Re-use derelict land to support economic growth and wellbeing, says Taskforce

Derelict land is a wasted resource that should help to deliver national ambitions for a fair and green recovery, a national taskforce said today.

This media release has been issued by Scottish Land Commission.

The Vacant and Derelict Land Taskforce has made a series of recommendations to Scottish Government which aim to transform Scotland's approach to tackling the legacy of derelict land and ensure that it is no longer acceptable to allow land to fall into long term disrepair.

A new approach is now even more important as the COVID-19 response shifts the way city centres are used and businesses adapt to different working arrangements. The pandemic is laying bare the needs and demands for access to safe quality space in our neighbourhoods. With the very real threat of more buildings and spaces lying empty and in disrepair it is imperative that Scotland not only tackles a 30-year-old legacy of vacant and derelict land but prevents a new legacy from forming. The recommendations outline how land can be reused to help achieve Scotland's targets for climate change, wellbeing and the economy.

Taskforce Chair, Scottish Land Commissioner Andrew Thin, said:

"Scotland's legacy of derelict land reaches into all communities, but our research shows that it is areas of most economic disadvantage that have the greatest concentration. These sites could instead be assets for their communities, providing much needed greenspace, growing space, community facilities, housing or businesses.

"Our recommendations require commitment from every level of government, as well as public and private organisations and landowners. The proposals not only call for a commitment to responsible practice by owners but recommend using planning guidelines, tax laws and other actions such as compulsory sales orders to halt the practice of leaving land unused.

"We must see urban land as a reusable resource, one that can be brought back into viable life to the betterment of local communities and the wider economy."

The Taskforce was jointly created by the Scottish Land Commission and SEPA in 2018. Part of the research it has carried out has helped to identify some priority urban sites, which have lain empty since before 2000 and have the best potential for reuse (https://landcommission.gov.scot/duste-map). There are also many examples of regeneration of disused land already in Scotland. These can range from major redevelopment such as the Clyde Gateway project to

community growing or education spaces and social housing.

“Our recommendations call for a national approach to tackling vacant and derelict land and to stem the flow of new sites. We need to make it unacceptable for land to be left to fall into disrepair. Scotland cannot afford to ignore this land any longer and as the pandemic changes the way people work and shop, we cannot let it happen again,” Mr Thin said.

Scotland has almost 11,000 hectares of vacant and derelict urban land. This legacy of Scotland’s industrial past means that almost a third of the Scottish population lives within 500 metres of a derelict site. So the Taskforce believes this matters to us all. These sites blight communities, harm wellbeing, and limit opportunities – but they could be so much more and help solve some of society’s biggest challenges.

Taskforce members including Scottish Futures Trust, Scottish Enterprise and the Development Trusts Association of Scotland (DTAS) are part of the solution. They are committed to work on changing attitudes and daily practice within planning, development and regeneration sectors to galvanise a changed approach to derelict and vacant sites.

Communities Secretary Aileen Campbell said:

“The coronavirus pandemic has been an unprecedented global crisis, with its effects felt most acutely in local communities. It has also highlighted the urgent need to ensure that our recovery from the pandemic is a green recovery focused on wellbeing.

“Tackling Scotland’s legacy of vacant and derelict land has always been a key objective, but our recovery from COVID-19 makes it even more important. Bringing these sites back into use can deliver multiple benefits such as providing space for housing, growing food and playing, as well as helping to reduce crime and antisocial behaviour, attracting more inward investment and improving people’s wellbeing, whilst supporting our transition to becoming a net-zero society.

“I welcome the Vacant and Derelict Land Taskforce’s report and look forward to working with the Scottish Land Commission and other stakeholders to discuss and develop detailed proposals based on its recommendations to help deliver a culture change in Scotland’s approach to vacant and derelict land.”

David Harley, Head of Water and Planning at the Scottish Environment Protection Agency (SEPA) said:

“As a member of Vacant and Derelict Land Taskforce, SEPA fully supports these recommendations. Scotland cannot ignore the waste of this finite resource any longer and action to tackle this legacy aligns with our One Planet Prosperity strategy. We will continue to work with businesses and partners to bring vacant and derelict land into environmental, social and economic use, and we will play our part in implementing the recommendations.”

The Taskforce makes 13 recommendations to the Scottish Government. They cover:

- **Better use of data**

- Reforming the national register of vacant and derelict land, including more information to help bring sites back into use through the planning system
- Map the sites on the register to make it more interactive in a format that anyone can access.

1. **Land as part of the circular economy**
    - Reform Scotland's regeneration strategy to focus on place-based regeneration and land reuse to empower communities and give the public sector a more active role in in development.
    - Make derelict sites that have been unused for a long time as a top priority in the new National Planning Framework. Make fixing 'brownfield' sites a priority in the next national Infrastructure Investment Plan.
    - Make it easier to buy land for reuse, with new laws for compulsory sales orders and review the current ways land is bought and sold by the public sector.
2. **Supporting delivery through funding**
    - Increase funding to support local authorities to bring vacant and derelict land back into use and review the Vacant and Derelict Land Fund.
    - Review Scottish Government funding to make sure areas that need it most are prioritised. Change how the public sector views investment that includes the benefits of wellbeing and not just the financial return.
    - Develop new ways of funding improvements to vacant and derelict land including a new compensation mechanism so that unavoidable loss of biodiversity from building on green areas is made up for by improving derelict sites, a new fund to improve derelict sites by creating a publicly-owned development bank of land, and providing money for communities to redevelop small derelict sites that are causing harm in their local area.
3. **Stopping the flow of vacant and derelict sites**
    - Corporate social responsibility objectives should include the understanding that it is unacceptable to let land become derelict or left vacant indefinitely. Public funding should only be given to responsible landowners.
    - Plans should be made for public land and property that is lying empty to be brought back into use. Landowners should identify buildings and sites that they might not need in the future and put plans in place to avoid the sites falling into disuse. To help with this, existing support for public sector asset disposal needs to be expanded.
    - The Government should use the tax system to encourage landowners to repurpose empty commercial property. This will help prevent a new legacy of vacant and derelict land as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic.
4. **Tackling the legacy**

- Scotland should set up a national programme of investing in green infrastructure, to bring derelict land and buildings back into use in an environmentally friendly way that will support jobs and skills development and help rebuild community resilience. The programme should focus on urban green spaces, regeneration led by communities, low carbon housing and renewable energy, and it should be planned and funded over several years to attract long term investment. Local authorities should take responsibility for coordinating.
- The Scottish Government should make a clear commitment to eradicating urban dereliction, put arrangements in place for keeping track of this goal and appoint a national coordinator to help achieve this.

Scottish Land Commission's full release can be viewed online.

Climate changing carbon dioxide emissions from SEPA regulated industrial sites drop 57% in a decade

This is a Policy statement and relates to the 2019 Pollutant emissions and waste transfers from SEPA regulated industrial sites experimental Official Statistics published at 9.30 am and available on SEPA's website at www.sepa.org.uk/environment/environmental-data/spri/. Climate changing carbon dioxide emissions from SEPA regulated industrial sites drop 57% in a decade – down 5% in the last year. 2019 Scottish Pollutant Release Inventory (SPRI) contains data from 1,327 regulated sites published by Scottish Environment Protection Agency (SEPA). The Scottish Pollutant Release Inventory (SPRI) 2019 data – this year experimental official statistics – was published today [29 September 2020] by the Scottish Environment Protection Agency. This year's data covers annual mass releases of specified pollutants to air and water and information on off-site waste transfers from 1,327 SEPA regulated industrial sites.

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Greenhouse gases

The two largest contributing pollutants in terms of emissions are carbon dioxide and methane which drive the overall greenhouse gas trend. While carbon dioxide continues to drive the overall emissions trend and remains the largest contributing pollutant in terms of the emissions for 2019, the data shows Scotland's carbon dioxide emissions have reduced significantly in the last 10 years. Emissions of the gas are down 57 per cent in the decade and 5 per cent annually to around 11,293,146,000 kg since 2018.

Whilst overall carbon dioxide emissions fell by 5% in the last year, direct emissions from those waste and waste-water management sector facilities required to report under SPRI increased by 76% over the last decade, partly driven by a move towards waste incineration instead of landfill for residual waste management. However, their emissions of greenhouses gases remain small relative to the energy sector.

The shift away from landfill towards recycling and incineration has resulted in further reductions in direct Methane emissions. While methane does not remain in the atmosphere as long as carbon dioxide it is initially far more impactful on the climate because of how effectively it absorbs heat. Methane emissions decreased significantly – by 44% – over the decade to 2019, and by 4% between 2018 and 2019 to 26,777,357 kg.

	2010	**2018**	**2019**	**% change 2010-2019**	**% change 2018-2019**
Carbon dioxide	26,384,456,678	11,849,079,760	11,293,145,941	Down 57%	Down 5%
Methane	47,912,442	27,878,368	26,777,357	Down 44%	Down 4%
Nitrous Oxide	250,912	89,846	96,543	Down 61%	Up 8%
Hydrofluorocarbons	1,465	3,513	1,263	Down 14%	Down 64%
Perfluorocarbons	1,604	4,418	3,945	Up 146%	Up 11%
Sulphur Hexafluoride	207	107	221	Up 7%	Up 106%

All measurements in kilogrammes.

Energy transition

A number of variables influence SPRI emissions. In the long term, the shift away from use of coal as a fuel is a significant factor. Carbon dioxide emissions from the energy sector have fallen by around 70% since 2010, largely due to the closure of coal fired power stations. As emissions from the energy sector have fallen, releases from other sectors now form a greater proportion of the greenhouse gas emissions reported to SPRI.

Some of the decreases observed for these gases can be accounted for by investment in new technologies and renewables, and landfill gas recovery

systems.

Wider economic drivers and the weather are other factors identified as affecting carbon dioxide and other greenhouse gas emissions from SPRI sites.

Circular economy

Scotland's progress towards a circular economy is also highlighted in both SPRI and separate '2019 Waste landfilled in Scotland' and '2019 Waste incinerated in Scotland' Official Statistics released today by SEPA.

As Scotland reduces, reuses and recycles more than ever before, waste which cannot be recycled is now being diverted from landfill as new energy from waste (incineration) infrastructure comes online. As a consequence methane emissions from the waste sector decreased by 47% over the decade, from a high ceiling of 40,868,900 kg in 2010, to 21,575,000 kg in 2019. Capture of gas at landfill sites has also contributed to the reduction.

Consequently, as methane emissions from landfill have reduced, carbon dioxide from incineration sites have increased 83% over the last decade from a low base of 1,090,000,000 kg to 2,000,000,000 kg in 2019. Emissions from this sector are small compared to that of the energy sector.

These trends represent direct emissions of greenhouse gases from specific parts of the waste management sector. They do not take into account efforts to reduce, reuse and recycle our waste. Scotland's Carbon Metric shows that in 2018, the overall impact of Scotland's waste management system – taking into account reduction, recycling, incineration and landfill – was 30% less than in 2011.

Terry A'Hearn, Chief Executive of SEPA, said:

"These experimental official statistics chart the progress we've made as a nation with our globally ambitious climate change targets, with some pollutants emitted from regulated businesses falling in the last decade. They also reflect the realism of a modern, Western European economy in transition.

"The successful businesses of tomorrow will be those that are sustainable. As Scotland's environmental regulator, our firm focus remains to helping Scottish businesses innovate and emerge stronger and more sustainably from the current public health pandemic, enabling leadership in a decade of climate emergency."

Minor year-to-year fluctuations in pollutants can often be attributed to changes at a few sites, due to increases or decreases in production, changing source products and new sites opening. All pollutants have a reporting threshold, below which sites do not need to report a value to SPRI. An increase in production can move a site's releases above the threshold, giving the appearance of a larger increase.

ENDS

NOTES TO EDITORS:

Complete SPRI data is available in two places:

- On SEPA's website at https://www2.sepa.org.uk/spripa/Search/Options.aspx
  This tool allows you to search for individual site data in various ways. The full public content of each site's return can be downloaded as a pdf. Some summary data can be downloaded as csv files. All data provided here is as live on the SPRI database, and it will update through the year where data corrections are made.
- On Scotland's Environment Web at environment.gov.scot/data/data-analysis/scottish-pollution-release-inventory/
  This is a data analysis tool which allows you to view summarised information by industry sector for pollutants and waste transfers. Data can be downloaded in bulk, including at a site level. It is updated annually when the previous year's data is published. For the first time, 2019 data is being published as an experimental official statistic

Waste landfilled in Scotland – 2019 and Waste incinerated in Scotland – 2019 Official Statistics are available on SEPA's website at www.sepa.org.uk/environment/waste/waste-data/waste-data-reporting/waste-data-for-scotland

Scottish Pollutant Release Inventory (SPRI)

- Operators of sites carrying out specific activities (67 activities covering 10 major sectors) above defined capacity thresholds are obliged to report to SPRI on an annual basis. The activities and thresholds are largely determined by European reporting requirements but some thresholds have been lowered to be relevant to pollutant releases in the UK and Scotland.
- Since 2001, owners or operators of facilities that have met the SPRI reporting requirements have reported on an annual basis. Data from SPRI is used to fulfil the reporting requirements of the European Pollutant Release and Transfer Register (E-PRTR).
- Using the tool to compare facilities or sectors provides a general overview of the total amounts of pollutants released or waste transferred. However, direct and causal inferences should not be made because detailed knowledge of processes, installed abatement technologies and other installed emission reduction technologies and practices must be known before this type of analyses can be accurately and definitively performed. Further, the types and amounts of source material, management methods, production patterns, etc. must also be known.

SPRI is a searchable database of annual mass releases of specified pollutants to air and water from SEPA regulated industrial sites. It also provides information about off-site transfers of waste from these sites. It does not

assess the compliance of the facilities or the health and environmental impact of the releases. Site compliance can be found in SEPA's Compliance Assessment Scheme results.

Official Statistics Publication for Scotland : Waste landfilled in Scotland – 2019 and Waste incinerated in Scotland – 2019

The Scottish Environment Protection Agency (SEPA) has published Official Statistics today (29 September 2020) which provide details of waste landfilled and incinerated in Scotland for calendar year 2019.

These are known as the Waste landfilled in Scotland – 2019 and Waste incinerated in Scotland – 2019 statistics and are published at www.sepa.org.uk/environment/waste/waste-data/waste-data-reporting/waste-data-for-scotland

The corresponding data set for all waste generated and recycled in Scotland during 2019 will be published in March 2021.

Waste landfilled

Scotland sent 3 million tonnes of waste to landfill in 2019, a reduction of 735,807 tonnes (20%) from 2018 and a reduction of over 4 million tonnes (57%) from 2005. The total amount of waste disposed of to landfill has generally decreased steadily since 2009, following large reductions between 2007 and 2009.

The reduction was largely due to the amount of Household and similar wastes landfilled, which fell by 36% from 1.19 million tonnes in 2018 to 0.76 million tonnes in 2019.

The amount of biodegradable municipal waste disposed to landfill fell below one million tonnes for the first time. The drop to 0.7 million tonnes is a decrease of 324,486 tonnes (32%) from 2018.

Waste diverted from landfill through incineration

The total quantity of waste incinerated in Scotland in 2019 was 1.23 million tonnes, an increase of 0.52 million tonnes (72%) from 2018, and an increase of 0.82 million tonnes (199%) from 2011.

This was largely due to the Household and similar wastes incinerated, which

increased by 131% from 2018 to 330,368 tonnes in 2019. The Household and similar wastes category does not include waste which has been segregated into recycling bins, only that which has gone into a general waste bin.

Waste data

Data on waste are collected to monitor policy effectiveness, and to support policy development, particularly commitments in the Scottish Government's Making Things Last – A Circular Economy Strategy for Scotland.

The figures are accurate at the time of publication, however data may be updated if further revisions are necessary. Normally these revisions will be published concurrent with the next official release.

Ends

SEPA warns of low water levels across North of the country

The Scottish Environment Protection Agency (SEPA) has warned of an increasing water scarcity situation in the North-East and Highlands, with businesses which abstract water all year round being encouraged to take steps to reduce their water usage.

- Warning comes as groundwater levels in the North-East of Scotland are extremely low and at one site have reached the lowest levels ever recorded, while some rivers in the Highlands run low.
- Scottish Environment Protection Agency (SEPA) is providing information for businesses that abstract water year-round on actions to take as resources reach critically low levels.
- Changing weather patterns caused by climate change means water scarcity will become more common in Scotland, and low water levels likely to run into 2021.
- Businesses looking for information on water scarcity and meeting license conditions urged to contact SEPA at WaterScarcity@sepa.org.uk

The Scottish Environment Protection Agency (SEPA) has warned of an increasing water scarcity situation in the North-East and Highlands, with businesses which abstract water all year round being encouraged to take steps to reduce their water usage.

The latest weekly water situation report published by SEPA shows that low groundwater levels in the North-East means parts of the region remain at moderate scarcity, while dry conditions and low river levels in the Highlands have led to some catchments being escalated to moderate scarcity.

Even with periods of heavy rain and thunderstorms in recent weeks, groundwater levels in the North-East are extremely low and at one site have reached the lowest levels ever recorded. This follows on from a spring in which there was exceptionally low groundwater levels as well as the third driest April on record.

Water is a resource that underpins key industries across the North and Scotland more widely, from food and drink production through to farming and golf course management, and while some businesses abstract seasonally, others need access to water all year round.

Those reliant on private water supplies are also feeling the effects of water scarcity. Of 22,000 private water supplies, almost 4,000 provide water to large numbers of domestic properties or businesses, including tourist accommodations, schools and care homes. There has been an increase in the number of users seeing supplies dry up.

Businesses have been asked to act in order to mitigate the impacts of depleted resources in the area. These actions are:

- Those in the agriculture sector still abstracting should stagger abstractions with other operators
- Where possible reduce the volume of water being abstracted
- Switch to other supplies or suspend abstractions if possible

Water abstractors licenced by SEPA should have a plan to deal with the range of conditions they may experience, including drought. They should monitor their water usage and equipment to ensure they are operating at maximum efficiency and avoiding any unnecessary leakage.

Changing climate patterns and extreme rainfall events put us in a position where an area can be experiencing water scarcity but still suffer from surface water flooding.

Terry A’Hearn, Chief Executive at the Scottish Environment Protection Agency, said:

“The severity of the water scarcity picture in parts of the North of Scotland is further evidence that water scarcity will become more and more prevalent across Scotland – and is just one of the many consequences of climate change the country faces.

“SEPA’s strategy for tackling this definitive challenge of our time is called ‘one planet prosperity’, focused on helping our communities and businesses thrive within the resources of our one planet.

“That is why it is important for businesses that abstract water to understand that SEPA is here to offer support and guidance, and we are setting out the key measures abstractors should be taking to conserve water, which is shared and finite.

“We want to work with businesses to plan long-term about their water usage so that we can preserve the resource as effectively as possible. This will

protect both Scotland's rivers and lochs and reduce their business risks."

More information on water scarcity can be found at sepa.org.uk/ water-scarcity. Businesses having difficulty obtaining water supply or that are concerned about meeting licence conditions should contact SEPA at WaterScarcity@sepa.org.uk. Those concerned about private water supply levels should contact their local authority.

Ends

Notes to editors

Links for further information

- Information about water scarcity including weekly updates can be found at – sepa.org.uk/water-scarcity
- The National Water Scarcity Plan explains how water resources will be managed prior to and during periods of prolonged dry weather. This is to ensure the correct balance is struck between protecting the environment and providing resource for human and economic activity.
- SEPA's regulatory response to COVID-19 – coronavirus.sepa.org.uk
- Those concerned about private water supply levels can contact their local authority. Moray – privatewatersupplies@moray.gov.uk, Aberdeenshire – water.admin@aberdeenshire.gov.uk, Aberdeen City – envhealth@highland.gov.uk, Aberdeen City –https://integration.aberdeencity.gov.uk/service/Public_health_problem__report
- Scotland's climate is changing – from periods of drought to extreme flooding, the weather patterns we are experiencing, as a result of climate change, mean we all have a duty to more carefully manage the country's resources – and water is no different.

A water scarcity situation builds up over a long period of time. Missing rainfall would have topped up reservoirs, raised groundwater levels and provided moisture in the soils.

The weekly report categorises the situation across Scotland through a five tiered approach. Appropriate action should be taken within these five categories:

Normal Conditions

Early warning

- Start to consider how you can optimise water use efficiency.

Alert:

- If you are irrigating your land, check equipment, don't over spray, use trickle irrigation and irrigate at night to avoid evaporation.

Moderate scarcity:

- In prolonged dry periods, reduce abstractions by staggering with other operators, reduce the volume and switch to other supplies or suspend your abstractions.

Significant scarcity:

- This means Scotland's water resources are becoming scarce – switch supplies or temporarily stop abstracting.

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Pints down the plughole the last resort for struggling landlords

Pouring out-of-date pints down the plughole is the last resort for struggling pub landlords. That is the advice from Scotland's environmental watchdog, the Scottish Environment Protection Agency (SEPA), concerned about the environmental impact of the disposal of waste alcohol.

The guidance, published on the regulator's dedicated coronavirus information hub, is designed to help landlords and licence holders make practical decisions on drinks disposal.

It comes against a backdrop of 10,000 licensed premises having closed during the lockdown and an estimated 7 million pints no longer fit to serve as a result.

SEPA knows the challenges faced by Scotland's pubs and licensed business, which is why the short, simple guidance has been issued.

It's part of a series of temporary regulatory guidance adopted by the agency,

aiming to support Scottish businesses during the current global pandemic and to help them recover.

For affected alcohol, and where the recovery of full or part full beverage containers may be possible (as determined by a suitable risk assessment), licensees should liaise with their supplier to consider, in the following order:

1. Can it be re-routed to another manufacturing process, e.g. distillation to produce industrial alcohol or malt vinegar, or to make animal feed?
2. Can it be taken to an anaerobic digestion or composting facility?
3. Can it be applied to land? Only where there is agricultural benefit, and there may be restrictions on the volume that can be applied.
4. Can it be returned to the source of manufacture for disposal?

As a last resort, or if the drinks containers can't be safely removed from the premises, licensees may be able to dispose the waste drinks to the sewer. However, in order to do this, they must get permission and guidance from Scottish Water.

Terry A'Hearn SEPA's CEO, said:

"We know pubs and licensed premises across Scotland are facing challenges due to the COVID-19 lockdown, and some are in the unavoidable and unusual situation of having out of date or spoilt casks and kegs on their premises.

"We're trying to lessen their headache where we can by offering advice on how to dispose such alcohol in a safe manner by re-routing, recycling, returning or, as a last resort, disposing of through the sewer network in a controlled manner."

Colin Wilkinson, Managing Director of The Scottish Licensed Trade Association (SLTA), said:

"The SLTA welcomes the guidance produced by SEPA following the relaxation of rules on beer ullage by HMRC. The Industry has produced best practice guidance for this, taking environmental concerns into consideration, and SEPA's guidance will add to the safe and responsible destruction of beer and lager into the drainage system. We would emphasize that all licensees should also check that they have received a communication/instructions on this issue from their supplier before they do anything."

Emma McClarkin, Chief Executive of the Scottish Beer & Pub Association, said:

"We welcome these guidelines from SEPA which build on the best practice advice from industry. As a sector, pubs and bars fully understand the importance of their environmental impact. It is why, since closure in March, we have been working closely with Government and the water industry to ensure that pubs are able to dispose of their unsaleable stock, including destroying beer that has become unsaleable as a result of the COVID-19 shut down and ensuring that it is done in a safe, environmentally-sound manner. We strongly encourage all operators to follow these guidelines and ensure all appropriate measures are taken."

Licensees who intend to recover duty paid on alcoholic beverages are reminded they must liaise with the appropriate brewers before embarking on any disposal process.

SEPA’s temporary guidance around the disposal of waste alcohol can be found on its coronavirus hub at www.coronavirus.sepa.org.uk.

Ends