

Hi SFG Supporters,



We hope this update finds you safe and well in 2021.

You may have noted a delay in our communications and that we are communicating from a new SFG mailbox. We will explain why we have transitioned to a new system and what it means for the SFG community moving forward.

There is vital membership information included in this email. Please read through it so that you are clear on the next steps and how everyone can help with SFG transition work.

SEPA Cyber-Attack

On Christmas Eve, the Scottish Environment Protection Agency (SEPA) was the subject of a significant, complex and sophisticated cyber-attack affecting its contact centre, internal systems, processes and communications.

SEPA email systems, staff schedules, some data products and reporting tools remain impacted and offline. Information submitted to SEPA since Christmas Eve, including by email, is not currently accessible.

More information about the cyber-attack is [available on SEPA's website](#). It contains service updates, practical advice and information on how to make contact with SEPA.

SFG Coordination Impacts and Response

As you may know the SFG Coordinator role has flowed from one affiliated partner organisation to another. This handover tradition has taken place between SFG Coordinators for more than 50 years.

I assumed SFG leadership responsibility from Autumn 2016 and SEPA supports me in that capacity. This means that since then, and up to Christmas Eve, I have managed SFG email communications, membership relations and basic personal data (i.e. names, affiliations and email addresses), to UK Government security standards, within the SEPA system.

The SEPA cyber-attack has impacted access to SFG emails and the SFG membership list since Christmas Eve. I have responded by working with the organisation to resume SFG communication as swiftly as possible. This now sits and will continue to sit outside of the SEPA system in a new SFG mailbox and independent cloud-based system governed by the SFG Team. I have also worked with

the SFG Team to embed some related membership changes as part of this response. We will cover these items in more detail shortly.

The situation has not disrupted important work of SFG's four Action Teams (AT) projects. SFG collaborations for overcoming planetary crises and connecting people with freshwaters are ongoing. In fact some ATs are busy preparing virtual contributions for the World Water Day event on Mon 22 March. Neither has it affected recent SFG survey feedback which we are also working our way through. Nor were special plans for SFG's Spring meeting led by our Hydro Nation Scholars impacted. This online event will go ahead on Thurs 22 April and agenda details will follow in the coming weeks. Thanks to everyone involved in coordinating these SFG community initiatives. Your efforts continue to be a great source of reassurance, connectivity and inspiration!

SFG Transition Begins Now

The SFG Team has learned from what happened. We have placed SFG's best interests at the heart of our decision-making and done this with the long-term view in mind. We have transitioned SFG membership communication out of the conventional affiliation-based model. The move into a new and independent SFG cloud-based system begins now.

This will create more flexibility for the SFG community. We need this edge to navigate in an ever-changing world and build resilient practices into the SFG Team. This may mean opportunities to gain experience, share duties and step in where needed. Like we do through other SFG initiatives. For example Guest Coordinator roles and Action Team projects. So that SFG work will go on whatever the circumstances and people in our membership can grow by helping to sustain it.

We are building back in a way that enables the SFG community to be better prepared to weather storms well. There is much SFG work yet to do and we will continue leading important freshwater contributions for many years to come.

This is where you can play a key part. We need the help of everyone to support a successful SFG membership transition by following 3 key steps:

1. SFG Contact Email

From now, this new email address (scottishfreshwatergroup@gmail.com) will serve as the primary channel for communicating with our SFG members and vice versa for you to get in touch with us.

To help, [please ensure that your email settings](#) recognise the new SFG mailbox as a safe sender. This will avoid future messages getting filtered out as spam email or hidden in junk folders. Thank you.

There is no going back to the former SFG mailbox. If you have contacted us and not received a reply, [please forward your email here](#) instead. We will respond to you as soon as we can.

SFG social media has been quieter than usual during this transition period. We will pick up activity on SFG Twitter and Facebook channels following this update. The [SFG Website](#) reflects these changes and helps to signpost others in our direction.

2. SFG Membership Joining Form

From now, all original and new SFG members will need to [opt in](#) for joining the SFG membership. This includes the current SFG Team and previous SFG Coordinators. It is free to join and takes only a few minutes to register for a potential lifetime of SFG membership.

To help, [please use the SFG membership joining form](#) which we created for this onboarding purpose and consists of three key parts. It is a UK General Data Protection Regulation (UK GDPR) requirement for enabling the transition process and administering your SFG membership. The first part contains important joining information. It relates to the SFG Privacy Statement. So that we are explicit about how the SFG Team will process your personal data and special category personal data for specific and compatible purposes. This is for you to read and understand before filling in the form and consenting to join the SFG membership. The second part will be familiar and relates to minimal [necessary](#) information. So that we can remain in contact and keep you updated on SFG matters. The third part contains a built-in aspect and relates to minimal [optional](#) information. So that we can understand and respect your motivation for joining the SFG community. We will consider these reasons in a collective context and privacy-friendly way. For example shaping future SFG initiatives that meet membership needs. Thank you.

You might prefer using a different email address than the one we have made contact on. You can tell us when completing the [SFG membership joining form](#) and by returning it as soon as possible. You may wish to request a change or erasure to your personal data in the future. Please let us know by email and we will amend your preferences accordingly.

There will be a single reminder to follow in the coming weeks. The SFG Team will phase out contact details if no responses have been received within [one month](#) and delete the interim SFG membership list when it is no longer required. After that transition period has elapsed only

registered SFG members will receive further communications by email. Of course, you can join or leave anytime. More SFG updates are due to come out ahead of our Spring meeting. You will have access to this information if you submit the form and consent to joining the SFG membership on a new UK GDPR agreement. We aim to catch up with the bulk of registrations by [1 April 2021](#) and manage additional uptake thereafter. We ask that SFG meeting agendas are not forwarded onto others for security reasons. Anyone interested in joining can approach the SFG Team or [SFG Website](#) for support.

3. SFG Moving Forward

So far we have rebuilt ~70% of our SFG membership from scratch. It involved piecing together SFG coordination knowledge inside a new and independent cloud-based system for SFG Team processing and communication. For example from previous agenda contributions, active involvement in our initiatives and recollection of meeting attendance. This information will serve as the interim SFG membership list and clarifies how we managed to contact you. Despite best intentions it is not feasible to identify contact details for ~500 people spanning the water community in Scotland and beyond. Unfortunately, this leaves ~30% of our SFG members unaccounted-for. So we need extra support with SFG recovery work.

To help, [please share this SFG email](#) across your professional networks. It will shine a spotlight on the SFG membership and encourage those interested in joining to contact us. More information is on the [SFG Website](#) and may be useful to point others towards that resource. Thank you.

From now, there could be flurries of cross-postings on emails and we ask that you bear with us for a while. Please keep relaying this SFG message on our behalf if you can. We are very keen to reconnect with as many original members as possible and expand our horizons. This will establish a SFG community passionate about sharing expertise and shaping outcomes for freshwaters. One that focuses on serving the environment to the best of our capabilities and developing leaders to sustain the work we do.

Thank you for continued SFG support through the hard-hitting times as well as the good. We value all your volunteer-led contributions. Look forward to hearing back from you!

Best wishes,

Pauline & the SFG Team

