Scotland's Environment Web – style guide

Part 1: Mandatory standards

Checklist

These essential standards must be applied to all documents.

& or and

Use the word 'and' instead of the symbol '&', unless you are quoting an organisation or document which uses the symbol.

/ or and/or

The '/' symbol means 'and/or' and is rarely applied correctly. Use the word 'and' or 'or' instead. Use an en-dash (-) to indicate a time span e.g. 2010-2011.

Acronyms and abbreviations

Spell out acronyms the first time they are used, with the acronym in brackets immediately afterwards. Use the acronym thereafter.

Spell out acronyms in tables, figures and graphs.

In long documents, repeat acronyms in full at the start of each section.

Do not use punctuation in abbreviations.

Alignment

Justify all text to the left.

Appendices

Consider whether the content you're allocating to appendices would be more useful in the body of the document. If not, refer to them with capitals (Appendix 1 etc.) and list them in the table of contents.

Bullet points

Standalone bullet points should be formatted as sentences, with an initial capital letter and a full stop. Introductory text should end with a full stop.

Bullet point lists should be formatted as extensions of the introductory text, with lower case initial letter and a semi-colon at the end.

Never put 'and' or 'or' at the end of the second to last bullet point, unless it is vital for meaning.

Capital letters

Use capitals for:

- the first letter of the first word in a heading, title or caption e.g. Bathing water results;
- specific areas or politically defined areas e.g. outer Hebrides, Central Belt;
- directorate, department, unit and team names;
- specific job titles e.g. Minister for the Environment, Environment Protection Officer;
- political institutions, organisations and parties;
- reference to other sections in a document e.g. Section 1, Appendix 3.

Don't use capitals for:

- chemical names e.g. carbon dioxide;
- areas defined by compass points e.g. north-east Scotland;
- reference to a generic rank e.g. ministers, directors;
- generic terms e.g. local authorities;
- SEPA core business e.g. habitat enhancement, diffuse pollution.

Chemicals and formulae

Give the full name of the chemical when first used, with the formula in brackets. Use the appropriate ^{superscript} and $_{subscript}$. It is ok to use the formula on its own thereafter.

Citations and references

When citing a further information source, hyperlink the most meaningful – i.e. relevant and descriptive – word(s) direct to the source. If the source is a document, rather than a webpage, then you must insert the file type and size in brackets after the hyperlink.

Please use the [Vancouver reference system](#) if your document has a reference list.

Copyright

All published documents are covered by copyright. If you use material from another source then you must make sure you are doing so legally.

This also applies to photographs – particularly any found online.

Dates

Right	Wrong
19 April 2011	19th April 2010
2009 – 2010 (note en dash, not hyphen)	2009/2010

Document titles

Document titles should be in title case - i.e. all words capitalised except pronouns, without a full stop at the end e.g. Annual Operating Plan.

References to published documents should be in italics and use the same capitalisation and punctuation as the document e.g. Concise Lexicon of Environmental Terms.

Emphasis

Use bold for emphasis, not italics or underlining. Use sparingly.

Fonts

All Arial.

- Document and section titles: 14pt bold
- Sub-headings: 12pt bold
- Under sub-headings: 11pt bold
- Body: 11pt
- Footnotes: 10pt

Footnotes

Number footnotes consecutively through the document. Use sparingly: if you have at least one footnote per page in a medium-sized document then you should use a reference list instead. Use Arial 10pt.

Fractions

When referring to fractions in a sentence, write them out in full and with hyphenation, e.g. 'two-thirds of the river' or 'three-quarters of the building'.

Only write fractions out in their numerical form when using them in graphs or charts, e.g. ½ or ¾.

Government

Specify which government you are referring to: UK, Scottish or otherwise.

All are referred to in singular form, and should include 'the' (in lower case) in their title e.g. "... for the Scottish Government ..." apart from when used as "Scottish Government policies include..."

Headings

Keep headings as short as possible. Only use a capital letter for the first letter of the first word unless the heading contains a proper word e.g. 'Waste management in Scotland'. Do not use a full stop at the end of headings. Use bold and see 'Font' for the correct font size.

Hyperlinks

Do not write the http:// part of web addresses unless the address does not contain www. Do not use the word 'here' as a hyperlink, because it is unhelpful to readers who use audio assistance.

Instead, link to a descriptive word or phrase e.g. "... the Water Framework Directive contains more information...".

If there is a chance your document will be printed by the end user then insert a footnote after the linked words and put the full address as the footnote.

Do not use pictures as hyperlinks.

Hyphenation

Preferred versions of commonly used words:

One word	Two words	Hyphenated
Dataset	Fly tipping	All words beginning with pre- and post-
Freshwater	Green space	Co-ordinate
Groundwater	Land use	Man-made
Hydropower	Water body	On-site
Online	Water course	Run-off
Website, webpage	Work stream	Web-based

i.e. and e.g.

Should appear as above.

Italics

Use italics for titles of books, films, plays and the names of periodicals.

Latin names

Give the common name as well as the Latin name in bracketed italics for animals and plant species, e.g. Atlantic Salmon (Salmo salar).

Legislation and regulations

Use the same punctuation and capitalisation when writing legislation and regulations in full. Use lower case when referring to them generically e.g. "The Water Framework Directive is an ambitious piece of legislation. The directive covers..."

Measurement units

Insert a space between numbers and their measurement units e.g. 1 km, 74 mm etc.

Numbers

Write numbers out in full from one to nine, and in digits for 10 and above. Measurement units always appear in digits e.g. 3%, 9 km. In a list of several items, use the most suitable format overall for the entire list e.g. " ...area into 364 surface water bodies (244 rivers, 6 canals, 38 loch water bodies, 73 coastal and 3 estuarine water bodies) and 20 groundwaters."

Use a comma for numbers of four figures or more, e.g. 1,000 and 10,000.

Figure numbers should be in bold, with 'Figure' spelt out in full i.e. not 'Fig', separated from figure legend text by a colon, e.g. Figure 1: Climate change trends in Scotland

Figure legends should end in a full-stop.

Percentages

Always use digits and the % symbol, never the words „per cent".

Places

Specific and politically defined places are capitalised e.g. Central Belt, European Union but areas defined by compass points are not e.g. north-east Scotland.

Plural and singular

SEPA is always referred to in singular form e.g. SEPA is, SEPA was. The same goes for other organisations e.g. "The Scottish Government was...", "Scottish Natural Heritage is...".

Quotations

Use double quotation marks (") when quoting something someone has said. When a quote is inside sentence, put the punctuation outside the quote. Put the punctuation inside the quote when it forms a standalone sentence.

Spacing

Use one space between sentences only. Use single line spacing in all documents.

Part 2: Online standards

These standards must be applied to the Scotland's Environment Web.

Document size

Try to keep the size of uploaded documents as small as possible, in order to make them easier and quicker to download.

Hyperlink behaviour

Hyperlinks should open in the same window unless they take the user to an external website, in which case they should open in a new window.

Do not write the http:// part of web addresses unless the address does not contain www. Do not use the word 'here' as a hyperlink, because it is unhelpful to readers who use audio assistance. Instead, link to a descriptive word or phrase e.g. "... the Water Framework Directive contains more information..."

Images

Only use images if they are absolutely essential. Any used images must:

- be relevant to the text;
- have as small a file size as possible without compromising usability;
- have useful alternative text 'alt text', for example 'SEPA staff taking water sample from a Scottish river'.

Do not use clip-art or animated GIFs in any circumstances. All images must be approved through SEPA Communications

Text formatting

Use the formatting buttons in the CMS to apply the following styles to each type of text.

- Page title in Heading 1;
- Sub-headings in Heading 2;
- Body text in Normal.

All text should be left justified.

Use one line space between Heading 1 and body text, and one line space between paragraphs.

If a bullet is more than two lines, separate each bullet with a one line space.

Do not underline any text. The CMS will automatically form at hyperlinks.

Only use italics as per the writing standard: for titles of publications. Use bold if you absolutely must emphasise a piece of text.

Titles and headings

Give your pages meaningful, concise titles so that users can quickly find the information they want to read.