



**water safety**  
Scotland

**Scotland's Drowning Prevention  
Strategy**  
2018-2026



Loch Ard by Elizabeth Lumsden.



# Contents

1. Introduction	5
2. Why do we need a Scottish Drowning Prevention Strategy?	6
3. The Scottish picture	7
4. What are we doing now?	10
5. What we want to achieve	11
6. What we intend to do	12
7. How we are going to achieve our targets and aims	18
8. Strategic summary	21
9. Appendix 1	22
10. Acknowledgements	23

## Development of the strategy

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# Foreword



## Clare Adamson

MSP for Motherwell and Wishaw and Convener of the Cross Party Group on Accident Prevention and Safety Awareness, Scottish Parliament.

Dear Colleague,

It gives me great pleasure to introduce Scotland's Drowning Prevention Strategy. By working in partnership with the relevant organisations and agencies, we can fulfil the aims of this strategy which are to:

- 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.

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**“Water is such an essential element that we can take it for granted, and as such neglect to consider the dangers”**

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As a country, we enjoy many positive aspects of water: from world renowned scenery of lochs and rivers to our rugged and beautiful coastlines, attracting many of us to enjoy the opportunities they offer. Even in our daily lives water is such an essential element that we can take it for granted, and as such neglect to consider the dangers associated with its use.

I commend this strategy to you and ask for your support.



# Introduction

Established in 2014 by RoSPA, Water Safety Scotland is essential in bringing together individuals and organisations from all over the country, who, over many years, have developed a variety of excellent water safety initiatives. These wide ranging and important initiatives have kept individuals and communities safe across Scotland.

In 2014, The World Health Organisation recommended that every country should have a National Water Safety Plan.<sup>(i)</sup> The UK-wide National Water Safety Forum fulfilled this recommendation and created the UK Drowning Prevention Strategy.<sup>(ii)</sup> This important “call to action”, which Water Safety Scotland fully supports, does not however fully consider the unique situation within Scotland.

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**“On average 50 people accidentally drown in Scotland each year, and a further 29 people take their own lives<sup>(i)</sup> in and around the country’s water ways.”<sup>(ii)</sup>**

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This document brings together Scotland’s drowning prevention initiatives and safety programmes and stands as Scotland’s first strategic framework for Drowning Prevention. It complements the UK Drowning Prevention Strategy whilst taking into account the unique situation in Scotland.<sup>(2)</sup>

In March 2017, Water Safety Scotland launched a draft response followed by a three-month consultation.<sup>(iv)</sup> As part of the consultation, Water Safety Scotland members and other relevant bodies felt that the response document justified being transformed into a strategy in its own right for all of Scotland.

## This Strategy sets out:

- The main differences that exist between Scotland and the rest of the UK
- The data picture
- What Scotland is doing now
- Targets and main aims

This Strategy requires everyone in Scotland to play their part – from the water safety community and emergency services to private, public and third sector organisations. Most importantly this strategy is for the people of Scotland who, with the combined efforts of all organisations and communities, can engage to ensure a reduction in water related deaths by 2026.

# Why do we need a Scottish Drowning Prevention Strategy?

The UK Drowning Prevention Strategy does not adequately reflect characteristics specific to Scotland, therefore Water Safety Scotland has created its own strategy and framework for drowning prevention.

- Scotland has increased opportunities for access to water due to its geography. With more than 30,000 freshwater lochs<sup>(vi)</sup> and a huge coastline of more than 11,800kms,<sup>(vii)</sup> Scotland covers roughly 60 per cent of the UK's entire coast<sup>(viii)</sup>
- The average UK sea temperature rarely gets above 15 degrees centigrade and gets colder further north in Scotland,<sup>(viii)</sup> leading to a potentially higher risk of suffering cold water shock when entering the water
- Scotland embraces the open use of space through The Land Reform (Scotland) Act 2003 which enables people to enjoy the great outdoors
- The Scottish Government has specific priorities and plans that differ from the UK Government. This is encapsulated into 16 National Outcomes<sup>(ix)</sup>

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## Specific research has highlighted the following issues in Scotland:

- A mixed picture at local government level in terms of the management of water safety<sup>(x)</sup>
  - Although the country scored well overall in child safety, it scored poorly in child water safety in comparison to other European countries<sup>(xi)</sup>
  - The Paddy Tomkins report<sup>(xii)</sup> is an important driver for water safety in Scotland
- 
- Scotland has a different education system from the rest of the UK. The Curriculum for Excellence allows flexibility for teachers to deliver topics in an innovative way and as such does not mandate water safety education or swimming lessons unlike England and Wales
  - There is a specific legal system in Scotland known as Scots Law, which has a different system for the reporting of unexplained and sudden deaths. This impacts upon the collection of water based death data in Scotland.



St Fillans Loch Earn by Stewart Prodder.



# The Scottish picture

## Evidence gathered from the Water Incident Database<sup>(3)</sup> indicates that Scottish drownings differ from the UK as a whole.

Activities in and around water are enjoyed safely by the majority of people. However, 400 people accidentally drown in the UK every year with a further 180 suicides recorded around water.<sup>(4)</sup> The UK Drowning Prevention Strategy highlights Scotland as carrying a disproportionate number of these drowning deaths.

On average, there are 50 accidental drownings in Scotland in each year and a further 29 suicides.<sup>(4)</sup>

Water Safety Scotland supports the four broad themes identified by the National Water Safety Forum<sup>(5)</sup> to guide drowning prevention. These are:

- Communities and environments
- Demography
- Recreational and everyday activities
- Behaviours

The following data within this Strategy (unless otherwise stated) comes from the Water Incident Database 2013-2015 analysis.<sup>(6)</sup>

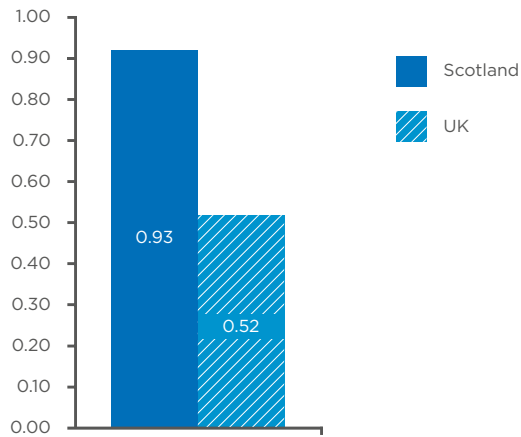
### Communities and Environments

The UK Drowning Prevention Strategy reports that England records the highest number of accidental drownings in the UK.<sup>(6)</sup> When the relative population rate is taken into consideration, Scotland carries a disproportionate burden; the accidental drowning rate is almost double the UK's average.

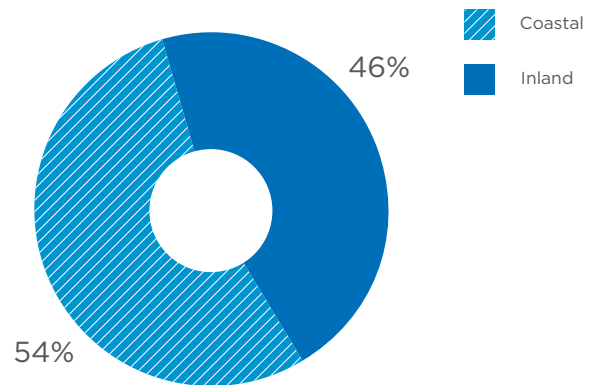


Scottish Fire and Rescue Service, swift water practice on Scottish rivers.





**Figure 1:** Rate of accidental drownings. Based on Scotland drowning statistics (WAID 2013 - 2015) and ONS 2015 population estimates



**Figure 2:** Accidental drowning by location in Scotland (WAID 2013 - 2015)

## Did you know?

**Accidental drowning in Scotland accounts for more deaths than cycle accidents on the road.** <sup>(xii)</sup>

Overall, UK statistics show that two in every three accidental drownings happen at inland waters such as at rivers and lakes/lochs (62 per cent).

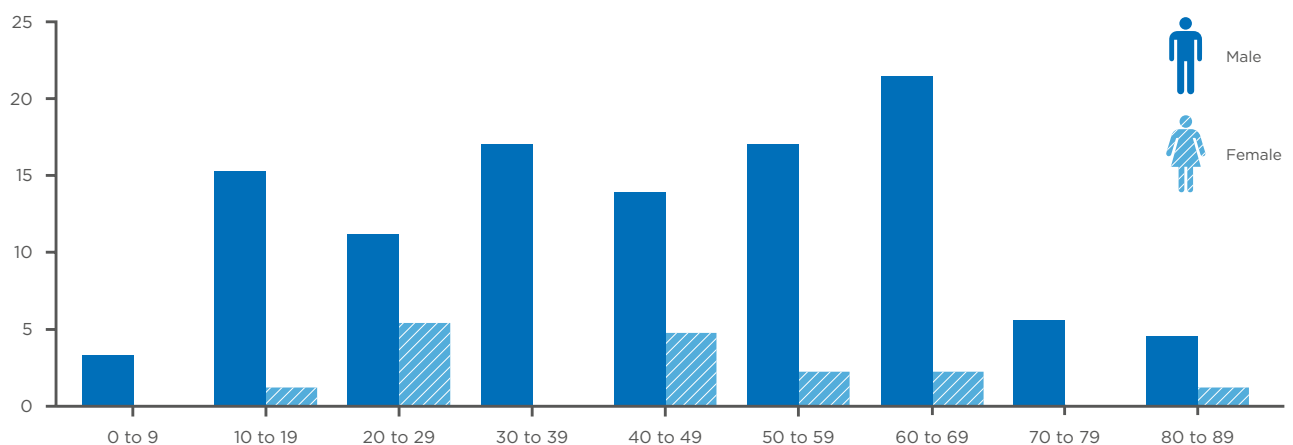
In contrast, when looking specifically at Scotland, accidental drownings are less clear cut and are more likely to occur at the coast (54 per cent).

## Demography

Consistent with the UK Drowning issue, men are most at risk of drowning. They account for approximately 9 in 10 of accidental drownings in Scotland.

Although the UK statistics show a distinct peak in the number of men drowning in the 20-29-year-old age group, this is not the case when looking specifically at Scotland. Drownings in Scotland are at the highest in the male 60-69-year-old age group.

Among women, the picture in Scotland is again different. The UK records women aged 50-59 as the highest age group for accidental drownings.<sup>(iv)</sup> In contrast, women aged 20-29 are at the highest risk of accidental drowning in Scotland.



**Figure 3:** Accidental drowning by age and gender in Scotland (WAID 2013-2015)



## Recreational and Everyday Activities

Like the UK as a whole, in 4 in 10 of Scotland's accidental drownings the person had no intention of entering the water. Instead they were participating in healthy and beneficial everyday activities such as walking, jogging or cycling.

Recreational activities on or near the water account for 41 per cent of water deaths in Scotland. Although participation in recreational activities is increasing in Scotland (recent statistics show a 7.1 per cent increase from 2013-2014<sup>(66)</sup>), most activities present a low risk when considering these participation levels.

Commercial drownings are higher in Scotland than in the UK. Overall UK statistics show commercial activities account for three per cent of accidental drownings<sup>(67)</sup> whereas in Scotland, commercial drownings account for 17 per cent of overall drownings.

Accidental drownings that happen at home account for two per cent of the overall statistics. In Scotland, like the UK, the main group affected is children under the age of five.

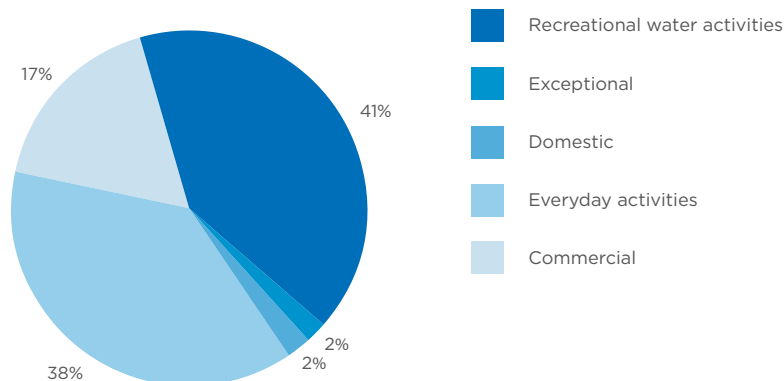


Figure 4: Accidental drownings by activity in Scotland, where the activity of the deceased has been recorded (WAID 2013-2015)

## Behaviours

Greater knowledge of the events and factors that lead up to a water-related death will help to understand individual behaviours in more depth. This will enable Water Safety Scotland to design relevant and targeted interventions. Water Safety Scotland believes that the following behavioural traits increase the risk of drowning:

- Attitude to risk and social norms such as the use of Personal Flotation Devices
- Lack of awareness of the risks associated with water
- Behavioural changes due to intoxication. The National Water Safety Forum noted that alcohol was a factor in 1 in 3 drownings of adults of working age in the UK<sup>(68)</sup>. This information is not readily available in Scotland but represents an important potential risk
- Socio-economic situations
- Lack of parental supervision.

KEY FINDINGS	The UK as a whole	Scotland
<b>Drowning rate</b>	The UK's accidental drowning rate is 0.52	Scotland's drowning rate is almost double at 0.93
<b>Location</b>	The majority of the UK's accidental drownings happen inland	The majority of Scotland's accidental drownings happen at the coast
<b>Gender</b>	Men are most at risk of accidental drowning	
<b>Gender and Age</b>	Men aged 20-29 are most at risk of drowning	Men aged 60-69 are most at risk of drowning
	Women aged 50-59 are most at risk of drowning	Women aged 20-29 are most at risk of drowning
<b>Activities</b>	In 4 in 10 accidental drownings, the person had no intention of entering the water	
	Commercial drownings account for three per cent of accidental drownings	Commercial drownings account for 17 per cent of accidental drownings

# What are we doing now?

Many excellent initiatives currently happen in Scotland to promote water safety and drowning prevention. Water Safety Scotland thanks and congratulates all organisations and individuals that have worked tirelessly to contribute to the reduction of drowning-related deaths. Below is a collection of some of the excellent work that has happened within Scotland.

## **Aberdeen Water Safety Group**

Following the tragic drownings at Aberdeen beach in the summer of 2016, local partners and individuals came together to form an action group to tackle the issue of drowning. Through their combined efforts, they have been able to increase activity and awareness to help keep visitors and the people of Aberdeen safe.

## **Dunbar Surf Club**

During 2017, Dunbar Surf Life Saving Club has worked with nearly 100 local people from the Dunbar area, delivering vocational awards, assessments, and long term and short term courses in surf lifesaving. Supported by RNLI Lifeguards Scotland, East Lothian Council and STRiVE Adventure, the club continues to develop and promote surf lifesaving.

## **Glasgow Humane Society**

Glasgow Humane Society has been operating since 1790. It aims to preserve human life in and around the waterways of Glasgow. This includes lifeboat and safety services as well as educating the public in water safety.

## **LochWatch Loch Awe**

Following a number of deaths in 2009, LochWatch was launched and has since gone from strength to strength. The group works by engaging local communities in water safety and supports statutory agencies in rescue activities.

## **Partnership approaches to water safety education**

There are a number of initiatives throughout Scotland in which partners come together to promote water safety education. This includes experiential learning sessions, classroom activities and school assembly presentations as well as water based activities in the pool and the open water environment.

## **RLSS UK**

RLSS UK's Don't Drink and Drown is the national campaign that warns drinkers to steer clear of walking by or entering water when under the influence of alcohol. Through a combination of activities and media, RLSS UK aims to keep the public safe from the effects of intoxication on and near bodies of water.

## **RNLI campaign**

Respect the Water is the RNLI's national drowning prevention campaign which in 2017 aimed to do three things:

- Make more people aware of risks such as cold-water shock
- Help people recognise the risk is personally relevant to them or people they know
- Provide shareable lifesaving advice.

## **RoSPA**

RoSPA, as well as providing the secretariat to Water Safety Scotland, continues to deliver water safety training and advice across Scotland. RoSPA also publishes important research in Scotland most notably the "Local Authority Approaches to Managing Water Safety".<sup>(3)</sup>

## **Scottish Fire and Rescue Service**

In addition to rescues, the Scottish Fire and Rescue Service supports numerous water safety campaigns including the National Fire Chiefs Council's Drowning Prevention and Water Safety Week which aims to raise awareness of the everyday dangers of being near water.

## **Scottish Swimming**

The Scottish Swimming national learn to swim framework teaches both children and adults core aquatic skills. These are the basic skills a swimmer requires to be comfortable and safe in the water. These skills, coupled with the ability to learn swimming, can help those in danger to self-rescue and increase their chance of survival.

## **Western Isles Signage**

The Outer Hebrides Community Safety Partnership created SMART SIGNS<sup>(4)</sup> which are strategically placed at confirmed "hotspots". They aim to alert island visitors to the inherent dangers of the beautiful but exposed Hebridean terrain, to enable people to seek assistance if required, and to help the emergency services find them.



# What we want to achieve

These specific Scottish characteristics, along with the need to ensure the safe use and safe participation of people in and around water, warrants a specific strategy and framework that will work in Scotland. Water Safety Scotland is committed to reducing drowning deaths and has set two overall 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.**



LochWatch Loch Awe, petrol boat on loch.

# What we intend to do

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**In order to achieve these targets, Water Safety Scotland has developed the following aims:**

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- Improve fatality incident data and intelligence across Scotland by advocating WAID and sharing WAID reports with partner organisations and local authorities
- Promote and develop learning to swim, water safety education and initiatives within early years, primary and secondary schools
- Develop water safety across Scotland's 32 local authority areas and promote the development of water safety policies
- Promote public awareness of water-related risks and ensure a consistent message across campaigns and communications
- Promote the safe participation of recreational activities across Scotland
- Contribute to the reduction of water-related suicide.



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

Drowning incident data is currently collated through the Water Incident Database (WAID), a web-based system that brings together collected data from a wide range of sources.

Data is currently collated in a variety of ways within Scotland, but lacks a consistent approach to the collection of fatal and non-fatal drowning incident data.

Water Safety Scotland is committed to working to improve data collection in Scotland. This will help to gain more insight into contributing factors including environments, individual behaviours, activities and demographics which can be used for targeted approaches, campaigns and projects.

In order to meet this aim, Water Safety Scotland will:

- Promote Scotland-specific WAID reports with partner organisations and local authorities
- Advocate WAID as the leading water fatality data collation system for Scotland
- Explore opportunities to work collaboratively following an incident to ensure all lessons are learned.

#### CASE STUDY

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## The Water Incident Database (WAID)

The Water Incident Database (WAID) is a web-based system created by the National Water Safety Forum to collate information on drowning incidents and fatalities.

Launched at the RoSPA water safety conference in November 2009, WAID seeks to bring together water-related incident data from different sources within the UK.

Current data providers such as the emergency services, coastguard and national governing bodies use different systems of data collection which are unique to their organisation. WAID has the ability to map the provider's bulk data and input it into the WAID system. Data can then be collected from numerous sources and merged into one single comprehensive incident record.

Incident records are bulked together into a dataset and analysed. The National Water Safety Forum then releases annual figures for the UK to give an overview of drowning fatalities within the previous year.

For the first time, Water Safety Scotland in conjunction with the National Water Safety Forum, released three year averages for Scotland in 2016.

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## Did you know?

### Unlike the rest of the UK, school swimming lessons are not a statutory requirement in Scotland.

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#### Promote and develop learning to swim, water safety education and initiatives within early years, primary and secondary schools

The World Health Organisation report notes that globally, drowning is the third highest cause of accidental death in young people.<sup>69</sup>

The UK Drowning Prevention Strategy puts a clear emphasis on the need for children to be equipped with the knowledge, skills and experience required to keep themselves safe in and around water. By raising an awareness of, and building resilience to, the dangers that water presents from an early age, Water Safety Scotland will continue to cultivate the behaviour changes needed to achieve a reduction in accidental drownings. Introducing these concepts at an early stage will better prepare young people to lead safer and healthier lives.

Learning to swim equips a child with the core aquatic skills needed for basic survival in the water. School swimming plays an important role for children who may not otherwise have the opportunity to learn to swim.

Water Safety Scotland is committed to this aim and has agreed on the following objectives:

- Development and promotion of a “Water Safety Scotland Education Standard”
- All children to participate in water safety education activities
- Ensure all children have the opportunity to learn to swim.

#### CASE STUDY

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### Cameron Lancaster



On a beautiful sunny Sunday afternoon in August 2014, Cameron Lancaster went to a disused quarry and jumped from the cliff into the water 60 feet below. As he fell, a gust of wind changed the angle of his body and he hit the water awkwardly, breaking his neck on impact. He was unconscious and drowned instantly without a struggle or awareness of his injuries.

Cameron had been due to join Napier University’s freshers’ week on September 6, but instead, his funeral took place on September 5. The impact of Cameron’s accident on the community was instant; social media, the presence of fire appliances and the coastguard helicopter made the tragedy both instant and very public. Cameron was a very popular and well-loved teenager, who was involved in many community activities. His loss was devastating to his friends, most of whom

were about to leave home for university or college – a transition that many failed to make after the sudden loss of a vital member of their peer group.

Nine months after Cameron’s death, another 18-year-old boy drowned in the same quarry under very different circumstances. The shock of this second drowning galvanised Cameron’s family into taking action, and his mother, Gillian Barclay, became involved in the Fife Water Safety Initiative. The ethos of the initiative is to educate young people about the risks that water poses. It provides them with the ability to conduct a dynamic risk assessment when in, on or near water, keeping themselves and others safe. Gillian said: “The Fife initiative and other such projects are so important in ensuring the safety of our young people. It is everyone’s responsibility to ensure that everything can be done to stop any accidental drowning.”



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

In 38 per cent of accidental drownings, the person had no intention of entering the water.<sup>(vi)</sup> In order to reduce the number of drownings, Water Safety Scotland needs to work with communities and local authorities to increase the awareness of water related risks.

Water Safety Scotland will continue to support and develop water safety across all 32 local authority areas while promoting the development of water safety policies that are relevant to each community and its localised water risks.

In order to deliver this aim, Water Safety Scotland has identified the following objectives:

- Encourage all local authorities to develop a water safety policy
- Support local authorities in the development of an effective water safety policy.

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**“Argyll and Bute has a very long coastline and hundreds of rivers, lochs and reservoirs. A coherent and achievable water safety policy is essential in the drive to reduce deaths by drowning. For every life lost the impact on families, friends, the community and the emergency services cannot be overstated.”**

Iain MacKinnon,  
Argyll and Bute Council

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## CASE STUDY

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### Perth and Kinross Council

Perth and Kinross has little coastal land but has many lochs and rivers that are an important amenity. Data shows that between 2010 and 2014 there were eight deaths from 68 attempted water rescues.<sup>(xvi)</sup>

The council previously had a water safety response based on a risk assessment process already in place, but no policy. The Perth and Kinross Water Safety Partnership (PKWSP) also places signage and throwlines in response to drowning incidents on both council and private land.

The policy and its accompanying guidance for the Risk Assessment Procedure was developed to rationalise and formalise the council's approach to assessing and responding to water safety issues on its land.

#### It aims to:

- Ensure the council has effective, efficient and sustainable water safety management which is applied consistently across council land
- Reduce accidental and deliberate entry to water and use a risk assessment procedure to ensure the appropriate water safety response within the context of the character of the site.

#### Developing the Policy

During the development of the policy, RoSPA publications and the knowledge and experience of council officers within educational, community safety and site management remits were used. Information from other councils was sought and consultation with the PKWSP took place. The policy was adopted in January 2016.

#### Putting the Policy into Practice

The council is in the process of repeating the risk assessing of its sites near water and extending signage to include countryside sites. The procedure is also proving to be a useful reference for officers who have not carried out water risk assessments previously.

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

Water Safety Scotland is committed to a multi-level approach to drowning prevention, through the development of a comprehensive plan to communicate with the public via the promotion of members' campaigns. These campaigns are well established and targeted towards specific drowning issues. By promoting partnership collaboration, those who are at risk in Scotland will have access to life-saving advice, enabling them to stay safe.

To achieve this aim, Water Safety Scotland has agreed the following objectives:

- Raise awareness of drowning prevention campaigns in Scotland
- Respond proactively to any Scottish-specific needs that are not currently addressed by members' campaigns.

### **Promote the safe participation of recreational activities across Scotland**

The Land Reform (Scotland) Act 2003 provides opportunity for people in Scotland to enjoy the great outdoors. Water sports activity is increasing in Scotland<sup>(66)</sup> and as such has proven health and wellbeing benefits.

Recreational activity accounts for 4 in 10 accidental drownings in Scotland. Water Safety Scotland believes that these drownings can be reduced by positive and proactive interventions of good practice.

Water Safety Scotland recognises that the national governing bodies in Scotland are the recognised experts in their respective fields and shares the National Water Safety Forum's belief that most water sports deaths happen to non-members of national governing bodies.

Water Safety Scotland has therefore agreed the following objectives:

- Act in a supporting role to bring together all national governing bodies across Scotland
- Promote the wider aspects of water safety among national governing bodies
- Share the wider benefits of safe sport participation at local and national level.

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## **Did you know?**

**In 4 in 10 accidental drownings, the person had no intention of entering the water.**

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### Contribute to the reduction of water-related suicide

On average 29 people take their own life in water-related suicides<sup>(5)</sup> in Scotland each year<sup>(6)</sup>. This represents a significant number of the water-related deaths in Scotland, and as such Water Safety Scotland believes this requires attention.

To deliver this aim, Water Safety Scotland has agreed the following objectives:

- Act in a supporting role to raise awareness amongst agencies that could play a role in the reduction of water-related suicide
- Support the understanding that suicide is preventable and encourage discussion on further action.



Scottish Fire and Rescue Service, Pinkston Watersports.

## CASE STUDY

### Lifesaving partnership working

According to WAID data, suicides represent approximately a third of drowning deaths each year in Scotland.<sup>(6)</sup> Suicide is not inevitable however; it is preventable.

In 2010, the rail industry entered a partnership with Samaritans which successfully resulted in a 12 per cent decrease in suspected suicides on the network in 2015/16. This partnership has been a success due to the holistic approach that has been taken, including the importance of people manning barriers, taking tickets and going about their day jobs. Network Rail, Scot Rail, Virgin Trains – and every staff member in that industry – has realised that suicide is everybody's business.

Water Safety Scotland recognises the importance of working together and that similar progress is undoubtedly possible. As seen in the rail industry, the right attitudes, skills and actions are key; from

increasing the confidence in approaching vulnerable people to identifying problematic locations.

Interventions, no matter what they are, interrupt the suicide thought process. They can stall decision-making, urge people to reconsider, and increase the chances of help reaching them. For example, 9 out of 10 people who attempt suicide and survive will not go on to die by suicide.

Suicide is a difficult issue to face. However, it is one that's best faced together. While suicide is preventable, we need the combined expertise of a range of agencies to begin to deal with this complex issue, not only to prevent vulnerable people taking their own lives, but to support staff and volunteers who can be left feeling distressed and helpless. With the combined knowledge and expertise in Water Safety Scotland, we can begin to support each other and save even more lives.

# How we are going to achieve our targets and aims

Water Safety Scotland is a partnership of organisations and individuals with a commitment to water safety in Scotland. Through its governance structure, Water Safety Scotland will seek to establish formal arrangements to promote the strategy with its members.

This strategy will form the future focus of Water Safety Scotland.

The following section is in tabular form and details how Water Safety Scotland is going to achieve its aims, targets and objectives through the use of specific activities.

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## **TARGET:**

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

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### **Promote Scotland specific WAID reports with partner organisations and local authorities**

- Produce an annual press release
- Create an annual summary and trend report
- Communicate Scottish specific WAID data with key individuals

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

- Receive annual update on WAID and future developments
- Encourage relevant members to sign up to WAID
- Revise the MOU with the NWSF to ensure yearly WAID reports include a “Scotland” tab

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

- Investigate how incidents are currently reviewed and lessons learned
- Scope potential locality to run pilot incident review process
- Publish findings



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## **TARGET:**

**Promote and develop learning to swim, water safety education and initiatives within early years, primary and secondary schools**

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### **Development and promotion of a “Water Safety Scotland Education Standard”**

- Consult with appropriate experts
- Create a benchmark standard
- Advocate the adoption of the standard

### **All children to participate in water safety education activities**

- Conduct a situational analysis
- Promote best practice
- Facilitate members to enhance and improve provision

### **Ensure all children have the opportunity to learn to swim**

- Publish research into school children’s swimming ability and participation in Scotland
- Promote the importance of school swimming
- Encourage opportunities for children to experience open water in a safe and controlled environment

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## **TARGET:**

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

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### **Encourage all local authorities to develop a water safety policy**

- Identify areas of high risk
- Encourage prioritisation of drowning prevention within high risk areas
- Continue to advocate a water safety policy in all local authorities

### **Support local authorities in the development of a water safety policy**

- Facilitate workshops on policy development
- Share reports, research and current water safety policies

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## **TARGET:**

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

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#### **Raise awareness of drowning prevention campaigns in Scotland**

- Create a campaign communications plan
- Encourage members to support these campaigns
- Support organisations which seek to raise awareness for parents through drowning prevention campaigns

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

- Explore potential gaps in campaigns and awareness raising activities
- Where appropriate, create and promote bespoke campaigns

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## **TARGET:**

### **Promote the safe participation of recreational activities across Scotland**

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#### **Act in a supporting role to bring together all national governing bodies across Scotland**

- Identify relevant national governing bodies and encourage membership of Water Safety Scotland
- If no group currently exists, create a recreational subgroup

#### **Promote the wider aspects of water safety among national governing bodies**

- Develop a Water Safety Scotland national governing body standard
- Develop a Water Safety Scotland brief for national governing bodies

#### **Share the wider benefits of safe sport participation at national and local level**

- Identify the benefits
- Promote the benefits
- Engage with the public

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## **TARGET:**

### **Contribute to the reduction of water-related suicide**

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

- Develop relationships with recognised mental health professionals
- Link into the Scottish Mental Health Strategy<sup>(xvii)</sup> and suicide prevention action plan
- Create a suicide prevention subgroup

#### **Support the understanding that suicide is preventable and encourage discussion on further action**

- Work with relevant suicide prevention organisations to understand common misconceptions
- Share and promote relevant campaigns and activities to help reduce suicides around water



# Strategic Summary

<b>TARGETS</b>	<p>Reduce accidental drowning deaths in Scotland by 50 per cent by 2026 and reduce risk among the highest-risk populations, groups and communities</p> <p>Contribute to the reduction of water-related suicide</p>
<b>Why do we need a strategy?</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• On average, 50 people accidentally drown in Scotland each year. A further 29 people take their own life in and around the waterways of Scotland</li><li>• The rate of drowning in Scotland is almost double that of the UK</li><li>• Scotland differs from the rest of the UK in terms of its geography, governance, education system and legal system.</li></ul>
<b>How are we going to achieve our targets and aims?</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Improve fatality incident data and intelligence across Scotland by advocating WAID and sharing WAID reports with partner organisations and local authorities</li><li>• Promote and develop learning to swim, water safety education and initiatives within early years, primary and secondary schools</li><li>• Develop water safety across Scotland's 32 local authority areas and promote the development of water safety policies</li><li>• Promote public awareness of water-related risks and ensure a consistent message across campaigns and communications</li><li>• Promote the safe participation of recreational activities across Scotland</li><li>• Contribute to the reduction of water-related suicide.</li></ul>

# Appendix 1

## How Scotland's Drowning Prevention Strategy fits into the UK Drowning Prevention Strategy

Theme	Scotland's Drowning Prevention Strategy	UK Drowning Prevention Strategy
<b>EDUCATION</b>	Promote and develop learning to swim, water safety education and initiatives within early years, primary and secondary schools	Every child should have the opportunity to learn to swim and receive water safety education at primary school and where required at Key Stage 3
<b>COMMUNITY</b>	Develop water safety across Scotland's 32 local authority areas and promote the development of water safety policies	Every community with water risks should have a community-level risk assessment and water safety plan
<b>SUICIDE</b>	Contribute to the reduction of water-related suicide	To better understand water-related self-harm
<b>AWARENESS</b>	Promote public awareness of water-related risks and ensure a consistent message through campaigns and communications	Increase awareness of everyday risks in, on and around water
<b>RECREATION</b>	Promote the safe participation of recreational activities across Scotland	All recreational activity organisations should have a clear strategic risk assessment and plans that address key risks
<b>DATA</b>	Improve fatality incident data and intelligence across Scotland by advocating WAID and sharing WAID reports with partner organisations and local authorities	





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[www.watersafetyscotland.org.uk](http://www.watersafetyscotland.org.uk)