CREW CENTRE OF EXPERTISE FOR WATERS

NEWS

Autumn 2025

Scottish Government
Riaghaltas na h-Alba

Photo credit: Rebekah Burman

In this edition:

CREW Letter:

As the nights draw in and the leaves begin to turn, autumn offers a moment to pause and reflect on what has been a productive few months for CREW and our partners. The changing seasons mark both continuity and change within our team and projects.

This autumn, we say a fond farewell to Maureen Whalen, who has been an excellent Project Manager for CREW. Maureen's positivity and commitment have made a lasting impact, and we wish her every success as she begins her PhD. At the same time, we're delighted to welcome Anishka Cameron as our new Project Manager. Anishka brings valuable new perspectives, and we're excited to work with her and introduce her to our collaborators.

As rainfall increases, autumn highlights the delicate balance between water scarcity and flood management - an ongoing challenge in a changing climate. Work is ongoing across six CREW capacity building projects, helping to support evidence-based decision making across our three themes. We've also received new priority project requests, which we'll be co-developing with our partners over the coming months, ready to begin next year.

In October, the team attended the RESAS ENRA Conference – a valuable opportunity to share knowledge, connect with partners, and showcase CREW's work. We also met with the ClimateXChange team and explored opportunities for joint working on shared priorities.

As we look ahead to a winter of project completion and new development, we continue to be dedicated to delivering timely, policy-relevant research, grounded in collaboration and real-world impact.

We hope you enjoy this autumn edition of the newsletter.

Rebekah Burman, CREW Project Manager

Rebekah

Who We Are and What We Do

RESAS Lunchtime Seminar Highlights CREW Research

Two of our projects were recently featured in the Scottish Government RESAS (Rural and Environment Science and Analytical Services) lunchtime seminar series. Dr Chris White and Dr Kristin Ceniccola-Campos both from the University of Strathclyde presented on the use of AI in flood forecasting and the use of monitoring psychoactive substances in wastewater to inform public health responses respectively.


Photo credit: Posnov, Getty Images

Event Spotlight

Communication and Impact at the ENRA Conference 2025

Researchers, policymakers, and stakeholders gathered in early October for the Scottish Government Environment, Natural Resources and Agriculture (ENRA) Science, Evidence and Policy Conference 2025, focused on shaping the ENRA Research Strategy 2027–2032. The strategy aims to strengthen collaboration, embed impact, and ensure research continues to tackle Scotland's most pressing environmental and rural challenges.

Speakers emphasised that impact must be built into projects from the outset, using approaches such as Theory of Change, living labs and decision-support tools that link science with real-world outcomes. This aligns with CREW's own impact strategy, which embeds impact from project design through to completion and beyond.

Photo credit: Charles Bestwick

CREW's AI and flood forecasting project, led by the University of Strathclyde and requested by SEPA, was showcased as an example of science addressing real-world challenges through innovation and co-production.

Latest publications

Scottish One Health AMR Register (SOHAR): Updated research insights

Publication page

The Scottish One Health AMR Register (SOHAR) has been updated to reflect progress in antimicrobial resistance (AMR) research across Scotland since 2021. The refreshed register highlights significant advances in developing new treatments, improving antibiotic use, and understanding resistance in the environment. However, gaps remain in areas such as animal health, food systems, public behaviour, and health inequalities. Stakeholders stressed the importance of keeping SOHAR active, accessible, and collaborative, ensuring it supports real-world solutions. A new platform hosted by National Services Scotland will launch in late 2025, improving usability and strengthening Scotland's contribution to tackling AMR.

Photo credit: Anishka Cameron

Exploring the use of Artificial Intelligence for flood forecasting in Scotland

Publication page

This fellowship explored how Artificial Intelligence (AI) and Machine Learning could strengthen Scotland's flood forecasting. By reviewing research, assessing real-world examples, and consulting experts, the study found that AI is most effective when used to support rather than replace traditional forecasting. Early opportunities lie in improving how warnings are issued and communicated, whilst more complex applications will take longer to adopt. The project recommends a phased approach, starting with simple tools that deliver quick benefits, alongside training to ensure human expertise remains central.

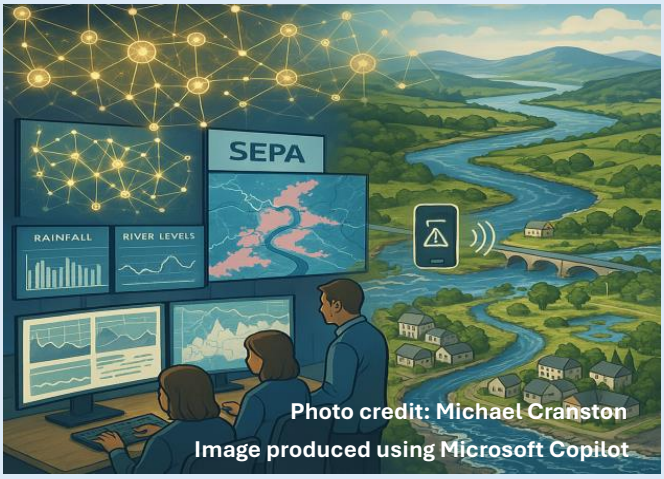

Photo credit: Michael Cranston
Image produced using Microsoft Copilot

To keep up to date with our published projects make sure to visit our publication page and take a look at our news articles for more information.

Recent Project Highlights

Household flood plans in Scotland – applying behavioural learnings to inform best practice and uptake

Project page

A newly started CREW project has already attracted national media attention. Led by Glasgow Caledonian University, with partners at the University of Glasgow and the James Hutton Institute, the £100,000 project aims to produce a household flood plan template to help households prepare amidst rising climate risks. The project is due to publish in early 2026.

Take a look at the online news articles below:

NewStart Magazine

Glasgow Times

Environment Journal


Photo credit: Rachel Helliwell

Past Project Highlights

Scotland Strengthens Research on Emerging Water Contaminants

Full News Article

Scotland is advancing its understanding of emerging contaminants in the water environment. Three CREW-commissioned projects explored substances such as PFAS, pharmaceuticals, microplastics, pesticides and antimicrobial-resistant genes, assessing their sources, pathways and potential risks to health and the environment. The findings highlight the need for expanded monitoring, improved data sharing and stronger collaboration between science and policy. Research on PFAS and other priority pollutants identified regional patterns and potential hotspots, supporting a more targeted approach to long-term surveillance.

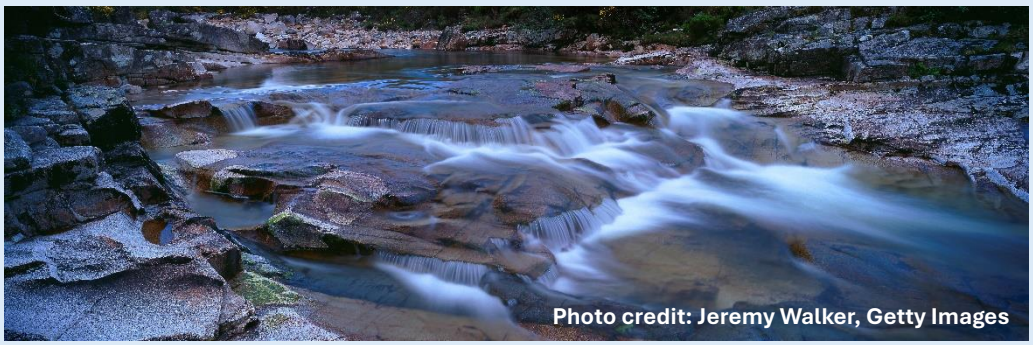
Photo credit: Jeremy Walker, Getty Images

Embedding Impact from Start to Finish: CREW's Collaborative Impact Strategy Impact

At CREW, we understand that impact is not a final step – it's built in from the very start. The ENRA Research Strategy consultation called for impact to be embedded and measurable across Scotland's research landscape. CREW's current approach already supports this ambition through early integration of impact planning, strong policy–research partnerships, and transparent evaluation. We continue to refine our methods to ensure that water research in Scotland remains responsive, collaborative, and capable of shaping the policies and practices that protect our environment.

Designing for Impact

Every CREW project begins with impact in mind. Our project request template includes a dedicated impact section, and ideas submitted through CREW calls are assessed by Scottish Government and its delivery partners for feasibility, urgency, and potential for impact. This early focus ensures that research questions are relevant, achievable, and capable of delivering meaningful change.

Identifying Types of Impact Through Icons

CREW projects use a set of icons - developed from an independent review of CREW's impact – to guide conversations around intended impacts from the start. When developing a project specification, the steering group selects the icons that best represent the outcomes they hope to achieve. These icons then feature throughout the project - in impact meetings, in the communications and impact plan, and during impact activities – to help build a clear narrative around impact. Impact categories and icons include:

Practice and capacity building

General awareness

Public health

Natural environment

Government policy

Institutional policy

Co-developing Pathways to Impact

Throughout the project lifecycle, each research team meets with CREW's Impact Officer and their steering group to discuss intended impacts – both immediate and long-term. Together, we identify potential users, sensitivities, and communication needs, creating a tailored Communications and Impact Plan. This co-development process helps keep projects focused on practical outcomes and fosters open collaboration.

Responsive and Bespoke Impact Support

No two CREW projects are the same. CREW provides tailored communications and impact support – ranging from facilitated stakeholder mapping and guidance on communication outputs to check-ins that ensure intended impacts still align and any changes are captured. By remaining flexible and responsive, CREW helps projects expand their reach and relevance.

Evaluating and Learning

CREW continually evaluates its processes and impact through project-end surveys, meeting feedback, and event reviews. Follow-up evaluations at six and twelve-months capture how findings have been used - whether in policy reviews, operational guidance, or new research. Insights are shared with project teams and partners to strengthen and encourage communication around impact.

Register of Expertise

Connecting opportunities and expertise in water science and policy, the Centre of Expertise for Waters (CREW) fosters collaboration between research and decision-making. Our Register of Expertise plays a key role in this effort. Please consider adding your skills and knowledge to the network.

Why should I register

Connect to opportunities

Reach out to colleagues and share your work

Explore skills and find solutions

Widen your network

Register

CREW - Scotland's centre of expertise for waters: Overview | LinkedIn

@crew-waters.bsky.social

@CREW_waters

CREW CENTRE OF EXPERTISE FOR WATERS www.crew.ac.uk

For general enquiries and feedback please contact us here: enquiries@crew.ac.uk