



water safety
Scotland

Interim Review

Scotland's Drowning Prevention Strategy

2018–2026



Moray coast by Elizabeth Lumsden

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2018 - 2026

Forewords



Ash Regan, *Minister for Community Safety*

Almost from the moment Water Safety Scotland published the 2-year review of their Scottish Drowning Prevention Strategy, early in 2020, the unprecedented challenges of the Covid-19 pandemic have impacted on our way of life. Disruptive impacts have been felt – for instance, with essential isolation requirements and the temporary closures of schools and swimming pools – across work to enhance water safety. That disruption actually highlights the importance of the work described in the Strategy, and the value of reviewing and reinforcing it.

As Minister for Community Safety, I am determined that the Scottish Government will contribute fully to efforts to improve water safety. Delivering crucial improvements for our people and our places requires action and engagement across a range of organisations, which is why I have been chairing roundtable discussions amongst some of the key stakeholders. Those discussions have been positive, facilitated by recognition of the significant foundations that have been laid by Water Safety Scotland and its partners. I record my sincere gratitude for the dedication and commitment of all those involved and look forward to continued co-operation in the pursuit of better water safety.



Clare Adamson, *MSP for Motherwell and Wishaw, and Convenor of the Cross-Party Group on Accident Prevention and Safety Awareness, Scottish Parliament*

The pandemic has brought a renewed appreciation for Scotland's bountiful outdoor offering. More and more of us are enjoying the country's waterways and coastlines. But it remains all too common to speak of tragedy when we look at water safety. This is a matter of continued urgency.

Since the strategy was launched, we have made strides in getting water safety on the national agenda. Worldwide the policy landscape has also improved with more governments engaging with drowning prevention as a public health imperative.

The individuals and organisations behind this review are amongst the most dedicated and passionate campaigners I have come across in my career. Their commitment has seen a tangible decrease in drowning fatalities since this strategy was launched in 2018. That demonstrates the importance of concerted and sustained action on water safety.

I commend this review and would ask for your support in ensuring that the aims of this strategy are met and that drowning prevention is given the prominence needed to make a real difference.



Background

Water Safety Scotland (WSS) is a voluntary association of organisations and individuals whose main purpose is to understand the risks around water in Scotland and engage with partners to develop a consistent approach to the prevention of water-related fatalities.

Scotland's Drowning Prevention Strategy (SDPS)ⁱ was launched in January 2018 with two main targets:

- Reduce accidental drowning deaths in Scotland by 50 per cent by 2026 and reduce risk among the highest-risk populations, groups and communities.
- Contribute to the reduction of water-related suicide.

This review, which follows on from the Two-Year Reviewⁱⁱ, provides an analysis of the targets and individual objectives set by SDPS. Additionally, as this review coincides with the approximate mid-way point of the strategy, this interim review outlines some specific changes and refinements to the strategy objectives in order to keep it current and fit for purpose.



Braco Castle by Stewart Prodger

The changing context of water safety

Growing support

Political support for water safety has increased in the past five years. For example, the United Nations (UN) General Assembly affirmed drowning as a preventable public health issue in April 2021ⁱⁱⁱ, which has brought water safety to the forefront of global public health.

Nationally, political support in Scotland has also increased, with the Minister for Community Safety, Ash Regan, hosting a number of high-level, roundtable discussions on water safety in 2021/22 to help support WSS and SDPS.

Locally, a number of water safety groups have emerged to tackle local water safety concerns. Some of these are local authority based, while others are run by the third sector or through the Scottish Fire and Rescue Service, which aims to create water safety groups, known as PAWS (Partnership Approach to Water Safety) groups, in all of Scotland's 32 local authority areas.

Changing context

More and more people are using Scotland's coasts and waterways. There has been a significant growth across Scotland in open water swimming, water based activities and overall growth in visitor numbers to destination locations. According to Visit Scotland, prior to COVID-19, the number of domestic overnight trips to coastal areas had grown consistently over the previous few years, with 2019 achieving the highest visitor numbers at 2.3 million^{iv}. The COVID-19 pandemic resulted in the suspension of this monitoring. However, Visit Scotland undertook a consumer study on actual and intended domestic trips. Recent figures show that those planning an overnight trip in Scotland said they were most likely to do so at the 'rural coastline'^v. RNLI has also noted that visits to Scotland's lifeguarded beaches have increased since the start of the pandemic.

CASE STUDY

Minister's Roundtables

Over the summer of 2021, with a particular concentration in one weekend in late July, there were a number of tragic water-related fatalities in Scotland. The impact of these fatalities was felt across Scotland within communities and families. In response, and in order to further support WSS and partners to help reduce drowning fatalities, the Minister for Community Safety, Ash Regan MSP, convened three meetings with some key stakeholders on 11 August and 22 September 2021 and 27 January 2022. The purpose of these meetings was to renew and further enhance efforts to work collaboratively to help prevent any future drownings. The value in supporting and solidifying the role of WSS and the implementation of Scotland's Drowning Prevention Strategy was recognised as a vital element of realising this ambition. In the course of these meetings, a range of stakeholders agreed to co-operate and support each other and to follow an action plan which aligns with and compliments SDPS. The outcome of this action plan should ensure a consistent, collaborative and impactful approach.

Progress made

Overall drowning figures

According to the Water Incident Database (WAID), the number of water-related fatalities is decreasing in Scotland. Scotland's Drowning Prevention Strategy had an initial average baseline of 96 fatalities (2013–2015), which has decreased over a period of five years (2016–2020) to an average of 92. Although this has not been a year-on-year decrease, it does constitute a 4 per cent decrease since the implementation of the strategy.

The number of accidental drowning fatalities¹ and suspected suicides has also decreased in comparison to the initial baseline.

Using a five-year average, accidental drowning fatalities have reduced by 12 per cent in comparison to the baseline, while suspected suicides have reduced by 7 per cent.

Figure 1 provides an overview of the five-year averages against the baseline. This is broken down into overall water-related fatalities and type.

Accidental drowning fatalities have reduced, on average, by 12 per cent

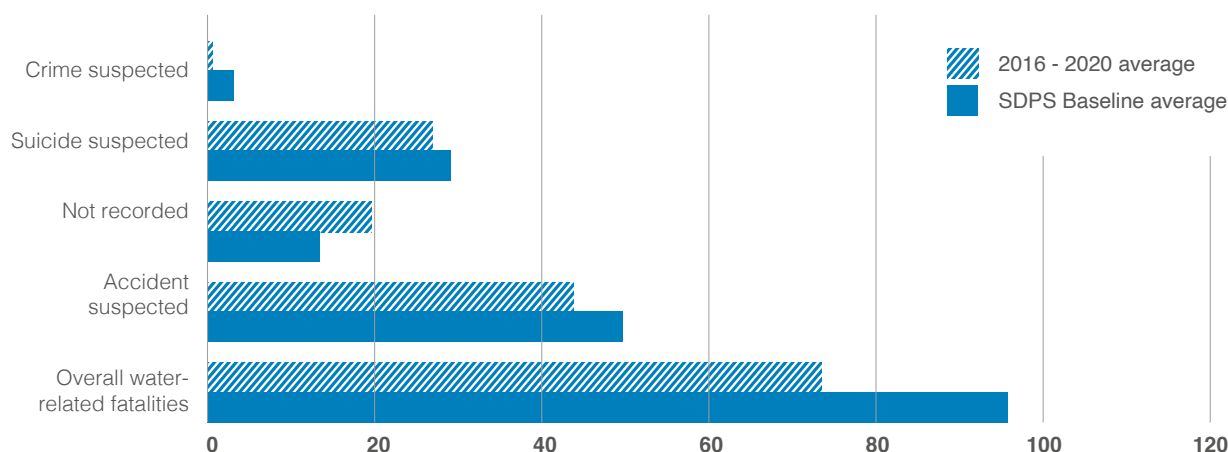


Figure 1: Scotland's Drowning Prevention Strategy baseline average (2013–2015) vs five-year averages (2016–2020)

Historically, Scotland has had a relatively high number of 'Not recorded' water-related fatalities due to the method used to capture data. WSS and its partners are committed to improving

data through the Data Subgroup, the Drowning and Incident Review, and through support of version 2 of WAID.

¹ In this document, 'accidental' refers to both accidental and natural causes.

Changing demographics

There have been some subtle changes to some of the demographics of accidental fatalities in Scotland since the first baseline analysis published in SDPS.

Males still account for approximately 9 in 10 of all accidental drownings. However, accidental drownings are now at their highest in the male 40 to 49-year-old age group. Among female, accidental drownings are most prevalent among those aged 20 to 29, closely followed by those in the 60 to 69-year-old age group.

Inland waters now account for 58 per cent of accidental fatalities, with recreational activities on or near the water accounting for 50 per cent of such fatalities. It should be noted, however, that in 36 per cent of accidental fatalities, the person had no intention of entering the water.

This information is summarised below in Table 1 in comparison to the SDPS baseline. Accidental drowning fatalities have also been mapped by location in Figure 2.

	SDPS baseline (2013 - 2015)	Five year data (2016 - 2020)
Gender	87 per cent male	87 per cent male
Age group	Ages 60–69 (male); Ages 20–29 (female)	Ages 40–49 (male); Ages 20–29 and 60–69 (female)
Location	54 per cent coastal; 46 per cent inland	42 per cent coastal; 58 per cent inland
Behaviour	41 per cent recreational; 38 per cent everyday activities	50 per cent recreational; 36 per cent everyday activities

Table 1: SDPS baseline (2013–2015) demographics vs five-year data (2016–2020) demographics²

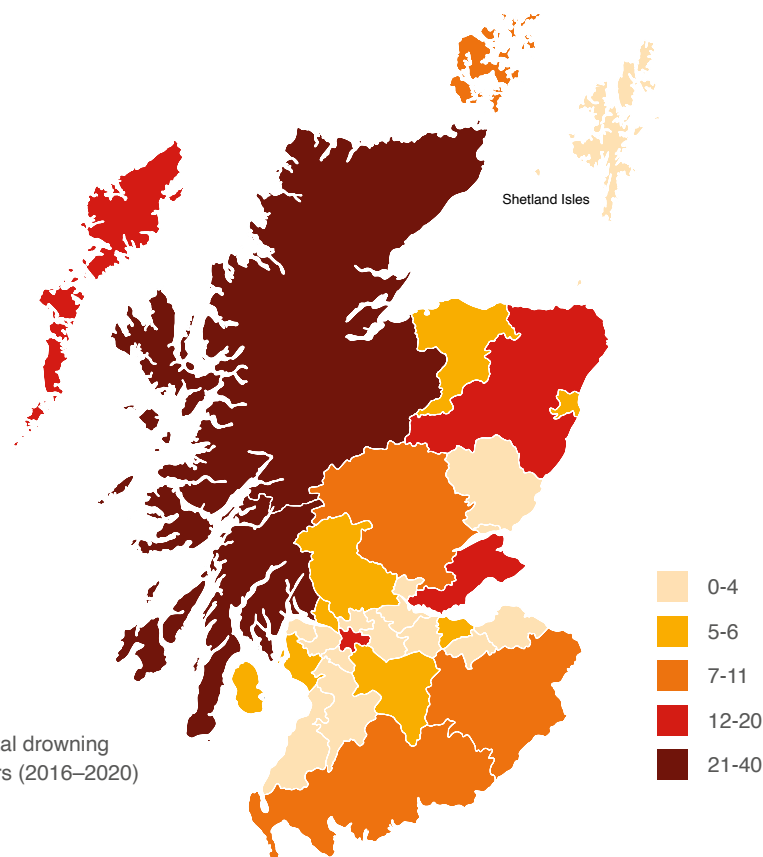


Figure 2: Map of accidental drowning fatalities over the five years (2016–2020)

² Notes: The 2013–2015 data totals 150 fatalities, with the following exceptions due to incomplete data: age/gender data excludes 22 records, activity data excludes 12 records, and location data excludes three records. The 2016–2020 data totals 220 fatalities, with the following exceptions: age/gender excludes 12 records, activity data excludes 13 records, and location data excludes three records.

Progress of aims



SFRS Pinkston demo 2021

Key

- ✓ Activity complete
- ↑ Significant progress made
- Some progress made
- No change/no progress made

Improve fatality incident data and intelligence across Scotland by advocating WAID and sharing WAID reports with partner organisations and local authorities.

The Data Subgroup drives forward the objectives and activities regarding the improvement of data and intelligence. The subgroup consists of representatives from:

- RoSPA (Chair)
- Scottish Canals
- Family Representative
- RNLI
- Scottish Fire and Rescue Service
- Police Scotland

Promote Scotland-specific WAID reports with partner organisations and local authorities

ACTIVITY	PROGRESS	EVIDENCE
Produce an annual press release	✓	Annual press reports have been released every year (2018–2021) to cover the previous year's data
Create an annual summary and trend report	✓	Annual press reports published as above
Communicate Scotland-specific WAID data with key individuals/organisations	↑	Every MSP and each CEO of a local authority receives the data. Work continues to highlight WAID data in other organisations

Advocate WAID as the leading water fatality data-collation system for Scotland

ACTIVITY	PROGRESS	EVIDENCE
Receive annual update on WAID and future developments	✓	Official updates have been provided annually to WSS by a member of the National Water Safety Forum (NWSF)
Encourage relevant members to sign up to WAID	↑	Key stakeholders have been analysed. Eight local authorities and organisations have signed up, including the Scottish Fire and Rescue Service
Revise the MoU with the NWSF to ensure that yearly WAID reports include a "Scotland" tab	✓	MOU revised and signed by the NWSF

Explore opportunities to work collaboratively following an incident to ensure all lessons are learned

ACTIVITY	PROGRESS	EVIDENCE
Investigate how incidents are currently reviewed and lessons learned	✓	Preventing Future Fatalities ^{vi} successfully investigated how incidents are reviewed in Scotland
Scope potential locality to run pilot incident review process	↑	The Drowning and Incident Review was piloted between October 2021 and March 2022. The formal evaluation is currently underway
Publish findings	↑	Preventing Future Fatalities ^{vi} was published. The formal evaluation of the Drowning and Incident Review is currently underway and will be published in late 2022

In addition to these objectives and activities, the Data Subgroup has agreed to include a new objective to 'Undertake bespoke data

projects where appropriate' to allow the analysis of emerging trends and hotspots.

CASE STUDY

Scotland's Drowning and Incident Review (DIR)

Following on from the publication of Preventing Future Fatalities^{vi}, WSS and the Scottish Fire and Rescue Service created the Drowning and Incident Review (DIR) process. The DIR is a voluntary process that can be triggered following an accidental water-related fatality in Scotland. It follows a specific process to gather data and intelligence on the incident, as well as suggest potential controls and mitigations that may help prevent any future incidents in the area. The Data Subgroup piloted the DIR over six months (October 2021 to March 2022) in order to provide an opportunity for changes and refinement, as well as to build an evidence base to show that the DIR is fit for purpose. RoSPA is leading a final formal evaluation of the DIR, focusing on the perspectives and experiences of the key stakeholder organisations involved.

Drive a generational change to facilitate greater safety education and enjoyment in and around water

WSS has changed the original education objective and subsequent activities to drive forward water safety education. This improvement is due to the belief that water safety knowledge should be provided across the life course. Additionally, WSS maintains that the use of Scotland's waterways can be a positive and enjoyable experience when coupled with appropriate risk awareness and education.

The Education Subgroup consists of representatives from:

- RNLI (Chair)
- RoSPA
- RLSS UK
- Scottish Fire and Rescue Service
- Canoe Scotland
- Safety Training Awards
- West Dunbartonshire Council
- Sport Aberdeen
- Scottish Swimming
- Outdoor Partnership
- East Ayrshire Council
- Scottish Water
- Scottish Qualification Development
- Triathlon Scotland
- AbSafe

River Lednock by Carlene McAvoy



Enable activity providers to support the Drowning Prevention Strategy through core and consistent education water safety messaging

ACTIVITY	PROGRESS	EVIDENCE
Create a suite of consistent core WSS water safety messaging and assets to be used	↑	All messaging is based on the WSS Water Safety Code. A National Water Safety workshop has been created. Current work is focused on the creation of short water safety videos
Encourage members to use and support messaging and assets	➡	All messaging is consistently referred to and embedded in the assets currently being developed

Provide support to schools and communities to implement a national water safety lesson

ACTIVITY	PROGRESS	EVIDENCE
Consult with appropriate experts	✓	Experts, Education Scotland and WSS members have been consulted at various times via subgroup meetings, and at a specific workshop that considered the progression pathway
Create a progression pathway and accompanying resource for Curriculum for Excellence	↑	A progression pathway has been created and is currently under consultation. Expected launch by Easter 2022
Create a National Water Safety workshop	↑	Resource drafted and edited, and has been piloted with young people from two secondary schools in West Dunbartonshire. Currently under further piloting with youth groups. Due to be designed and finalised in 2022

Promote the importance of experiencing water safety in all settings

ACTIVITY	PROGRESS	EVIDENCE
Support a situational analysis of the state of school swimming	➡	A working group has been formed to investigate next steps
Promote the importance of school swimming at a national level	➡	As above
Promote the importance of experiencing water safety in outdoor environments	➡	This is being embedded into the progression pathway and the National Water Safety workshop. A working group is also being formed to steer the direction of this activity



RYA Yachtmaster Offshore Power Skipper, Arran by Michael Avril

CASE STUDY

Water safety education in Scotland

WSS aims to drive a generational change in water safety in Scotland with a key focus on promoting the WSS Water Safety Code^{vii}. Recognising the pivotal role of education, WSS is supporting all practitioners to further develop children's and young people's understanding and awareness of the dangers of water, enabling them to safely participate in water-based activities.

The Education Subgroup has been focusing on two main projects to date: the creation of water safety education lessons for schools and the creation of a National Water Safety workshop for use by anyone in Scotland.

Lessons in schools: Working with Education Scotland, age- and stage-appropriate water safety education lessons have been planned to support all children and young people aged 3 to 18 to develop valuable lifesaving knowledge, skills and understanding. The current proposal of one lesson per key educational level will support the embedding of water safety education and progression within the Curriculum for Excellence. Additional extension activities to enhance the learning experience will also be made available through the Education Scotland National Improvement Hub and the WSS website.

National Water Safety workshop: The free-to-download resource will help young people to navigate the hazards of water, provide key guidance on what to do in an emergency, and signpost them toward safe ways to have fun and enjoy water. This resource features engaging activities that prompt young people to think critically about the risks they take and provides clear guidance on what to do in the event of an emergency. Additionally, this resource is accompanied by worksheets and support materials. The workshop, which was inspired by the great work of the Fife Water Safety Project, has been piloted with the help of young people in Scotland, who provided invaluable feedback.

Develop water safety across Scotland's 32 local authority areas and promote the development of water safety policies

There is no Policy Subgroup for this section of the strategy due to the need for each local authority to tailor its water safety policy to the needs of its area. The Steering Group, with the support of the main group, continues to drive forward this section of the strategy.

Encourage all local authorities to develop a water safety policy

ACTIVITY	PROGRESS	EVIDENCE
Identify areas of high risk	✓	Local authorities at high risk have been identified by the Data Subgroup and Steering Group as key priority areas. A recent five-year analysis has been undertaken
Encourage prioritisation of drowning prevention within high-risk areas	↑	Areas associated with high risk were invited to workshops held by RoSPA/RNLI in collaboration with WSS in 2019 and 2021. The Steering Group has also supported the creation of local groups
Continue to advocate a water safety policy in all local authorities	↑	RoSPA, in collaboration with WSS, writes to every local authority annually to promote the need for a water safety policy

Support local authorities in the development of a water safety policy

ACTIVITY	PROGRESS	EVIDENCE
Facilitate workshops on policy development	✓	Two workshops have been held by RoSPA/RNLI – one in 2019 and another in 2021 – to help facilitate water safety policies. Full evaluation reports are available online
Share reports, research and current water safety policies	↑	WSS continues to share reports and policies with local authorities. A member of the Steering Group attends each local water safety group to help promote policies and to share best practice and apply it consistently

CASE STUDY

Loch Lomond and the Trossachs National Park Authority

Loch Lomond and the Trossachs National Park Authority encompasses around 720 square miles and spans four local authority areas: Argyll and Bute, Perth and Kinross, Stirling, and West Dunbartonshire. It is estimated that around 50 per cent of Scotland's population lives within a one hour's drive of the park.

Within the National Park, there are 22 freshwater lochs, including the iconic Loch Lomond, one lake and around 50 rivers and burns, making it a wonderful place for safe and fun recreational activities on or around water. Following a water safety review by RoSPA in 2020, the National Park Authority established a water safety project team.

One of the priorities for this project in 2021 was to develop a water safety policy and an accompanying risk assessment procedure. The policy has helped formalise the National Park Authority's approach to risk assessment and its response to water safety on its owned and managed land.

The policy, which supports Scotland's Drowning Prevention Strategy, aims to:

- Reduce the chance of people being injured through bodies of water by carrying out consistent site and visitor risk assessments on all owned and managed sites.
- Work with landowners, where possible, to co-ordinate a consistent approach to water safety across the National Park, where much of the land is owned by others.
- Promote water safety education and raise awareness of water safety advice for visitors to the National Park.
- Ensure the National Park Authority's digital communication channels and campaign signage promote relevant and up-to-date guidance in line with WSS and other partners, such as RNLI and RLSS.

Developing a Water Safety Policy

The Park Authority team researched several water safety policies from other agencies and based its policy on the best practice of others. Although the National Park spans 720 square miles, it owns very little land, and the policy ensures all its sites are managed safely and responsibly for all who visit them. The Park Authority has a dedicated water safety project team and, through a consultation process with RoSPA, upgraded, and where necessary installed, new public rescue equipment and signage at sites around Loch Lomond. The second phase of the project is currently assessing sites outwith the Loch Lomond area.

The Park Authority hopes that by employing best practice, it can encourage other local authorities to follow the aims of the strategy. Through a local water safety initiative, the Park Authority is helping three key local authorities with their own water safety policy journey, thereby ensuring that there is a consistent approach across the National Park.

Equally, the Park Authority has worked with partner organisations locally and nationally to share water safety communications to ensure consistent messages for the public in order to have a greater impact.

Promote public awareness of water-related risks and ensure a consistent message across campaigns and communications

Although there is no Campaigns and Communications Subgroup at the time of writing, the Steering Group has been working with partners to establish and create this subgroup. It is due to meet for the first time in April 2022. Accountability for this section of the strategy lies with the Steering Group, with input from all members of WSS.

Raise awareness of drowning prevention campaigns in Scotland

ACTIVITY	PROGRESS	EVIDENCE
Create a campaign communications plan	✓	The campaign communications plan is updated annually for the year ahead. The Steering Group has also created a corporate communications plan
Encourage members to support these campaigns	✓	Members are encouraged through emails and main meetings to use the materials
Support organisations which seek to raise awareness for parents through drowning prevention campaigns	↑	Members are encouraged annually to support RoSPA's Family Safety Week and Child Accident Prevention Trust's Child Safety Week

Respond proactively to any Scotland-specific needs that are not currently addressed by members' campaigns

ACTIVITY	PROGRESS	EVIDENCE
Explore potential gaps in campaigns and awareness raising activities	↑	Scotland's Year of Coasts and Waters 2020/21 was identified as an opportunity to ensure consistent messaging. 2021 also provided an opportunity to begin a WSS project on water safety signage
Where appropriate, create and promote bespoke campaigns	↑	A kit bag project ran in 2018 ^{viii} . Scotland's Year of Coasts and Waters 2020/21 also provided an opportunity to create a consistent and generic water safety message ^{vii} , which is now the main water safety message in Scotland

CASE STUDY

World Drowning Prevention Day

In April 2021, the United Nations (UN) General Assembly affirmed drowning as a preventable global public health issueⁱⁱⁱ. This follows recent estimates from the World Health Organization (WHO) which show that around 236,000 people drown every year across the world.

The UN also declared 25 July as World Drowning Prevention Day. In 2021, this was heavily supported by members of WSS, who commemorated the day at various events, and supported the initiative with numerous online and social media posts. The Kelpies – two 30-metre-high horse-head sculptures located near Falkirk – were lit up blue to mark the occasion and to remember all those who have lost their lives to drowning.



The Kelpies by Scottish Canals

Promote the safe participation of recreational activities across Scotland

The Recreation Subgroup drives forward activities and objectives regarding recreational activity. The subgroup consists of representatives from:

- Scottish Adventure Activities Forum (SAAF)
- RNLI
- RoSPA
- Scottish Rowing
- Scottish Swimming
- Glenmore Lodge (SportsScotland)
- National Coasteering Charter Scotland
- Police Scotland
- Royal Yachting Association Scotland
- Canoe Scotland
- Loch Lomond and the Trossachs National Parks Authority
- Waterski & Wakeboard Scotland
- Ramblers Scotland
- HorseScotland

Act in a supporting role to bring together all National Governing Bodies across Scotland

ACTIVITY	PROGRESS	EVIDENCE
Identify relevant National Governing Bodies and encourage membership of Water Safety Scotland	✓	National Governing Bodies and related recreation bodies have been identified. There is ongoing promotion to encourage membership of WSS
If no group currently exists, create a Recreation Subgroup	✓	The subgroup met for the first time in 2021 and will continue to meet regularly

Promote the wider aspects of water among national governing bodies

ACTIVITY	PROGRESS	EVIDENCE
Develop a Water Safety Scotland national governing body standard	➡	Evidence of existing messaging is currently being collated so that the standard can be developed
Develop a Water Safety Scotland brief for national governing bodies	➡	A plan is in place to develop this brief, along with the NGB standard above

Share the wider benefits of safe sport participation at national and local levels

ACTIVITY	PROGRESS	EVIDENCE
Identify the benefits	➡	The key benefits are currently being researched by the subgroup
Promote the benefits	—	Awaiting completion of the above
Engage with the public	↑	Through Scotland's Year of Coasts and Waters 2020/21 messaging ^{vii} , many NGBs shared the generic water safety message across Scotland



Scottish Canoe Association

CASE STUDY

Stand Up Paddleboarding: A Growth in Popularity

There's little doubt that Stand-up-Paddleboarding (SUP) is going through an explosion in popularity in Scotland and the UK. You only have to take a walk along a beach on a sunny summer's day to see the number of people enjoying themselves on the water on Stand-up -Paddleboards.

Restrictions on foreign travel, more leisure time available and the nice weather over the last few summers have all added to the growth in this emerging sport.

The simplicity of Stand-up-Paddleboarding and the ease of which inflatable boards can be transported and launched have opened the sport to a wider demographic. An estimated 90,000 paddleboards were sold in Scotland in 2021 making it the fastest growing water sport in the country.

Since 2018, The Scottish Canoeing Association (which governs paddlesport activity in Scotland) trained 1975 people in the foundations of safety and rescue and have assessed over 150 paddlesport leaders who will be qualified to lead in Stand-up-Paddleboarding activity. These efforts, in providing high quality safety training and qualified instruction go some way in establishing a safety framework which looks after the sport and those who take part in it.

Combining the efforts of a number of key organisations, Water Safety Scotland is highlighting WSS' Water Safety Code^{vii} to help educate and communicate a Scotland wide message for safe access to the water. The following key messages should be considered when taking to the water on a Stand-up-Paddleboard:

Stop and Think, Spot the Dangers

Stay Together, Stay Close

In an Emergency, Call 999

Contribute to the reduction of water-related suicide

The Suicide Prevention Subgroup drives forward activities and objectives regarding suicide prevention and is chaired by Samaritans Scotland. The wording of the two main objectives has been adapted slightly and due to the completion of the majority of activities, further activities have been planned. The subgroup consists of representatives from:

- Samaritans Scotland (Chair)
- RNLI
- Scottish Fire and Rescue Service
- Police Scotland
- National Rural Mental Health Forum
- Scottish Community Safety Network
- Scottish Canals
- Angus Council
- East Ayrshire Council
- Family Representative
- NHS Tayside

Act in a supporting role to bring together agencies and organisations that work to prevent water-related suicide

ACTIVITY	PROGRESS	EVIDENCE
Develop relationships between mental health and water safety organisations to improve understanding and ensure effective sharing of information and resources to support reductions in suicide	↑	Subgroup has brought together mental health professionals and wider sector representatives working in water safety to learn from each other and support improvement. External engagements – such as with the National Rural Mental Health Forum – continue to support relationship building
Link to the Scottish Mental Health Strategy and Scotland's Suicide Prevention Action Plan	↑	SDPS has been recognised as a measure that will make a significant contribution to suicide prevention. A new national focus on locations of concern has been supported by the work of the group. The next period will focus on development of Scotland's new Suicide Prevention Strategy and the upcoming review of the Mental Health Strategy
Create a Suicide Prevention Subgroup	✓	The group has been active since 2018

Support the understanding that suicide is preventable and engage in further action to reduce water-related suicide

ACTIVITY	PROGRESS	EVIDENCE
Work with relevant suicide prevention organisations to understand common misconceptions	✓	Common misconceptions have been discussed and identified by the Suicide Prevention Subgroup. A presentation is available to those engaged in water safety activity to promote understanding of suicide among frontline staff and volunteers
Share and promote relevant campaigns and activities to help reduce suicides around water	↑	Discussions within the group have promoted specific campaigns and activity among members. Some member organisations have created webpages on suicide prevention. Further work is ongoing to ensure active amplification of existing campaigns through individual member networks

Under the objective to 'Support the understanding that suicide is preventable and engage in further action to reduce water-related suicide', the following new activities have been added:

- Share intelligence on water-related suicide and attempted suicide appropriately to support an evidence-informed approach to suicide prevention
- Engage with national work to reduce the risk of suicide at locations of concern linked to the water
- Share experience and insights, and make suggestions for improvement, to support better postvention support for those impacted by water-related suicide or attempted suicide.

“Reducing suicide on, or around, Scotland's waters is such an important endeavour. Every life lost to suicide is a tragedy and the loss of each person is felt by so many. The opportunity to Chair this group, which brings together so many key organisations in a collective effort to make a difference, is both an honour and a privilege.”

Rachel Cackett, Executive Director of Samaritans Scotland and Chair of the WSS Suicide Prevention Subgroup

“SFRS is delighted to be a member of the WSS Suicide Prevention Subgroup. We see this as an excellent opportunity to work together with our partners, share key information, and initiate proactive steps to help drive down instances of suicide within our communities. We fully understand that this is not an issue which can be tackled by one single organisation; rather, it requires a collaborative approach and multi-agency focus. We believe that being part of the WSS Suicide Subgroup provides the correct platform for that partnership working.”

Chris Casey, Station Commander, Scottish Fire and Rescue Service

“Police Scotland recognises the huge impact of suicide in all sectors of society and is committed to the shared effort of reducing suicide in Scotland. A coordinated partnership approach is the only way to focus the knowledge and expertise of the agencies and individuals involved in both Water Safety and Suicide Prevention. The WSS Suicide Prevention Subgroup provides the opportunity to make a real difference to communities and Police Scotland is a committed member of this significant collaboration.”

Superintendent Hilary Sloan, Partnerships, Prevention and Community Wellbeing is the Strategic lead for Water Safety for Police Scotland

“Dealing with suicide has become an ever-increasing task and risk for the RNLI and we are by no means an expert in its prevention. Being a member of the Water Safety Scotland Suicide Prevention Subgroup has been very helpful to the RNLI allowing us to understand prevention best practice, feed in intelligence on locations of concern, to join with fellow members to promote campaigns and to contribute, where we can, to the reduction of suicide in Scotland.”

Michael Avril, RNLI Regional Water Safety Lead



New objectives

In addition to the original objectives, WSS has created two new objectives as outlined below. These will help to consolidate gaps within the original strategy and provide a more holistic and inclusive approach to drowning prevention in Scotland.

WSS recognises the role of UK Search and Rescue (SAR). However, to help improve the SAR of water-related incidents, the following target and objectives have been created.

TARGET:

Improved understanding, learning of resources and capabilities of Search and Rescue (SAR) water-related incidents

Improve understanding of the response for rescue of water-related incidents

- Ensure a control room review to make certain best asset response
- Develop an improved understanding of SAR resource and assets

Improve communications both pre- and post-incident

- Develop consistent corporate communications, including agreed media messages
- Ensure involvement of SAR organisations in the Drowning and Incident Review (DIR)

Increase inter-agency water-related training

- Create a best practice guide for Scotland's response requirements
- Support at least one annual training event

WSS recognises the impact that a drowning fatality can have on family members, friends and communities. Accordingly, the following target and objectives have been set.

TARGET:

Work with families that have been affected by water-related fatalities

- Explore opportunities to establish a Families Subgroup
- Provide opportunities for families and those affected by drowning to advocate their ideas to help reduce drownings in Scotland
- Signpost to relevant and appropriate support services

Next steps

WSS, in collaboration with its partners, is making progress in drowning prevention and water safety. The creation of these additional objectives and activities will help to improve the strategy and bring us closer to the ambitious targets of SDPS.

Activities that have been identified as having no change/no progress made will take precedence in order to ensure full implementation of the strategy objectives.

No one agency can deliver water safety, it requires all agencies to work together in partnership. By bringing together experts and practitioners in this field, WSS will lead the implementation of the strategy in a consistent and evidence-based approach.

WSS is committed to reducing drowning fatalities and will continue to work to meet the targets in order to help make Scotland a safer place to live and visit.

Aberdour by Elizabeth Lumsden



Contributors and thanks

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