

# Scottish Water overview

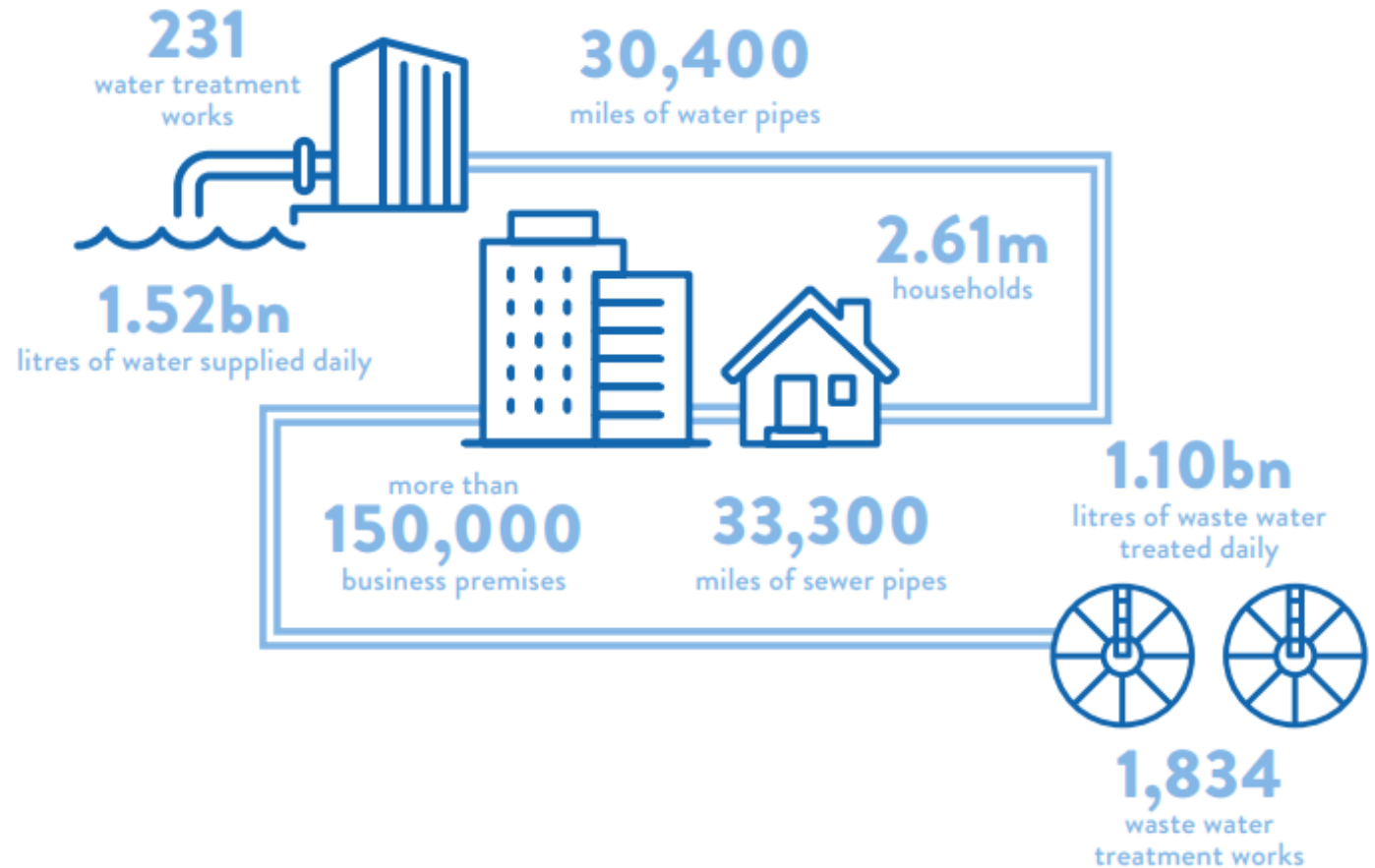
**Grant Vanson**  
**Edinburgh & Lothians Strategic Drainage Partnership**  
**Manager**

# Our role in Scotland

Every day we:

- Support over 2.6 million households and more than 150,000 business premises across Scotland
- Deliver 1.52 billion litres of clear, fresh drinking water; and
- Remove 1.1 billion litres of wastewater which we treat, recover resources from, and return safely to the environment
- Operate 1,834 wastewater treatment assets, serving populations of <10 to over 500,000
- Operate over 3,600 Combined Sewer Overflows (CSOs)

## OUR VITAL ROLE COVERS:



# The History

2

From 1978 up until as recently as 25 years ago, the sludge sewage waste from Edinburgh's homes was loaded on to MV Gardyloo, a £1.87 million purpose built ship built by Ferguson Shipbuilders in Port Glasgow, before being transported out and dumped in the Firth of Forth, the ultimate 'trip to the loo'!

MV Gardyloo was built with lounge & dining facilities, and a trip on the ship soon became a day out with a difference for locals and visitors alike. The vessel hosted the occasional wedding on board, but we cannot confirm if the marriages lasted the test of time.

Finally, in 1998, the Gardyloo flushed her tanks for the last time. A new European directive on sewage disposal and a significant upgrade to the treatment works at Seafield meant that sludge waste needed to be treated in a more environmentally friendly manner.



1

The Edinburgh Sewage Disposal Scheme was opened at Seafield in 1978. Up until this time, raw sewage was pumped out into the sea, often, far too close to beaches. The new scheme offered partial treatment (by today's standards), with the sewage 'sludge' remaining largely untreated and requiring off site disposal.

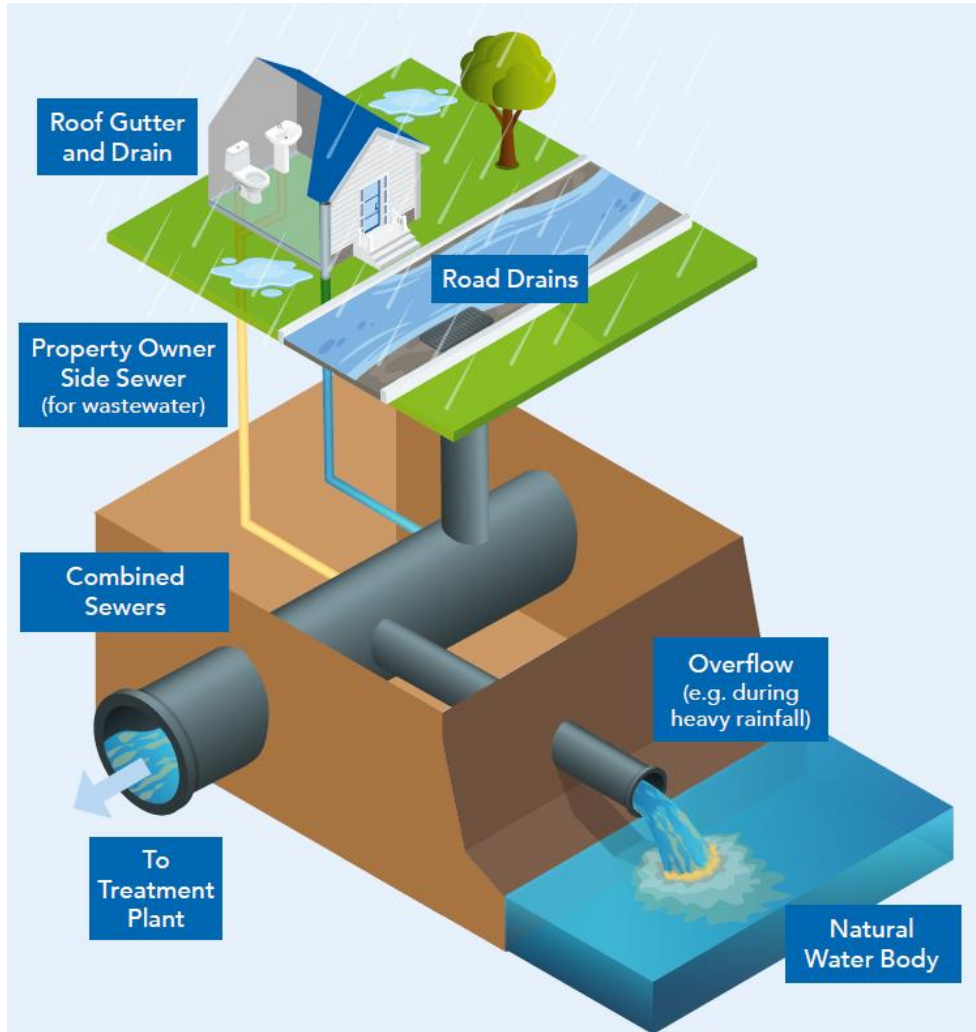


3

Following the European directive changes, an Urban Wastewater Treatment directive heralded significant changes to the site. Sludge was no longer transported off-site, but was subject to additional treatment within the works.



# Current and future challenges



Current drainage network operation



## Climate Change

35% increase in rainfall intensity by 2100  
More frequent and intense storms



## Ageing Assets & Infrastructure

Requiring significant investment



## Urban Creep

Loss of Greenspace increasing run-off rates and volume



## Population Growth

13,800 new homes needed every year (to 2039)



## Historical Connections

Roads, land drainage, misconnections



## Customer Expectations

Increasing public scrutiny and political pressure

# Customer Priorities for investment



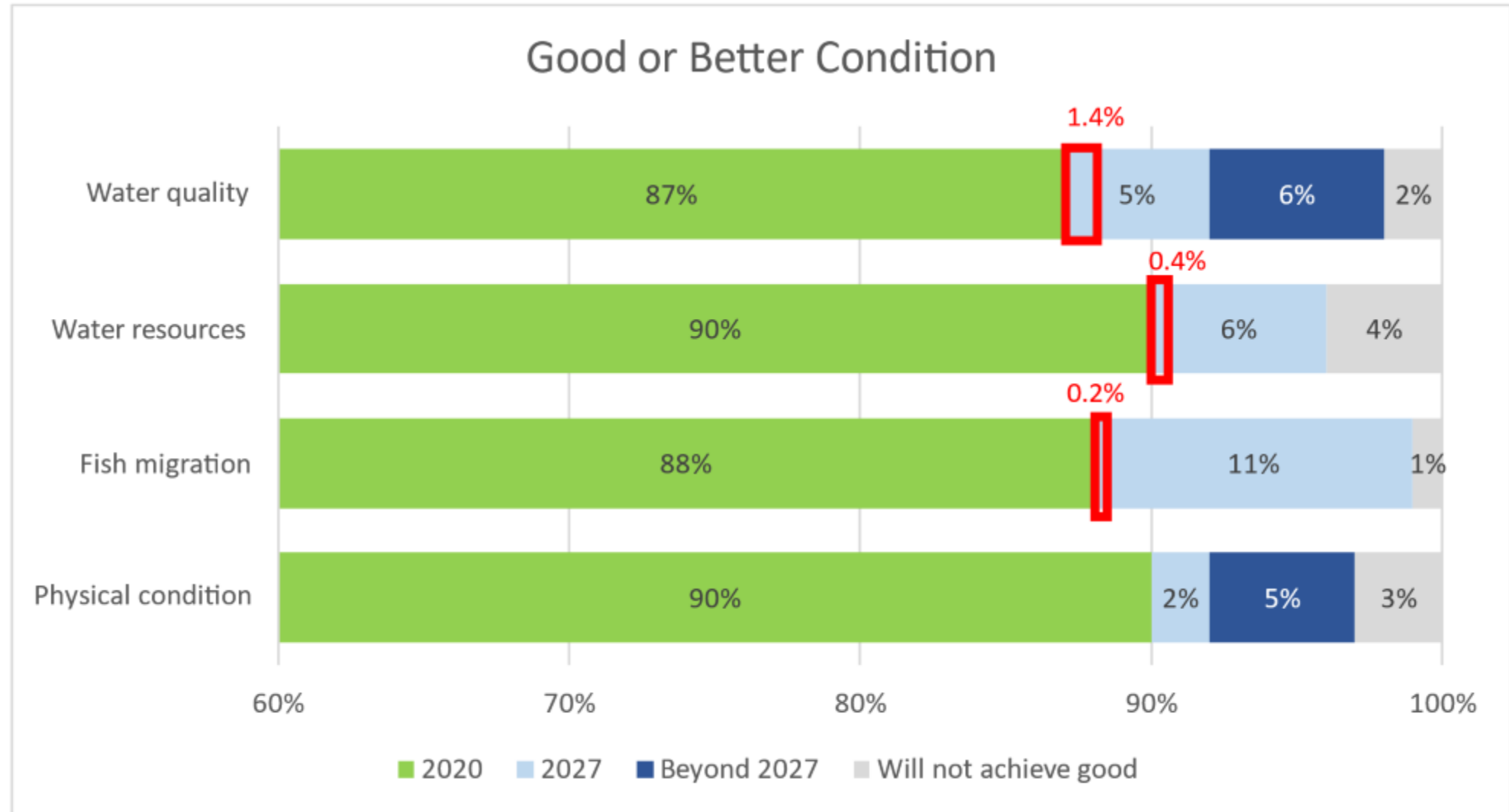
## Consumer Scotland research February 2026: Strategic Review of Charges 2027-2033

Participants were encouraged by Scottish Water's Long-Term Strategy and commitment to investing in sustainable solutions. They highlighted areas that they believed Scottish Water needed to focus on, including:

- external and internal sewer flooding,
- repairing and replacing pipes,
- maintaining drinking water quality, and
- ensuring uninterrupted supply.

[Summary: Phase 1 of Strategic Review of Charges 2027-2033 consumer research \(HTML\) | Consumer Scotland](#)

## River Basin Management Plan (RBMP) – Current and Anticipated Condition



# The Overflows Challenge

TIMES CAMPAIGN

## How Britain's waterways became a dirty joke – and why we should act now

Adam Vaughan explains why The Times has felt compelled to launch its Clean It Up campaign to address the country's polluted waterways

THE TIMES

BBC Sign in

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## Scotland's growing sewage spill problem

3 August 2021 · Comments



## Public advised not to enter sea at Portobello due to 'pollution incident'



An electronic sign has been updated to advise people to stay out of the water  
15 June 2026

People have been advised against going into the sea at Portobello Beach in Edinburgh due to an ongoing pollution incident.

## INVESTIGATION

# Scottish Water records more than 12,000 sewage spills

4th July 2021

The Herald



# Improving Urban Waters Route Map

## Urban Waters Routemap Supports National Action Plan



### Action Plan

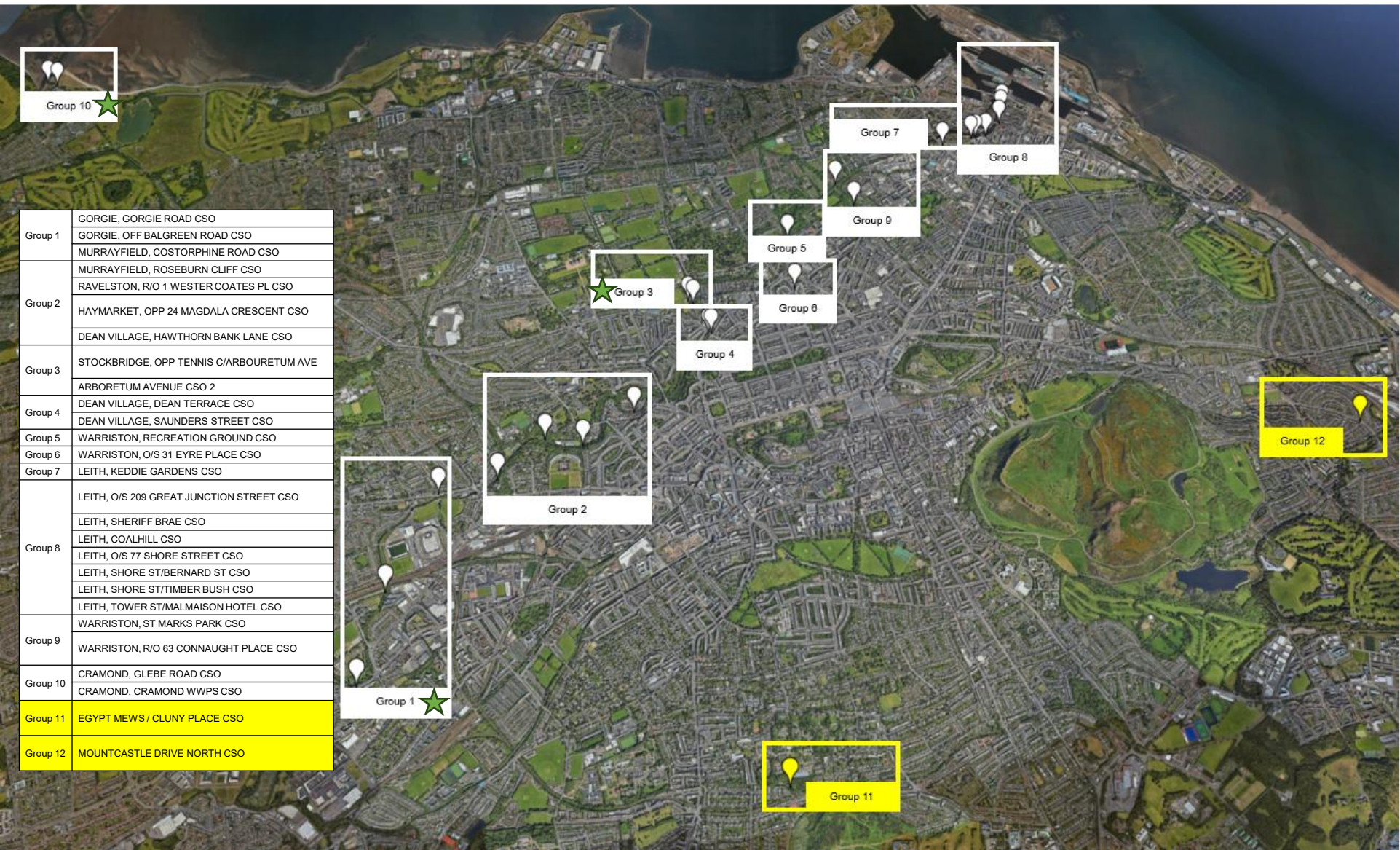
Our multi-million-pound investment to improve the environment at the

### IMPROVING URBAN WATERS ROUTEMAP ANNUAL UPDATE

The ecological condition of Scotland's water environment is the focus of a comprehensive new action plan, backed by enhanced monitoring and reporting.

The route map contains shorter and longer-term actions on how we will approach:

- Improving Water Quality
- Monitoring and Reporting of discharges from all highest priority waters
- Significantly reducing sewer related debris in the environment
- Reducing Spills from the sewer network



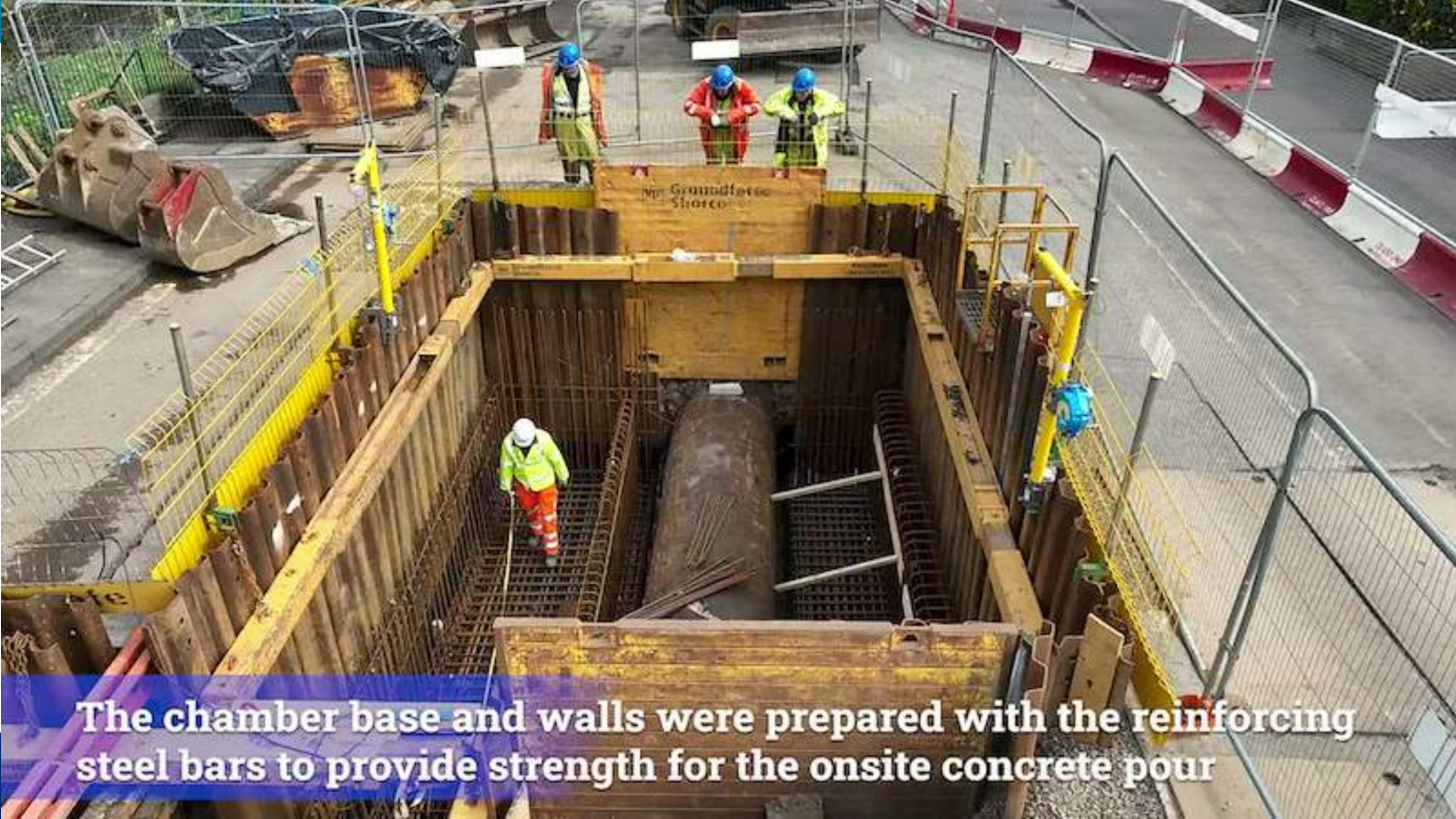
## Needs overview

- 25no. High Priority
- 2no. Medium Priority

Priorities set by SEPA and programme agreed with SEPA and WICS through six yearly business plan cycles

# Improving Urban Waters

- **Balgreen:** Construction works are complete.
- **Murrayfield / Gorgie Road:** Murrayfield works completed December 2025. Gorgie Road works completed July 2026.
- **Cramond House & Davidson Mains CSO:** Start on site is targeted for September 2026.  
**Cramond SPS CSO:** Start on site is targeted for October 2026.
- **Stockbridge (Arboretum Place / Tennis Courts):** Significant progress and engagement. Investment brought forward with a view to start on site early 2027.
- **Warriston Recreation Ground:** Ground Water Investigations ongoing. Potential start from 2027.



**The chamber base and walls were prepared with the reinforcing steel bars to provide strength for the onsite concrete pour**

[Homepage](#) > [Your Home](#) > [Your Waste Water](#) > [Overflows](#) > [Overflow Map](#)

## Overflow Map

### New Map Features

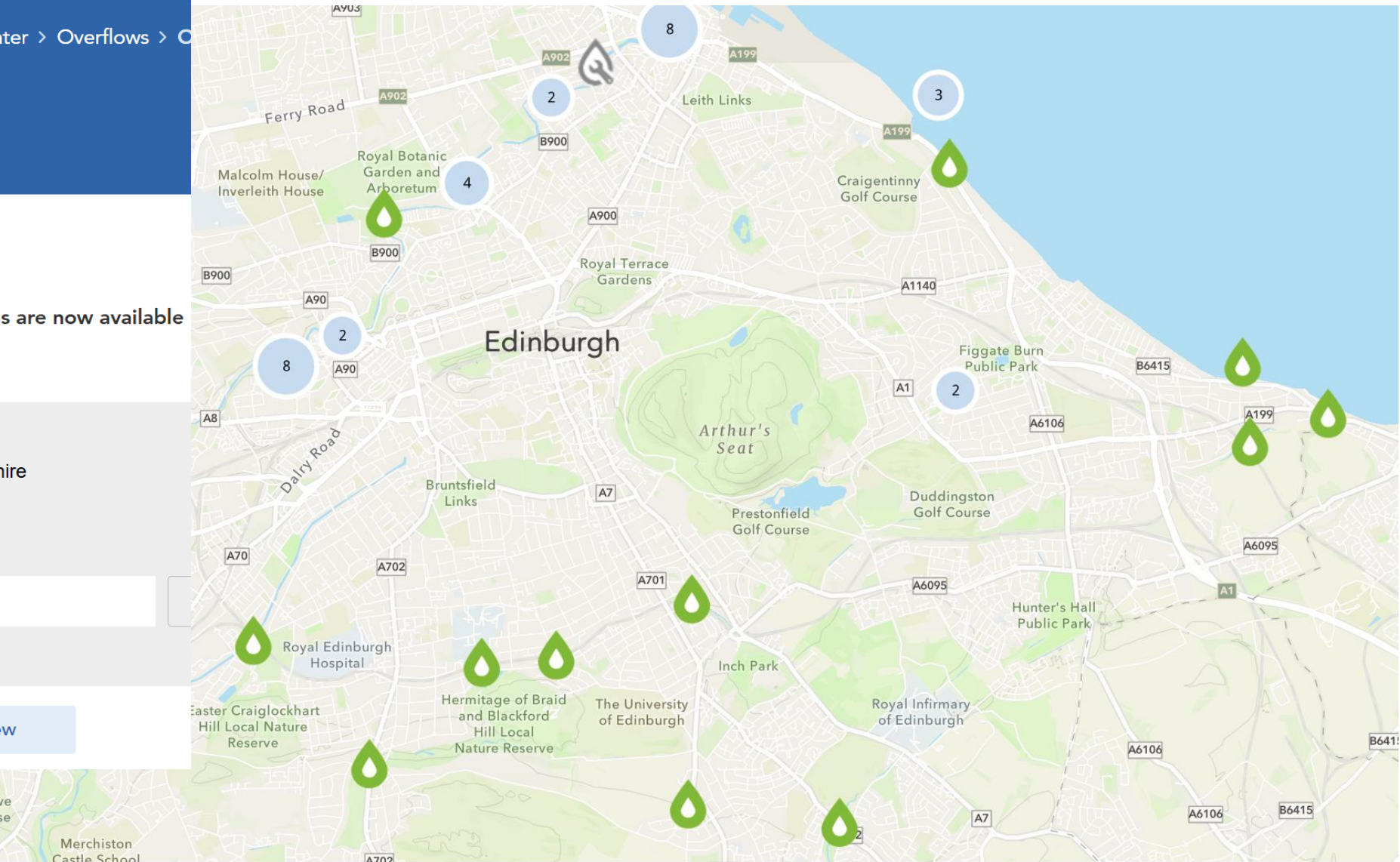
Rainfall Data and Bathing Water Locations are now available

Search an area by:

- Postcode, Town or City
- Local Authority Area - eg: West Dunbartonshire
- Waterbody - eg: Loch, Burn, River or Sea
- Designated Bathing Water

 Map View

 List View



[Overflow Map - Scottish Water](#)

# Engagement and Behaviour Change

## Our 'Nature Calls' campaign

- We attend and clear 37,000 chokes per year
- Estimated annual cost of £6.5m
- SRD commonly found at beach cleans up; including sanitary products and wipes
- Our research shows that, despite this, 74% of people surveyed say they never flush wipes

### Campaign aims

- Call to action customers to change their behaviour, binning the wipes
- Campaign to ban wipes containing plastic from being sold



# Rainwater Strategy - Manage Rainwater and Spills

## No more in, what's in out'

01

### Remove & Slow

Take rainwater out of the combined system and hold back what remains, so sewers can do their job.

02

### Blue-Green First

Place-based rainwater systems: using a combination of blue-green infrastructure underpinned by grey network solutions.

03

### Partnership-Led

Partnership projects deliver rainwater management at scale and value that no single organisation can achieve alone.

04

### Resilient Places

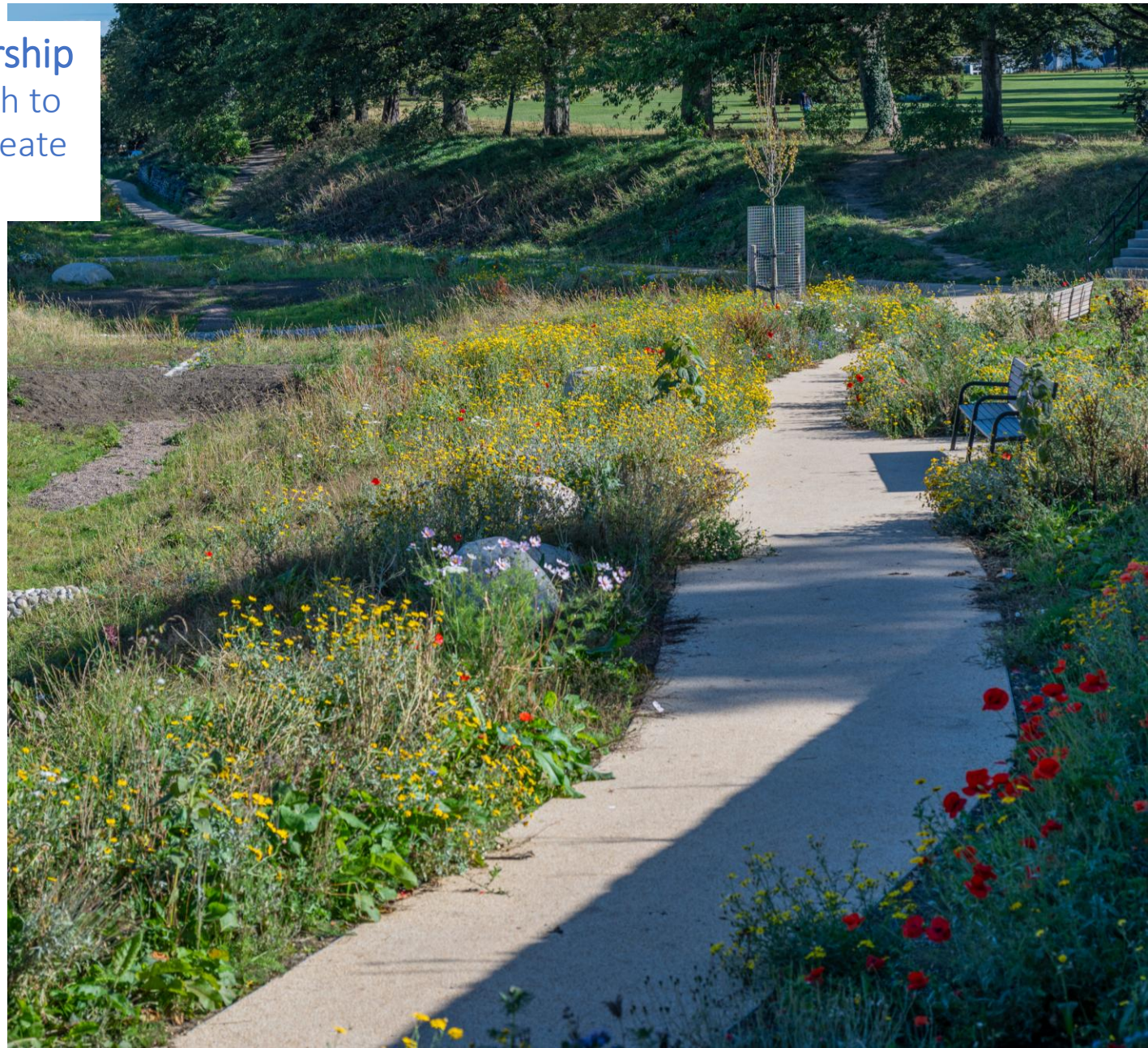
Manage more rainwater on the surface to cut flood risk, increase biodiversity and enable growth.

**Create capacity in our sewers by slowing or preventing rainwater from entering the combined system — working in partnership to build place-based rainwater management systems.**

# Manage Surface Water and Reduce Spills

## Edinburgh and Lothians Strategic Drainage Partnership

Develop and deliver a multi-agency, place-led approach to sustainably manage drainage and surface water and create flood resilient communities



# Questions for consideration

What kind of information are stakeholder groups interested in?

What is the best way to communicate information to a wider stakeholder audience?