

The Highland Council

Agenda Item	9
Report No	NC/18/25

Committee: Nairnshire

Date: 25 August 2025

Report Title: Environmental Health - Annual Report & 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 variety 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 explores ways to delivering services more efficiently and within budget including reviewing associated income streams, working with 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 Environmental Health Officer (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 successfully passed their professional qualifications in March.

The EH team worked with Education and HR team to promote the EH profession in the senior Highland schools and in July 2024, two school 4th year students joined the Mid team for two weeks work experience. Unfortunately, due to resources, we were unable to offer a similar school placement this summer.

- 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 2025/26 plan was approved by the Communities and Place Committee on 22 May 2025 – link to report [here](#).
- 5.2 The 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 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. This includes:-

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), blue-green algae, radon advice and National Assistance funerals.

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 in Multiple Occupation (HMOs) and housing defects. It also includes the delivery and administration of the Council Scheme of Assistance that provides advice and funding by means of a grant for disabled adaptations in the home and for housing improvement and repairs. We also support the on-going Ukrainian resettlement team in conducting property inspections.

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 Councils waste team and SEPA regarding waste and fly tipping issues.

5.4 Much of the work is pro-active and preventative. The team has a key role in ensuring the Highlands maintains its reputation of a safe and healthy place in which to live, work and visit. 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 '4Es' approach - **Engage, Explain, Encourage and Enforce** in responding to most cases.

5.5 The Environmental Health operate three operational areas: **North, Mid and West**, with the Nairn 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. Two SEHO are based in Inverness, with the third based in Dingwall. 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.

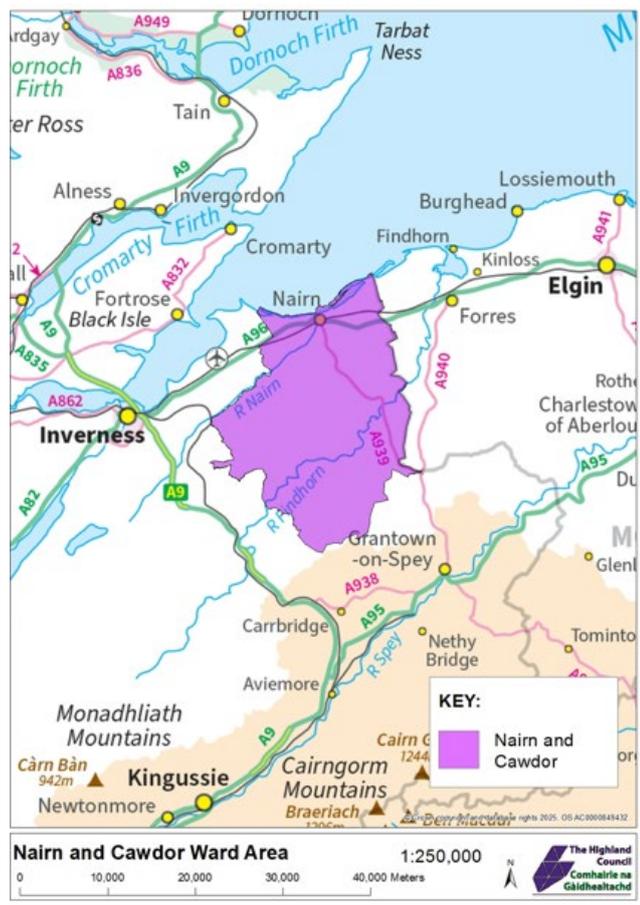
6 Summary of Environmental Health Activity/Local Issues

6.1 For the purpose of this report, the Environmental Health activity has been split into three principal 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 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 ward.

Fig 1 – Ward Areas covered by Report



All data presented is for the period between **1 April 2024 – 31 March 2025**.

Reactive Work

6.2 Table 1 below provides the number of Service requests (*i.e., complaints; requests for advice; consultations etc*) received by the Environmental Health team, broken down by the general type of 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

Category Type	Total No of Service Requests 2024/2025	Total No of Service Requests 2023/2024
Noise	31	25
Statutory Nuisance	19	9
Food Safety	27	22
Health & Safety	9	12
Civic Government Licensing	19	16
Miscellaneous Licensing	1	1
Short Term Let Licensing	102	43
HMO Licensing	0	0
Animal health	19	23
Housing	45	28
Pests (e.g., mice, rats, seagulls etc.)	7	9
PWS Water Supply (incl. other)	33	14
Dog Control	5	10

Planning Consultations	10	7
Fly Tipping/Waste/Trade Waste	3	3
Abandoned Vehicles	15	27
S87 Public Health Funerals/Enquiry	1	0
Infectious Disease/HPT Referral	2	2
Liquor Licensing	5	0
Air Quality	3	0
Smoking Ban	5	0
General/Misc/Other	12	15
Litter	3	0
FOI/EIR Requests	0	1
Total	374	269

The total number of Service requests received by the Environmental Health team for these wards was **374**. These figures are consistent with the previous year.

Further work on improving the content on the Councils website and availability of advice/guidance to the public will further reduce some of the Service demand to make more efficient and effective use of existing resources.

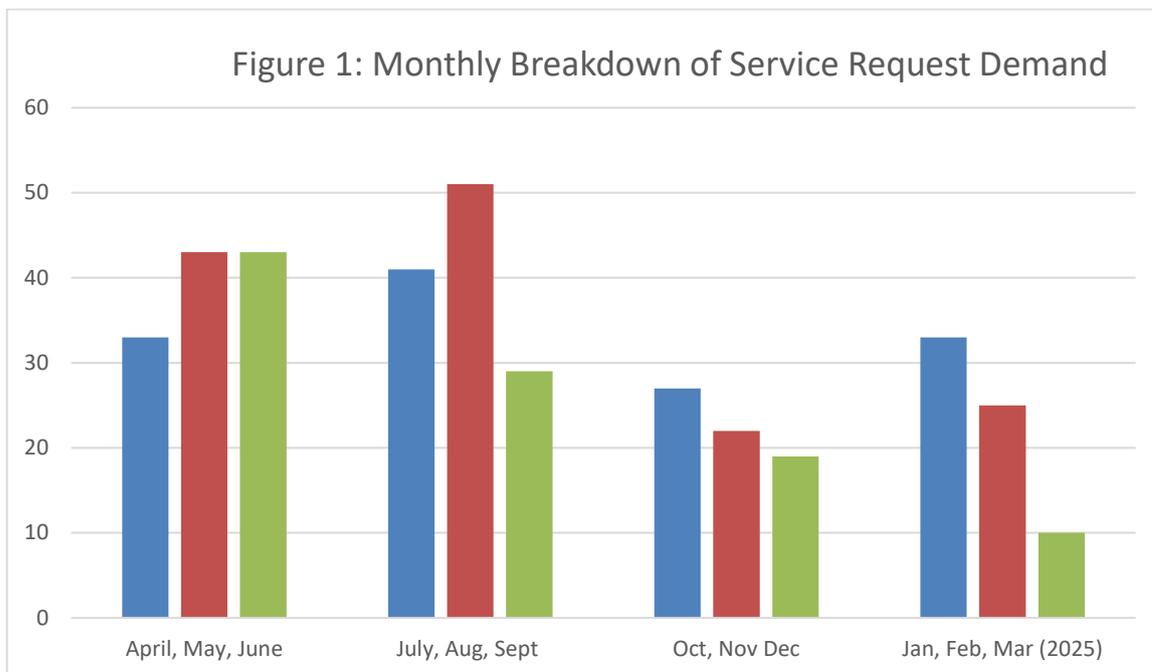
- 6.3 Contaminated land officers screened **131 planning applications**. Whilst the majority of actions were only advisory/informative due to the proposed development not materially changing the risk of potential contamination and **1** applications were recommended to undertake contamination site investigations due to the former use of site being an agricultural building with fuel storage.
- 6.4 Table 2 below provides the number of Housing Scheme of Assistance and Private Water Supply Improvement Grants that have been approved during the period.

Table 2 – Number and value of Approved Grants

Type	Number	Total Value of Grants
Scheme of Assistance Housing Grant – Adaptation (i.e. for installation of stairlifts; level access showers and access ramps etc)	20	£124,810*
Scheme of Assistance Housing Grant – Repair (for significant essential repairs of privately owned property)	0	0
Private Water Supply Grants (i.e. to carry out improvements to the private water supply system)	1	£2,400

**-total grant expenditure in year (will have carry over from committed spend in 2023/24)*

- 6.5 As expected, the Service demand increases over the summer months when more people are out enjoying themselves and with the increased number of visitors to the area. This increased demand is shown in Fig. 1 below which highlights the trend for service requests to increase over the summer months and then decrease over the winter months. This trend is consistent with previous years and something we would expect to see continue.



6.7 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](#).

The Miscellaneous Licences are typically issued for a calendar year, and so numbers of licences have been included for 2024 and 2025 (to date). The exception is caravan site licences for touring/holiday sites – applications are only required if new site or change in licence holder.

Licence Type	2024	2025
Animal Boarding Establishment	5	6
Breeding of Dogs	0	0
Caravan Site – Holiday/Touring	1	0
Cinemas Act 1985	0	0
Animal Welfare/Rehoming	0	0
Riding Establishment	0	0
Animal Welfare – Selling	0	0
Venison Dealers	0	0
Zoo	0	0

Pro-Active/Scheduled Work

6.8 The Environmental Health team conduct a range of programmed work, particularly in respect of food safety where a significant number of food businesses are inspected to check compliance. Such work is in addition to responding to Service Requests.

A breakdown of the number of programmed inspections/visits that were carried out during the period **1st April 2024 – 31st March 2025** is detailed within Table 4 below:-

Table 4 - Pro-Active Inspections/Visits by Type

Inspection/Visit Type	No of Inspections/Visits Conducted
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Food Safety	41
Water Sampling	26

*- *this does include re-sampling visits*

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

There are 22 **Regulated (commercial)** and 29 **Exempt (domestic)** private water supplies in the Nairn 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.

Formal Enforcement Activity

- 6.9 Two health and safety enforcement notices were served in 2024/25 on a workplace premises in relation to not having a suitable risk assessment and no suitable arrangements for the health and safety management of the workplace. The notices were complied with and all other service requests and issues identified by the Environmental Health team have been satisfactory resolved without the need to pursue formal enforcement action (i.e., by following the 4 Es approach).
- 6.10 A food safety concern relating to the glycerol poisoning of a young child and the consumption of slush ice drinks at a local food business resulted in a multi-agency approach by NHS Highland, Public Health Scotland and Environmental Health. Officers continue to engage and educate our food businesses in relation to the risks created by glycerol levels in slush ice drinks and to adhere to current industry guidance [Glycerol in Slush Ice Drinks](#)

7 Local Matters

7.1 Abandoned Vehicles

The Mid Aea team is seeing a significant increase in the number of abandoned vehicles reported for investigation. These take up a significant resource in investigating and are quite often found not to be abandoned. The team have been working with colleagues in the Housing and Parking Enforcement teams to continually improve the response to abandoned vehicles. Improvement have been made to the council website, cost recovery and a pilot of an innovative approach to housing car park areas is being trialled in Easter Ross. Improvement work in this area will continue in 2025/26.

7.2 Dog Control/Littering

The Mid Area Team in the last year have seen an increase in the number of dog control related incidents which have required investigation. Whilst no formal dog control notices have been issued to dog owners within the Nairn area, each complaint requires investigation which often involves a visit to the dog owner and property to offer advice. The increase in abandoned car reports and dog control related issues has thereby had an impact on the available resource to undertake pro-active patrols in respect of dog fouling and littering etc over the period. It should be noted that it is our appointed dog wardens that carry out both roles.

The EH team aim to increase the number of pro-active campaigns / targeted enforcement patrols to take place over the coming year and so any feedback on localities particularly affected by dog fouling or littering would be welcome.

A newly appointed Senior EHO is managing the team responsible for dog control/littering/fly-tipping after the retiral of Clifford Smith (SEHO) and will cover the Nairn ward for these issues, including the Trade Waste Policy.

7.3 Export Certification

The EH team provide a service for exporting food businesses to be issued with export health certification for food products they export to Europe and rest of the world. The Inverness team has certified and issued **191 EU export health certificates** to businesses within Highland.

8 **Highland Wide Issues/Service Priorities**

8.1 Short Term Lets

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. To date, the Environmental Health Team have responded to over 8500 licence applications. 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 to conduct compliance monitoring, complaint investigation and licence renewals. For the Nairn area our service has consulted on 197 applications.

8.2 Animal Licensing

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 require licences from April 2026, with no current planned date for the other activities, although an update on this is expected in the next year.

8.3 EU Exit/Export Certification

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 liaison with UK and Scottish Government on import controls. As well as assisting with the arrangement of audits by countries that we export to.

8.4 Approved Food Establishments

The team is continuing with the implementation of a new national approach to inspection of Approved Food Establishments – Official Control Verification (OCV). Approved Establishments are manufacturers of products of animal origin (i.e., smokehouses; fish processors, dairies, manufacturing butchers etc).

This new approach, which is required across **71*** establishments in Highland, has increased the resourcing necessary to inspect such premises. There is one approved establishment within the Nairn ward area.

**The figure of 71 is subject to change depending on whether a premises continues to require approval or not for the activities undertaken, or for any new premises requiring approval.*

8.5 Non-Surgical Cosmetic procedures - Licensing

There is a current consultation from the Scottish Government covering the regulation of non-surgical cosmetic procedures. This is likely to bring additional work for Environmental Health team in terms of licensing and assessing compliance with any mandatory conditions. It is not known at this time how many premises could be subject to such a licensing regime in Nairn Area when it eventually comes into force.

8.6 Renewable Developments

SSEN Transmission is currently consulting on and undertaking significant work to upgrade the electricity transmission network across the North of Scotland. Additionally, there are a considerable number of developments connected to the renewable energy sector (i.e., windfarms, Battery Energy Storage Systems (BESS) and Hydro schemes that are requiring significant input at the planning consultation stage. Officers from each of our three EH operational teams are involved in assessing and responding to consultations for all these types of development. 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.

8.7 Green Freeport

With growth and development linked to the Green Freeport in and around Inverness and Cromarty Firth there will be a corresponding increase in demand for resource in the EH team to assess any potential impacts arising from such developments. This may be for example in terms of contaminated land assessments or assessing operational impacts such as noise. Officers from our Mid Area team will be involved in assessing and responding to consultations for all the types of development linked to the Green freeport.

9 **Going Forward**

9.1 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.

9.2 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: Assistant Chief Executive - Place

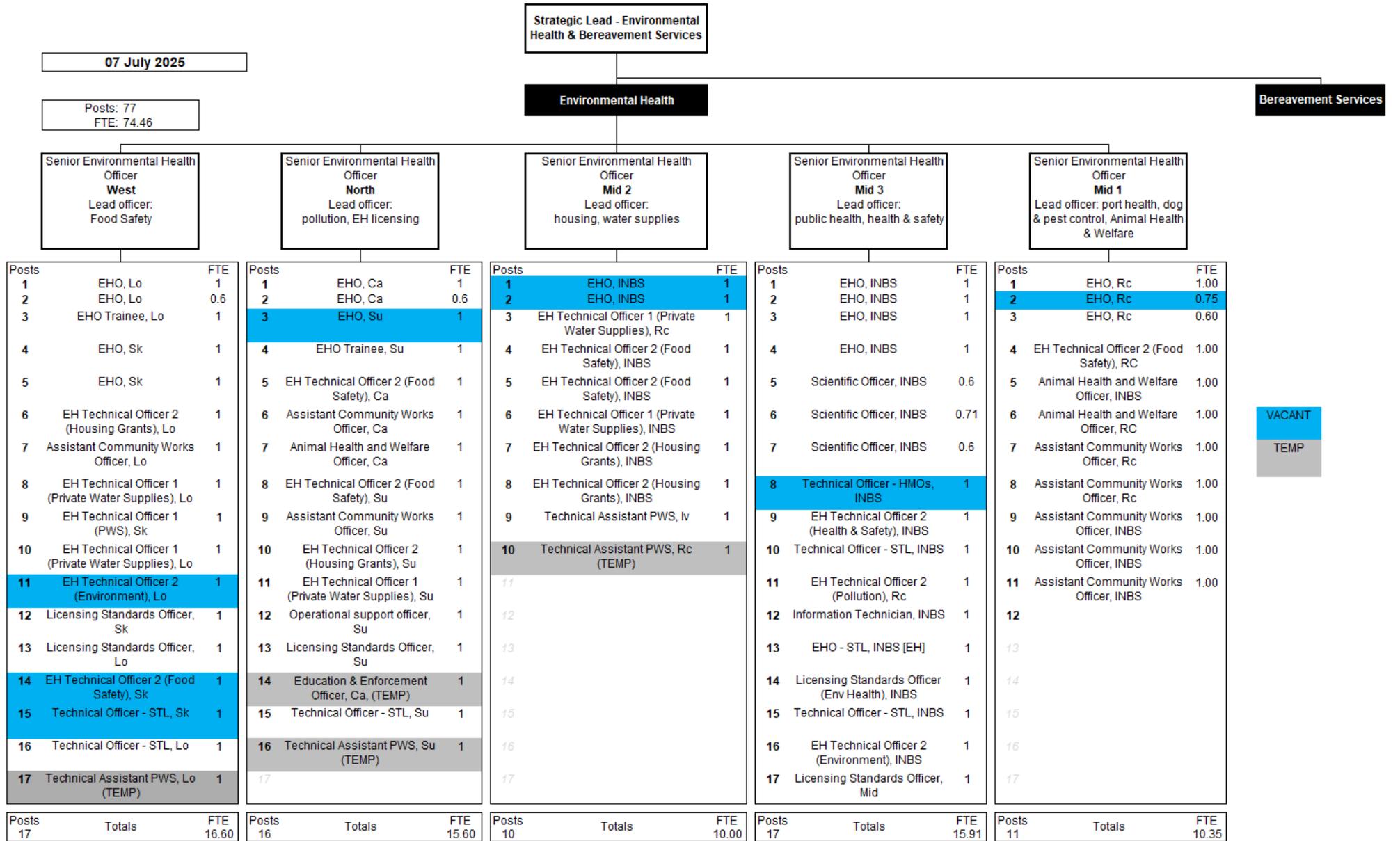
Date: 6 August 2025

Author: Patricia Sheldon, Senior Environmental Health Officer

Background Papers: None

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

Appendix 1 - Current Environmental Health Team Structure & Operational Areas



EH Operational Areas



Environmental Health Operational Areas
1: 1,200,000 0 25,000 50,000 75,000 100,000 Meters

 The Highland Council
Comhairle na Gàidhealtachd

Appendix 2

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

Detailed breakdown of service request numbers within each of the general category types		
Animal Health & Welfare	A02 Animal welfare ENQUIRY	0
	A03 ANIMAL - General ENQUIRY (not nuisance etc)	7
	A11 ABP COMPLAINT	2
	A12 Animal welfare COMPLAINT	1
	A14 Animal disease COMPLAINT	6
	A16 WATSR COMPLAINT	1
Dog Control	D04 DC Aggressive Dog	1
	D05 DC Dog Bite - Person	1
	D07 DC Dog - Other	3
Planning & Other Consultations	E02 Planning – General CONSULTATION (enter type code)	7
	E15 EIR (Environmental Information Request)	1
	E17 GENERAL EH Enquiry	1
	E18 Planning – ENQUIRY (enter type code)	1
Misc	G11 Litter	3
	G16 Roadkill - removal of dead animals from verge	6
	G20 Fly-tipping - URGENT (e.g. public health risk)	2
	G21 Fly-tipping - Non-Urgent	1
	OA1 Other	13
Abandoned Vehicles	OA1 Other	1
	G01 Abandoned Vehicle	15
Health & Safety	H03 H & S Complaint (Non-Work Related)	6
	H19 RIDDOR Accident Notification	1
	H20 H & S Complaint (Work Related/ HASAWA)	1
	H23 H & S Request for Information/ Advice	1
Licensing Consultations	LAC Miscellaneous Licensing Consultation (enter type code)	1
	LBB Civic Government Licensing Enquiry (enter type code)	4
	LBC Civic Government Licensing Consultation (enter type code)	15
	LBE Short Term Let Licensing Consultation	94
	LBG Short Term Let Licensing Complaint	8
	LCB Liquor Licensing Enquiry (enter type code)	1
	LCC Liquor Licensing Consultation (enter type code)	4
Noise	N05 Noise Advice Enquiry (enter type code)	3
	N06 Noise Non-Domestic (enter type code)	11
	N07 Noise Domestic (enter type code)	16
	N09 Noise Housing Referral (enter type code)	1

Other Statutory Nuisance	N31 Foul Odours	5
	N33 Smoke Complaint	5
	N35 Light Nuisance	1
	N37 Water Nuisance	1
	N40 Choked/Defective Drain / Sewer	4
	N89 Air quality complaint	1
	N91 Air Quality Project Work	2
Public Health Burials	NBB National Assistance Burial enquiry/request (s50)	1
Housing	NGB Housing grant enquiry	36
	NGC Housing grant property visit	1
	NHC Housing complaint - dampness	1
	NHD Housing complaint - structural	1
	NHE Housing complaint - other	1
	NHG Request for Housing Condition Report	1
	NHZ Ukraine Refugee Property Check	1
	OA1 Other	3
Pest Control	OA1 Other	1
	P04 Rats aff. House HIGH (enter type)	1
	P08 Rats NOT aff. House LOW (enter type)	2
	P12 Ants LOW (enter type)	1
	P15 Gulls LOW (enter type)	2
Food Safety & Standards	X02 Food Premises Registration	9
	X05 FOOD SAFETY enquiry/consultation	7
	X17 FSS Food INCIDENT Report	1
	X41 Complaint: Food (Unfit, Microbiological, foreign body)	5
	X42 Complaint: Hygiene of Premises	5
	XIC ID CONFIRMED Notification from NHS Highland	1
	XIF ID ADVISORY Notification from NHS Highland	1
Water Supply	XW1 Private supply grant enquiry	5
	XWB Private supply enquiry (non-grant)	25
	XWC Private supply complaint/contamination report	1
	XWH Private supply STL Questionnaire	1
	OA1 Other	1
		374