

# Water testing system unveiled

SCIENTISTS AT the Scottish Crop Research Institute (SCRI) in Invergowrie have pioneered a way of testing water quality—using the DNA fingerprinting technology with which police forces track down criminals.

The new computer-aided techniques will give better and more efficient analyses of water samples than was previously possible—crucial as the deadline for complying with European directives on water quality rapidly approaches.

DNA sampling allows bacteria to be tracked much more quickly, and without the need for scientists looking at samples under microscopes in a laboratory.

EnPrint, the institute's first spin-out company, will develop and market the technology, for what should be a burgeoning market.

The European Union's water framework directive (WFD) has made monitor-

ing and improving water sources a key requirement of government policy, with targets to be met by 2015.

EnPrint chief executive Dr Rayne Longhurst said, "This is an exciting technology with a ready-made market opportunity presented by the water framework directive, which we are eager to start developing.

"The medical and forensic fields already benefit from DNA fingerprinting technology and EnPrint is perfectly placed to take advantage of introducing a similar approach in the environmental sector."

Genomia Seed Fund is to provide start-up capital of £150,000.

Perth and Kinross enterprise and infrastructure convener John Kellas congratulated the SCRI.

"We are very lucky to have an organisation like SCRI here," he said. "It is a

very important employer and carries out some very important work which puts our area on the map in terms of its groundbreaking research in this field.

"This is incredible technology and we are very proud that it has been developed in Perth and Kinross."

Scotland's environment minister Roseanna Cunningham praised the project, describing it as an "exciting example of the practical uses our scientists are applying their experience and expertise to."

"Water quality is of paramount importance, as it is essential for clean drinking water and supports the healthy environments and habitats for which Scotland is renowned," she said.

In 2006, 734 km of Scots watercourses rated as poor or seriously polluted.

