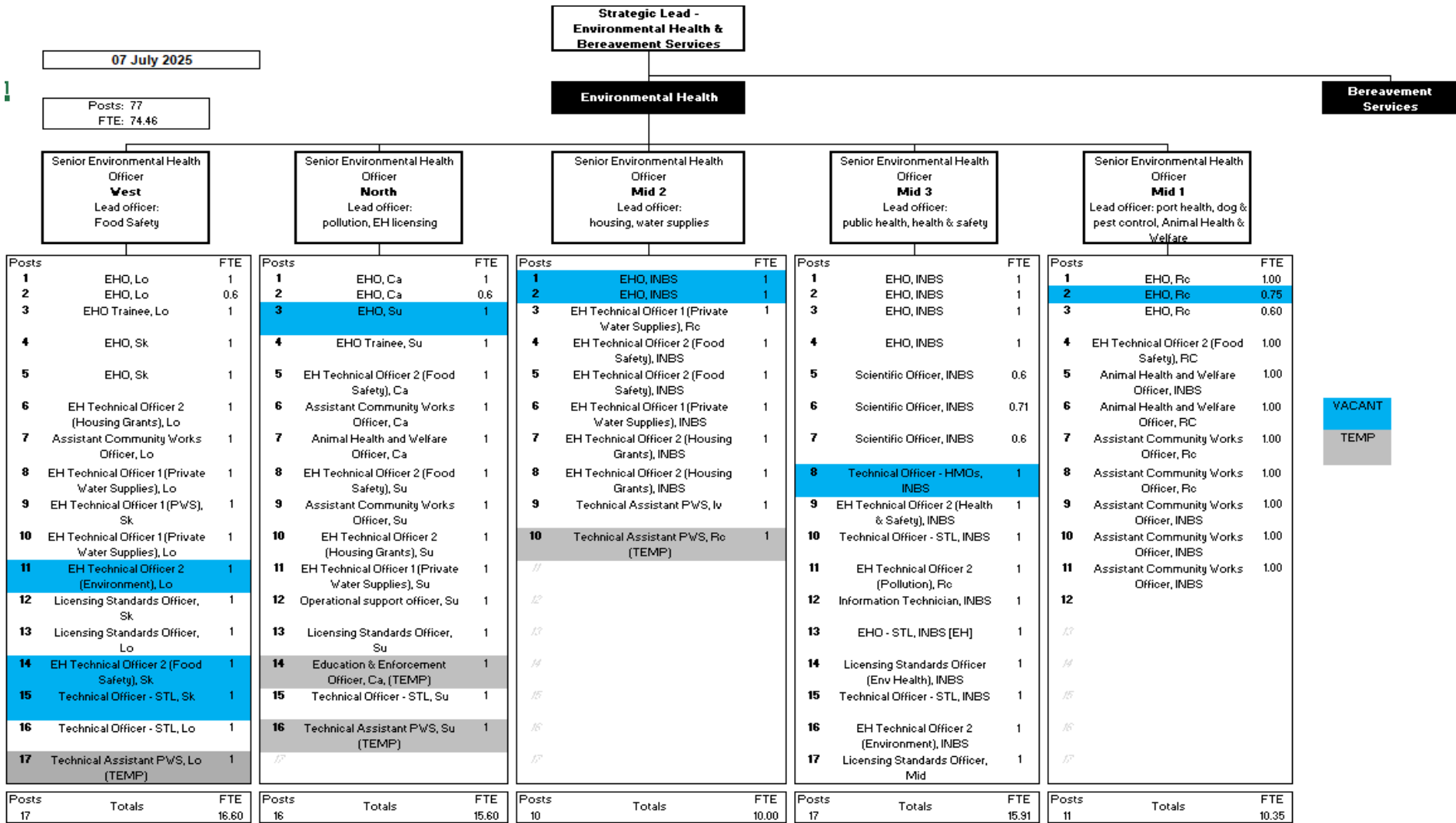
Designation: Strategic Lead Environmental Health & Bereavement Services

Date: 15 July 2025

Author: Barry Cumming, Senior Environmental Health Officer

Appendices: Appendix 1 – Environmental Health Team Structure & EH Operational Areas  
Appendix 2 – Detailed breakdown of service request numbers within each of the general category types

Current Environmental Health Team Structure & Operational Areas



## EH Operational Areas



## Detailed breakdown of service request numbers within each of the general category types

Summary Category	Category Type	Service Requests 2024/2025
Animal Health & Welfare	A02 Animal welfare ENQUIRY	6
	A03 ANIMAL - General ENQUIRY (not nuisance etc)	1
	A05 Animal traceability ENQUIRY	1
	A12 Animal welfare COMPLAINT	2
	A13 ANIMAL - General COMPLAINT (not nuisance)	1
	A14 Animal disease COMPLAINT	1
Dog Control	D01 DC Dog Fouling	5
	D02 DC Stray Dog CALL OFFICER IMMEDIATELY	1
	D04 DC Aggressive Dog	1
Planning & Other Consultations	E02 Planning – General CONSULTATION (enter type code)	25
	E06 Groundwater Consultation/Enquiry	2
	E16 Planning – MAJOR Applications (enter type code)	1
Abandoned Vehicles	G01 Abandoned Vehicle	36
Misc	E12 FOI request	6
	E17 GENERAL EH Enquiry	10
	G02 Grounds Maintenance - General	2
	G05 Grounds Maintenance - Trees	1
Litter & Fly Tipping	G11 Litter	2
	G16 Roadkill - removal of dead animals from verge	7
	G20 Fly-tipping - URGENT (e.g. public health risk)	1
	G21 Fly-tipping - Non-Urgent	6
	G22 Local Environment Patrol (e.g. dog fouling, litter, smoking ban)	1
Health & Safety	H03 H & S Complaint (Non Work Related)	3
	H19 RIDDOR Accident Notification	1
	H23 H & S Request for Information/ Advice	1
Licensing Consultations	LAB Miscellaneous Licensing Enquiry (enter type code)	15
	LBC Civic Government Licensing Consultation (enter type code)	11
	LBE Short Term Let Licensing Consultation	575
	LBG Short Term Let Licensing Complaint	9
	LCC Liquor Licensing Consultation (enter type code)	3
	LDA Housing (Scotland) Act - HMO Application [Enter Type Code CHC-]	5
	LDC HMO Complaint - Unlicensed Premises [Enter Type Code CHC-]	1
Noise	N05 Noise Advice Enquiry (enter type code)	2
	N06 Noise Non-Domestic (enter type code)	12
	N07 Noise Domestic (enter type code)	15
Other Statutory Nuisance	N21 Premises - Dirty Houses & Gardens	1
	N31 Foul Odours	4
	N33 Smoke Complaint	1
	N34 General Nuisance - Other	4
	N35 Light Nuisance	3
	N40 Choked/Defective Drain / Sewer	4
	N41 Choked/Defective Septic Tank	3
	N60 Routine Refuse Complaint	2
	N62 Animal waste nuisance (not dog fouling-use code D01)	1
	N63 Animal/Whale etc Carcass	2
	N90 Air Quality LSO Reactive Work	1
Public Health Burials	NBB National Assistance Burial enquiry/request (s50)	2
	NBD Home Burial enquiry/request	1
Housing	NGB Housing grant enquiry	20
	NGC Housing grant property visit	1
	NGD Housing grant application	4
	NHB Housing general enquiry	2
	NHC Housing complaint - dampness	2
	NHZ Ukraine Refugee Property Check	3



Pest Control	P03 Mice large inf HIGH (enter type)	2
	P04 Rats aff. House HIGH (enter type)	1
	P10 Pests (Other)	1
	P11 Flies LOW (enter type)	1
Food Safety & Standards	X02 Food Premises Registration	79
	X05 FOOD SAFETY enquiry/consultation	10
	X07 FISH/Shellfish EXPORT Certificates	166
	X10 Approval/Lic/Auth application FH	1
	X11 Shellfish REGISTRATION Documents	20
	X13 FSS FOOD Alert	1
	X15 REQUEST for classification/fast track (shellfish)	2
	X16 Fishing Vessel Registration	3
	X19 FSS SHELLFISH - Sample FAILURE	5
	X41 Complaint: Food (Unfit, Microbiological, foreign body)	3
	X42 Complaint: Hygiene of Premises	6
	X49 Support Attestation	10
Port Health	XPC Ship Sanitation Certificate Request	1
Water Supply	XW1 Private supply grant enquiry	15
	XWB Private supply enquiry (non grant)	37
	XWC Private supply complaint/contamination report	5
	XWD Private supply request for sample	7
	XWF Private supply other consultation	3
	XWH Private supply STL Questionnaire	23
	XWQ Lead in public supply notification requiring investigation	1