

Scottish leadership on sustainable, inclusive growth is translating global ambition into local action, writes **Terry A'Hearn**

# New partners with a fresh approach

In planetary terms, today is “time up” for the Earth. Monday, 29 July 2019 is Earth Overshoot Day – when humanity will have used nature’s resource budget for the entire year.

This year, Earth Overshoot Day is its earliest ever. Over the past 20 years, it has moved up two months. This means that humanity is currently using nature 1.75 times faster than our planet’s ecosystems can regenerate – equivalent to 1.75 Earths.

According to Global Footprint Network, the international sustainability organisation behind Earth Overshoot Day and ecological footprinting, we now have a choice: between one-planet misery or one-planet prosperity.

Since joining the Scottish Environment Protection Agency as chief executive in 2015, I’ve put one planet living at the heart of our regulatory strategy, which we call One Planet Prosperity.

The scale of environmental challenge facing humanity is enormous, with a real urgency to act.

On 28 April this year, Scottish First Minister Nicola Sturgeon declared a climate emergency. The

announcement built on Scotland’s globally ambitious climate strategy, leadership and innovation, and it locked-in the response to a future built on sustainable and inclusive growth.

As an Australian, and having been an environment professional for 30 years in four nations, I’ve heard lots of speeches and read a lot of strategies on sustainability.

There’s something distinctly different about Scotland. It’s a nation which is serious about environmental, economic and social success – on a global scale and in communities across Scotland.

As a regulator, SEPA too is changing today, fit for the challenges of tomorrow. We recognise that the challenges are too great for any one organisation or company to tackle alone. Working together, we’ll achieve so much more.

On Friday, I joined ten other public, private, voluntary and community sector organisations in Fife to sign a SEPA-led Sustainable Growth Agreement on a fresh type of local partnership with an ambitious regeneration vision for communities based around the River Leven in Fife.



This is a Scottish first and locks in sustainable, inclusive growth to the Leven Partnership Project, which aims to revitalise the River Leven as a great regional asset by 2030.

Partners including Scottish Enterprise, Diageo, Fife Council, Sustrans, Scottish Natural Heritage, Scottish Water and Fife College will be working in partnership with SEPA to achieve shared outcomes across the River Leven catchment.

Working in new ways, with new partners, and innovating for

environmental and economic opportunities, is critical to this greatest challenge of our time.

Cambridge University Institute for Sustainability Leadership Fellow, and former chief executive of Greenpeace International, Paul Gilding, who spoke at the event, said: “With Scotland’s globally ambitious climate strategy, leadership and innovation in response to the climate emergency, it’s great to see progressive partners such as SEPA and others, work

together in new ways to transform communities for the people who live and work there.”

Scotland is a small nation with huge potential to tackle the greatest issue of our time and to win for our environment, our economy and communities, such as Leven, and across the globe.

Scotland can do this – Scotland is now.

*Terry A'Hearn is the chief executive of the Scottish Environment Protection Agency*

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Thursday, 1 August issue for details

