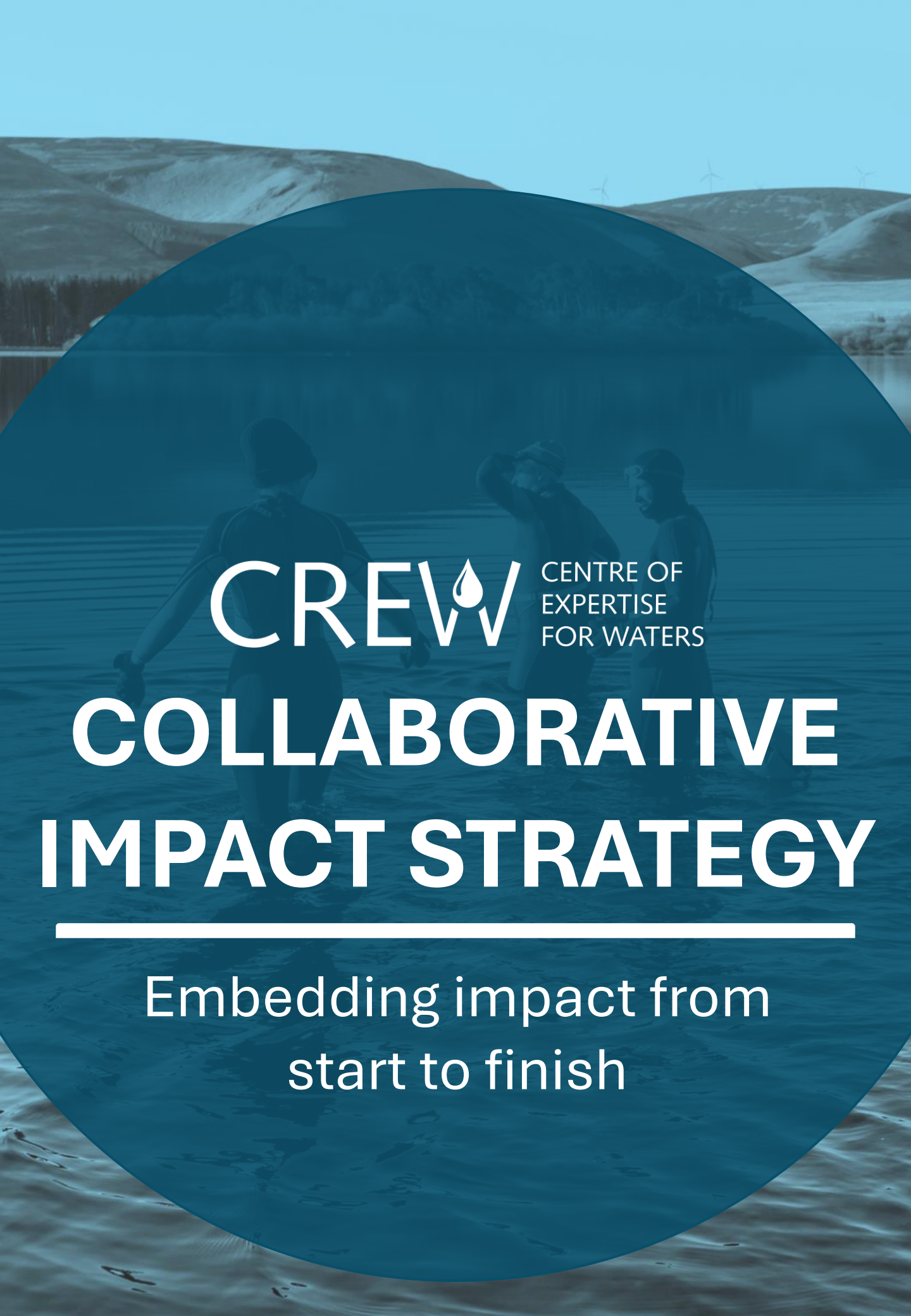




CREW

CENTRE OF  
EXPERTISE  
FOR WATERS

# COLLABORATIVE IMPACT STRATEGY

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Embedding impact from  
start to finish

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

At the Centre of Expertise for Waters (CREW), we understand that impact is not a final step – it's built in from the very start. The Environment, Natural Resources and Agriculture (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.

