

Overview

We evaluate both the impact of our work and the effectiveness of how we work, to deliver on our Strategy 2026-2031 ambitions.

How we do it

We use a theory of change approach to demonstrate how our scrutiny work has an impact on the environment. We also utilise key performance indicators (KPIs) and performance management indicators (PMIs) to measure our organisational performance.

Together these approaches will enable us to assess how well we are achieving our vision.



Measuring our performance

Theory of Change

For each of our major investigations and analytical projects that make recommendations for improvement, we will prepare a theory of change to explain how the actions taken by ESS are expected to contribute ultimately to improved environmental outcomes.

We will include details of these in our publications which are published on our website.

Each theory of change will set out the intended improvements to environmental law and regulation, the chain of events that is expected to result in improvements, any key assumptions that underpin our theory of change and the wider context.

Each theory of change will also identify specific indicators that ESS will use to track improvements in areas of the environment in which ESS has acted.

Long-term outcomes

In addition to these indicators, we will commission detailed case studies on a three-yearly basis to examine the long-term outcomes of our work and ESS' contribution to changes in law, policy and regulation which will be published on our website.

Those improvements should, alongside other contributing factors, lead to better environmental outcomes for nature and people and contribute to the achievement of Scotland's ambitions for the environment and climate change.

Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) and Performance Management Indicators (PMIS)

We also measure our organisational effectiveness on a regular basis using PMIs and KPIs.

Our PMIs include a wide range of operational and management information related to our investigation and analysis work, our engagement and profile, delivery against our People Strategy pillars, delivery of our annual Business Plan objectives and compliance with governance and financial reporting requirements set out below.

These PMIs are organised under three KPIs: Performance, People and Profile. This will enable us to describe and explain our progress each year in a qualitative and quantitative way.

The first year of reporting performance against these KPIs and PMIs will be at the end of the financial year April 2026 to March 2027. All PMI data will be made available on the ESS website each year, and published alongside the Annual Report and Accounts by end of October.

In the Annual Report and Accounts, a revised performance management section will also be added, which will focus on a descriptor of progress under the three KPIs. In this section, we will indicate whether we have: met, partially met, or not met our ambitions in this area.

Our KPIs will remain constant across the period of this Strategy. However, to enable a flexible approach, and to build more challenge into our KPIs over time, we will regularly review our PMIs, which may be added to, or enhanced, where additional insight is required.

Please note, information related to the previous set of PMIs related to ESS' work is set out in past Annual Reports and Accounts which are published on our website.

Strategic Objectives:

Objective 1. Securing compliance and improving effectiveness

Objective 2. Analysing and investigating environmental concerns

Objective 3. Monitoring and scrutinising environmental performance

Objective 4. Engaging and communicating effectively

Objective 5. Being an efficient and effective organisation

Performance management indicator being measured in 2026/27	Key performance indicator: Performance; People; Profile	Strategy 2026-2031 strategic objective
ESS contribution to long- term environmental outcomes	Performance	Objective 1 Objective 2 Objective 3 Objective 4 Objective 5
Casework completed	Performance	Objective 1 Objective 2 Objective 5
Casework resulting in enforcement action	Performance	Objective 1 Objective 2
Percentage of enforcement action accepted/implemented	Performance	Objective 1 Objective 5
Number and proportion of issues resolved informally	Performance	Objective 1 Objective 2 Objective 5
Percentage of casework completed within expected timescales	Performance	Objective 5
Number and type of (investigation) inquiries received	Performance	Objective 4 Objective 5
Number of outputs from analytical work	Performance	Objective 2 Objective 3
Percentage of recommendations / actions from analytical work: accepted; progressing; or delivered	Performance	Objective 1 Objective 2 Objective 3

ESS responses to Parliament and Government consultations	Performance Profile	Objective 3
Stakeholder perception of ESS role	Performance Profile People	Objective 4 Objective 5
Number of public/ stakeholder engagement sessions	Performance Profile People	Objective 4 Objective 5
Number of citations in parliamentary reports or meetings	Performance Profile	Objective 4 Objective 5
Social media engagement rate	Performance Profile	Objective 4 Objective 5
ESS website page views	Performance Profile	Objective 4 Objective 5
Service standards met	Performance Profile	Objective 4 Objective 5
Progress against the ESS People Strategy	People Performance Profile	Objective 5
Progress against corporate reporting	Performance Profile	Objective 5
Number of complaints received	Performance Profile People	Objective 5
Progress against the ESS Sustainability Plan	Performance People	Objective 5