

Agenda Item	9
Report No	DSA/20/25

Committee: Dingwall and Seaforth

Date: 25 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 have to 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 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 the Dingwall and Seaforth Committee area.
- 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 an 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 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).

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 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 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 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 '4Es' 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 Dingwall and Seaforth Committee area being covered by the Mid Team. The Mid Team has three Senior Environmental Health Officers (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.

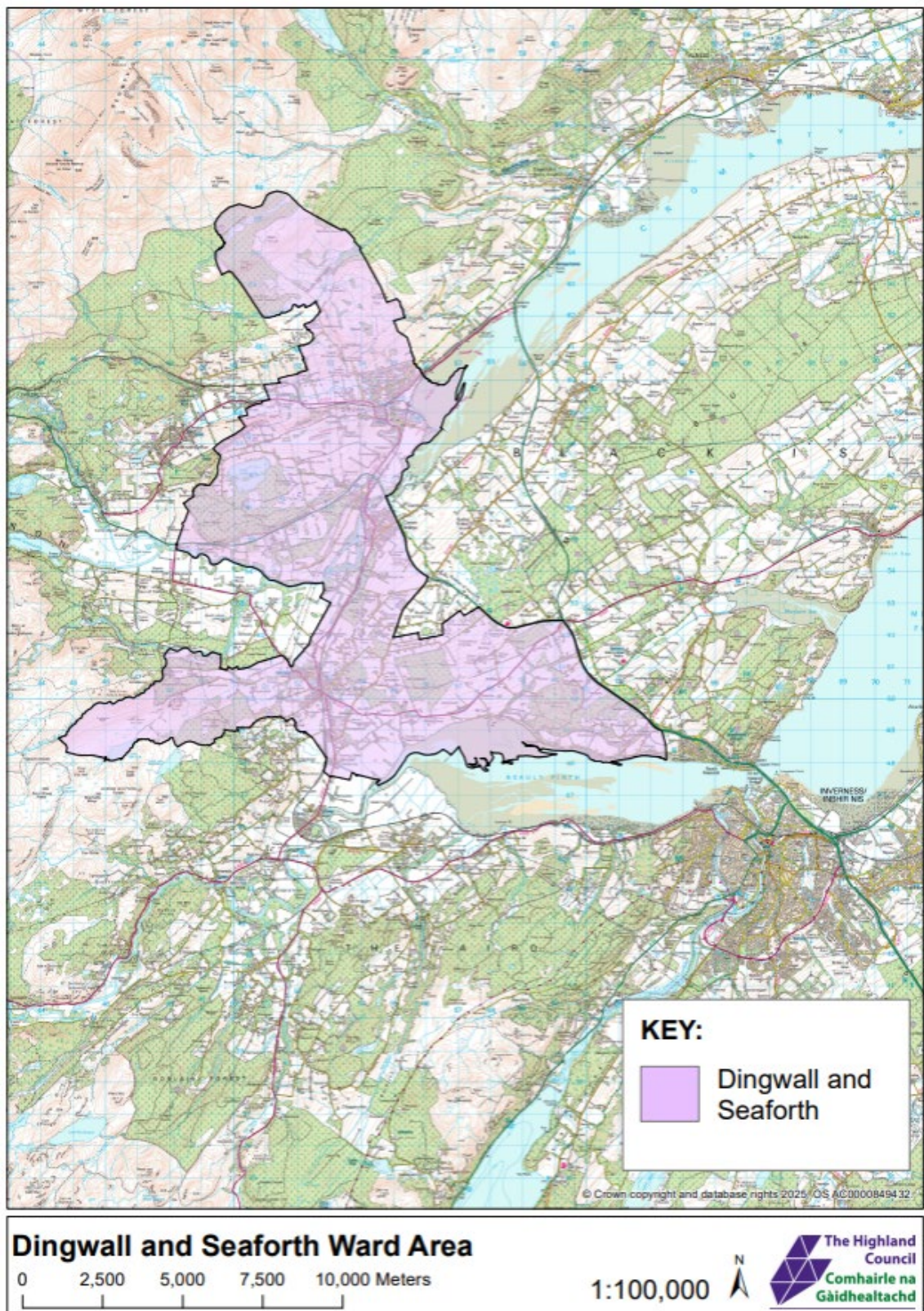
Appendix 1 details the latest team structure for Environmental Health and includes a map of the relevant EH operational areas.

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 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 Dingwall and Seaforth Committee area (i.e., Ward 8). 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 of category. A more detailed breakdown within each of the general category types is contained within **Appendix 2**.

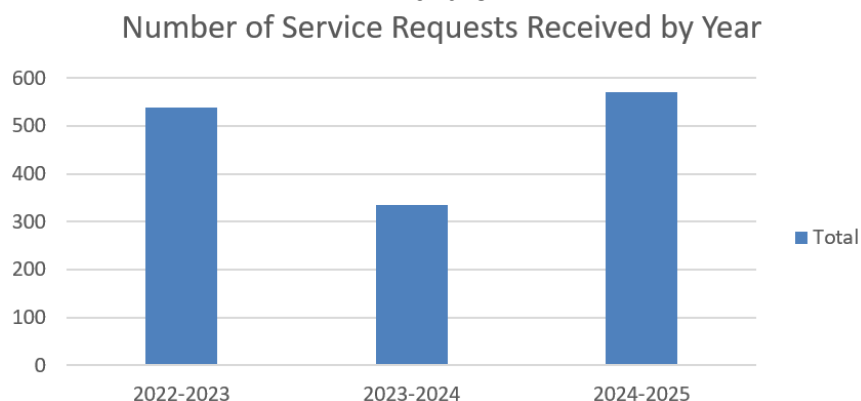
Table 1: Number of Service Requests by General Category Type for Ward 8

Category Type	Number of Service Requests 2024/2025
Export Health Certificates	175
Abandoned Vehicles	77
Short Term Let Licensing	67
Noise	51
Statutory Nuisance	31
Animal Health	26
Water Supply (inc. PWS)	24
Food Safety	20
New Food Premises Registrations	19
Housing	18
Dog Control	14
Health & Safety	13
Pests (e.g., Mice, Rats, Seagulls)	13
Planning Consultations	6
Fly Tipping/Waste/Trade Waste	3
Miscellaneous Licensing	3
Civic Government Licensing	2

The total number of Service requests received by the Environmental Health team for Ward 8 was **568**.

There is a general trend of increasing numbers of service requests across Highland. It reflects the increased statutory duties undertaken by the Service. Figure 1 illustrates:-

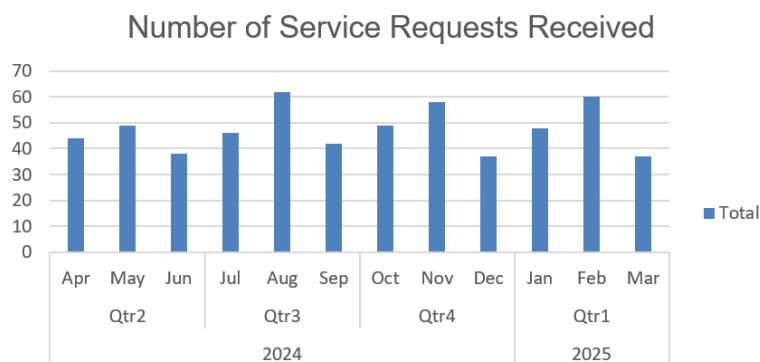
Fig 1 – Comparison of Service Request demand between 2020 – 2024 within Ward 8



In addition, in 2024/2025 80 planning applications were screened by the Service's Contaminated Land Officers.

- 6.3 There were 5 Scheme of Assistance Housing Grants (for the installation of stairlifts, level access showers, access ramps etc.) approved during the period within Ward 8. They had a total value of £28,328.
- 6.4 Unusually when compared to some other areas in Highland, there is no significant fluctuation of service request numbers between summer months and the rest of the year. The annual Service demand is shown in Figure 2 below:-

Fig 2 – Monthly breakdown of Service Request demand.



Pro-Active/Scheduled Work

- 6.5 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 8 is detailed within Table 4 below:-

Table 4 - Pro-Active Inspections/Visits by Type

Inspection/Visit Type	No of Inspections/Visits Conducted
Food Safety	24
Water Sampling	2
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 2 Regulated (commercial) and 7 Exempt (domestic) private water supplies in the Dingwall and Seaforth Committee 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 5 approved establishments in the Dingwall and Seaforth Committee area. 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.

Local Matters

6.6 Export Health Certificates

A total of 175 Export Health Certificates were certified by this Service. This certification supports the continued export of fish and fishery products, by local business, to the EU and the rest of the world.

6.7 Abandoned Vehicles

Seventy-seven abandoned car reports were received by this Service for investigation, which accounts for nearly 14% of requests for the Dingwall and Seaforth Committee area. These reports take up a significant resource in investigating and following up and are often found not to be truly “abandoned” vehicles. The team has 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 prepared for trial in Easter Ross. Improvement work in this area will continue in 2025/26.

6.8 Noise

Fifty-one service requests relating to noise were received. Of these, 41 were in relation to domestic noise requests/enquiries, and 6 were for non-domestic noise enquiries (construction, industrial etc.,).

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 licences 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 liaison 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, required across 5 establishments in the Dingwall and Seaforth Committee area, has substantially increased to resourcing required to inspect such premises. Approved Establishments are manufacturers of products of animal origin (i.e. fish processors, 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 the Dingwall and Seaforth Committee area.
- 7.6 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: Assistant Chief Executive - Place

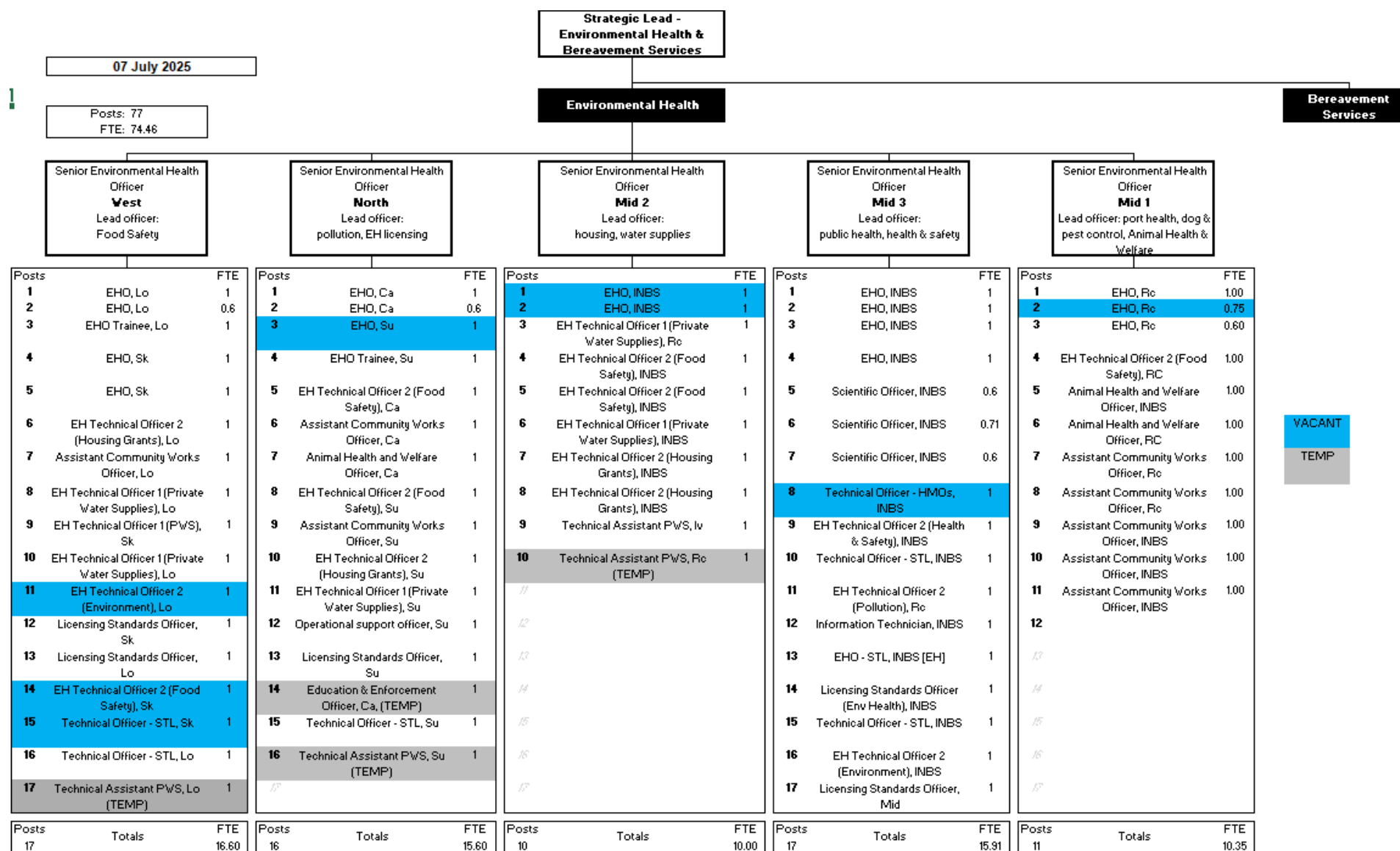
Date: 6 August 2025

Author: Barry Cumming, Senior Environmental Health Officer

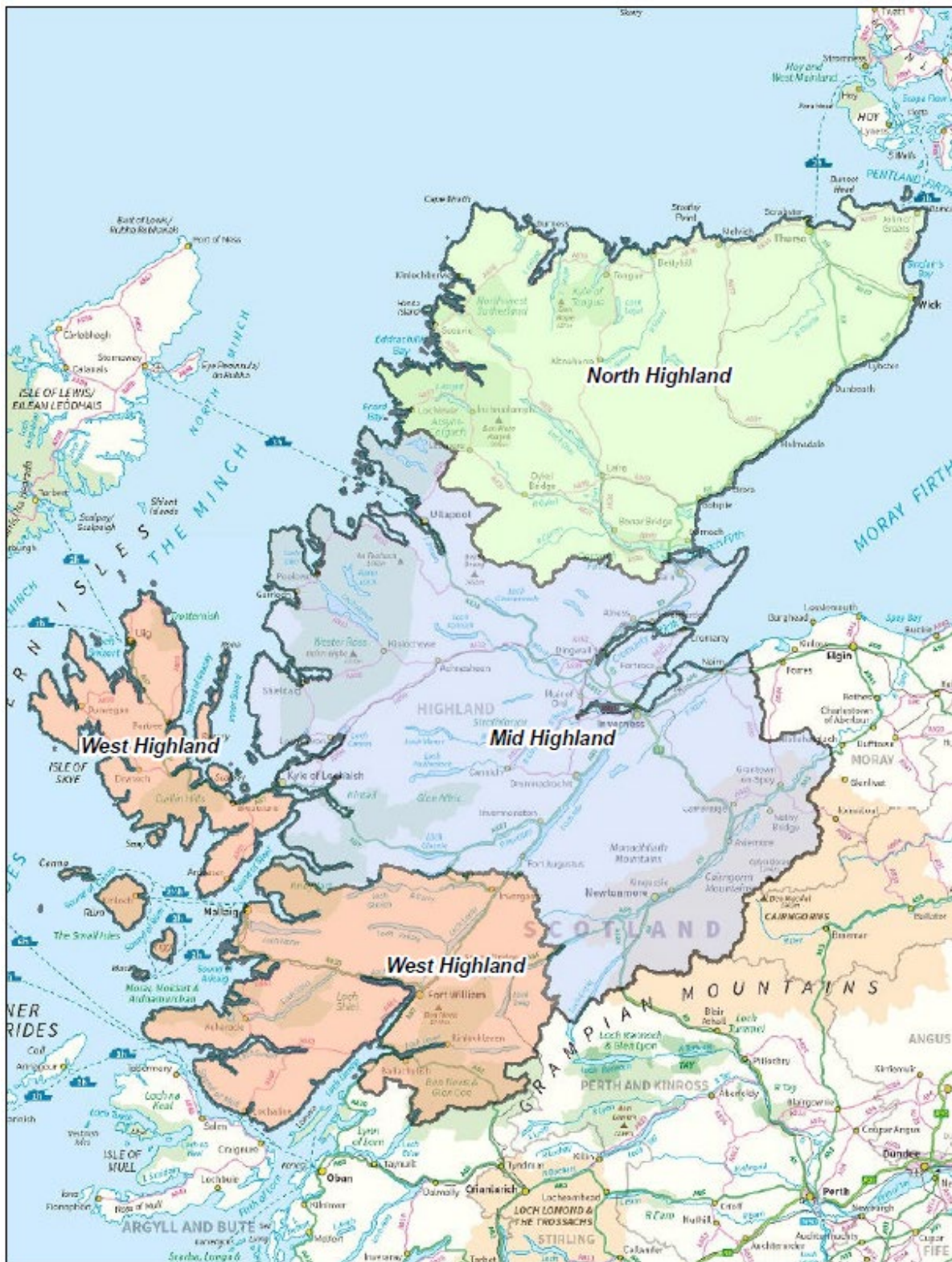
Background Papers: None

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



Appendix 2

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

Animal Health & Welfare	A02 Animal welfare ENQUIRY	6
	A03 ANIMAL - General ENQUIRY (not nuisance etc)	11
	A04 Animal disease ENQUIRY	1
	A05 Animal traceability ENQUIRY	1
	A06 WATSR ENQUIRY	1
	A12 Animal welfare COMPLAINT	1
	A14 Animal disease COMPLAINT	1
	A15 Animal traceability COMPLAINT	1
	A16 WATSR COMPLAINT	4
Dog Control	D01 DC Dog Fouling	4
	D02 DC Stray Dog CALL OFFICER IMMEDIATELY	3
	D04 DC Aggressive Dog	3
	D05 DC Dog Bite - Person	2
	D07 DC Dog - Other	2
Planning & Other Consultations	E02 Planning – General CONSULTATION (enter type code)	2
	E15 EIR (Environmental Information Request)	1
	E17 GENERAL EH Enquiry	3
Misc	G15 Public Conveniences	1
	G16 Roadkill - removal of dead animals from verge	2
	G21 Fly-tipping - Non-Urgent	3
Abandoned Vehicles	G01 Abandoned Vehicle	77
Health & Safety	H03 H & S Complaint (Non-Work Related)	7
	H11 H&S Request For Information	1
	H19 RIDDOR Accident Notification	4
	H23 H & S Request for Information/ Advice	1
Licensing Consultations	LAB Miscellaneous Licensing Enquiry (enter type code)	1
	LBC Civic Government Licensing Consultation (enter type code)	2
	LBE Short Term Let Licensing Consultation	67
	LCB Liquor Licensing Enquiry (enter type code)	1
	LDA Housing (Scotland) Act - HMO Application [Enter Type Code CHA or CHB]	1
Noise	N05 Noise Advice Enquiry (enter type code)	2
	N06 Noise Non-Domestic (enter type code)	6
	N07 Noise Domestic (enter type code)	41
	N09 Noise Housing Referral (enter type code)	2
Other Statutory Nuisance	N21 Premises - Dirty Houses & Gardens	4
	N31 Foul Odours	5
	N33 Smoke Complaint	1
	N34 General Nuisance - Other	2
	N40 Choked/Defective Drain / Sewer	2
	N41 Choked/Defective Septic Tank	1
	N60 Routine Refuse Complaint	1
	N62 Animal waste nuisance (not dog fouling-use code D01)	2
	OA1 Other	13
Public Health Burials	NBB National Assistance Burial enquiry/request (s50)	1
Housing	NGB Housing grant enquiry	9

	NGD Housing grant application	1
	NHC Housing complaint - dampness	3
	NHE Housing complaint - other	3
	NHG Request for Housing Condition Report	2
Pest Control	P04 Rats aff. House HIGH (enter type)	2
	P08 Rats NOT aff. House LOW (enter type)	1
	P10 Pests (Other)	2
	P11 Flies LOW (enter type)	1
	P12 Ants LOW (enter type)	2
	P14 Other insect pests LOW (enter type)	3
	P15 Gulls LOW (enter type)	2
Food Safety & Standards	X02 Food Premises Registration	19
	X05 FOOD SAFETY enquiry/consultation	8
	X07 FISH/Shellfish EXPORT Certificates	175
	X08 FOOD (non-Fish/Shellfish) EXPORT Health Certificates	1
	X41 Complaint: Food (Unfit, Microbiological, foreign body)	2
	X42 Complaint: Hygiene of Premises	3
	X49 Support Attestation	2
	XIC ID CONFIRMED Notification from NHS Highland	4
	XIF ID ADVISORY Notification from NHS Highland	1
Water Supply	XWB Private supply enquiry (non-grant)	24
		568