

## POLICY ZONE E: OTTER NARROWS

### LANDSCAPE CHARACTERISTICS

The landscape is comprised of hummocky land forms with rocky outcrops on the east and west sides of the loch. Upland areas are a large-scale mosaic of forestry with small areas of open moorland. Some areas are wooded down to the coastline, with coniferous woodland on the west and deciduous woodland along the track leading to the Ballimore Estate.

### SEASCAPE CHARACTERISTICS

Generally, the coastline around Otter Ferry is composed of pebble and shingle sand beaches north and south of the pier. Otter Spit, which originates on the east side of the loch dominates the seascape. The beach on the south side of the pier eventually transitions into the large (1.5 km long) spit that protrudes into the loch narrowing the water body and forming a natural separation between the upper and lower loch. The coastline is not particularly indented north of the spit. South of Otter Spit there is a large intertidal area. On the west side, the coastline is more rugged with a steep cliff shore running from policy zone D into E that transitions into a lower relief shore before Achnaba. The shore at Achnaba is composed of boulders and cobbles with bedrock outcrops that becomes a finer substrate as the bay sweeps round to Port Ann. The northern part of the bay contains an area of salt marsh habitat. The rugged bedrock headland to the east of this overlooks the island Glas Eilean, which also dominates the view from Achnaba across the loch to Otter Ferry.



Otter Spit (An Oitir)



Intertidal sand flat south of Otter Spit

### ACCESS

At Achnaba there is a private slipway adjacent to a breakwater. On the east side at Otter Ferry, the loch can be accessed via a stone pier and a floating pontoon. A short distance to the north, two paths lead off the road onto the shore. Boats may be launched from trailers at this location.



Vehicle access to shore south of Otter Spit



Pier at Otter Ferry



The Oyster Catcher Inn at Otter Ferry



Shore access north of Otter Ferry

## VISUAL AMENITY

On the west side of the policy zone, views over the loch from the A83 are intermittent and very occasional. There are clear views over to Otter Ferry from Achnaba, but not from Port Ann which is set back from the coast. Port Ann Bay and Glas Eilean are particularly scenic. On the east side, the single track B8000 runs parallel to the shore with open views to the west over Otter Spit and across to Achnaba and Glas Eilean. Views of the loch are open at Otter Ferry, focussing along the spit, or southwards out across the more extensive lower loch.

## SETTLEMENTS

There are around 20 properties congregated at Achnaba, with a few individual dwellings around the main development. At Otter Ferry, there is a small cluster of homes, the Oyster Catcher Inn, and a village shop.

## CURRENT USES

*Refer to policy zone E activity map for locations of current activities.*

### Aquaculture

There is an active oyster farm situated on the estate-owned foreshore at Ballimore.

### Fishing

There is an active commercial fishery for prawn and queen scallops north and south of Otter Spit, and to the west of Glas Eilean. However, fishing activity within this policy zone is somewhat restricted by subsea cables.



Oyster trestles on foreshore at Ballimore House

### Marine Infrastructure

Subsea power cables extend from Otter Ferry to Port Ann. An out of service telephone cable runs adjacent to the shore from Port Ann to the south of the policy zone and lands just north of Ardrishaig.

### Discharges

There is one local authority outfall discharge within this policy zone, located at Port Ann.

### Recreation

Angling - This is a popular area for angling charter boats, particularly north of the spit and the narrows, where dogfish are caught tagged and returned.

Diving - There are two scenic dive sites in this policy zone: Glas Eilean and Otter Narrows (West of Otter Spit - 50 m). Numerous research dives have been made on a large area of maerl, west of the narrows.

Sailing - This is a popular area for recreational boating and the recent addition of a floating jetty at Otter Ferry together with five visitor moorings has encouraged sailors to stop at the Oyster Catcher Inn. There are designated anchorages at Achnaba and Otter Ferry.

### Charter Boats

Ardrishaig Charter boats occasionally run an evening cruise to the Oyster Catcher Inn from Ardrishaig.

### Coastal Paths

At Port Ann, there is a hiking path leading to the ruin of a ferryman's cottage and old pier. From this path, there are views to Otter Ferry over Port Ann Bay and Glas Eilean, and south to lower Loch Fyne. There is also a coastal path at Otter Ferry.



Pontoon at Otter Ferry



Breakwater at Achnaba



Port Ann Bay

## DESIGNATIONS

Refer to policy zone E designation map for areas covered.

### Argyll and Bute Development Plan (Structure and Local Plan) Designations

- Settlements of Achnaba and Port Ann each have areas designated as 'Developed Coast' (a coastal area of Countryside Around Settlement).
- Land immediately adjacent to the shore on the east and west sides of the loch is designated as 'Undeveloped Coast' (a coastal area of Sensitive Countryside).
- Slopes above Otter Ferry and to the west of Achnaba are designated as Rural Opportunity Areas.
- Both the west and east coastlines of this policy zone, including Otter Spit, are designated as Areas of Panoramic Quality – West Loch Fyne Coast and East Loch Fyne Coast.

### Other Designations

- Land around Otter Ferry and Ballimore Estate is a 'Designated Garden & Designed Landscape'.
- The 'Loch Fyne Coastal Strip' Shellfish Growing Water extends throughout the length of the policy zone.

## WILDLIFE

One of the two sills that separate the basins of Loch Fyne is found at the Otter Narrows. Because of the relatively high tidal currents through the narrows, the seabed substrate is composed of pebbles and cobbles on sand and shelly gravel, in contrast to the more common finer muds found in deeper areas with less tidal movement. This area hosts an abundance of brittle stars, and a Maerl bed is located to the west of the spit, which is alongside and mixed in with a large bed of the file shell (*Limaria hians*). Beds of both maerl and the file shell are UK Biodiversity Action Plan priority habitats. The spit also has a super-abundant population of mussels. Otter Spit itself is a haven for seabirds and waders, with recordings of many species such as black and red-throated divers, sandpipers, razor bills, oyster catchers, black guillemot, turn stones and dunlin. Glas Eilean also hosts numerous seabirds. The Killail Burn enters Loch Fyne just north of Otter Ferry and is noted by the Argyll Fisheries Trust as significant for wild salmon and sea trout.



Glas Eilean, located off Port Ann Bay

## HISTORICAL FEATURES

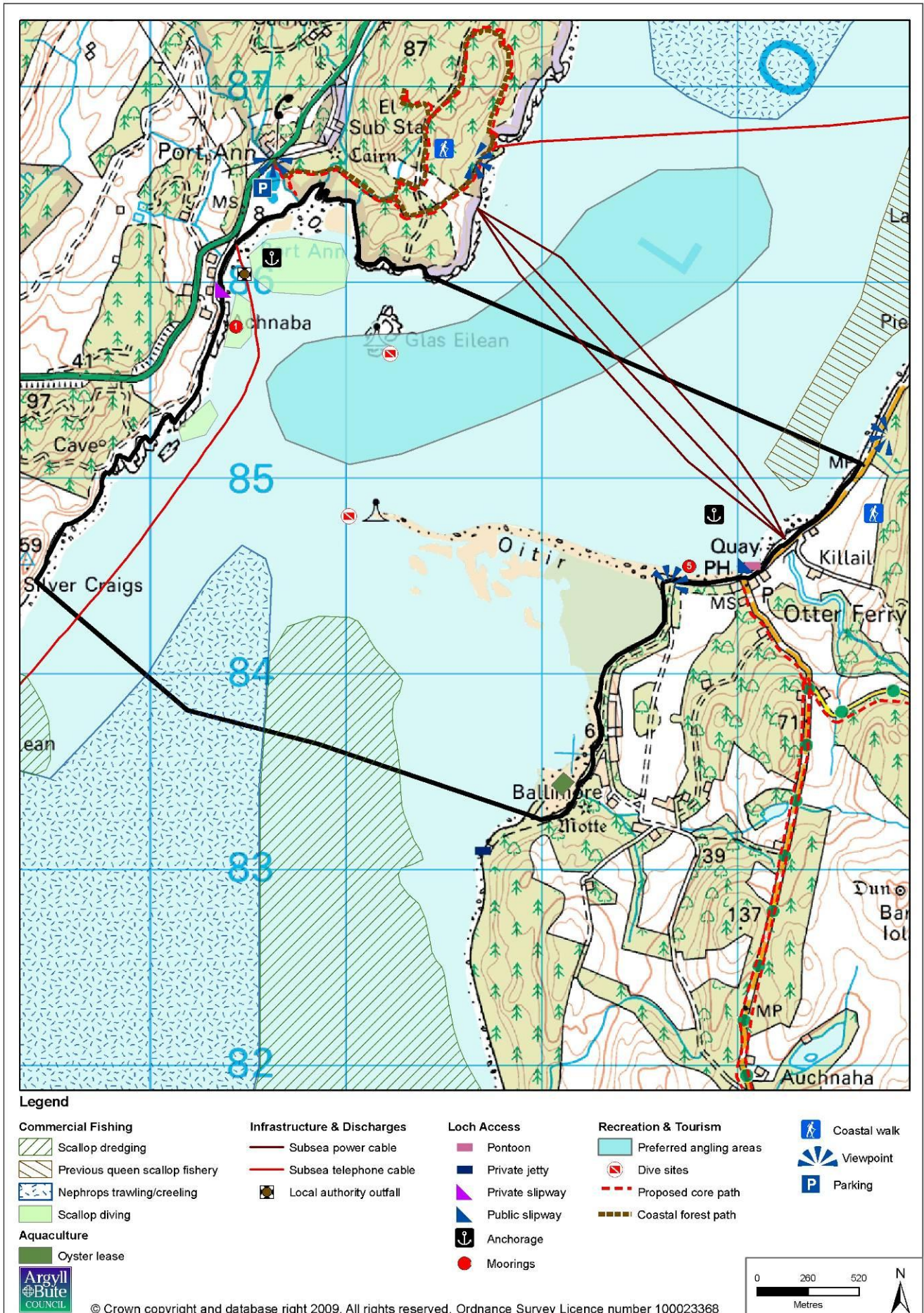
- Ballimore House (category B listed building) on Ballimore Estate (category C(S) listed) is an impressive 19<sup>th</sup> century baronial home, with extensive landscaped gardens, which are a Designated Garden and Designed Landscape.
- Cnoc Mhic Eoghainn, motte, a scheduled ancient monument is situated 340m west of Ballimore Estate.
- Otter Ferry Pier (category C listed), built in early 19<sup>th</sup> century for ferry (long out of use) to West Otter Ferry, Glassary Parish.
- Otter Ferry House, category C listed, built in the latter 18 century.



Ballimore House

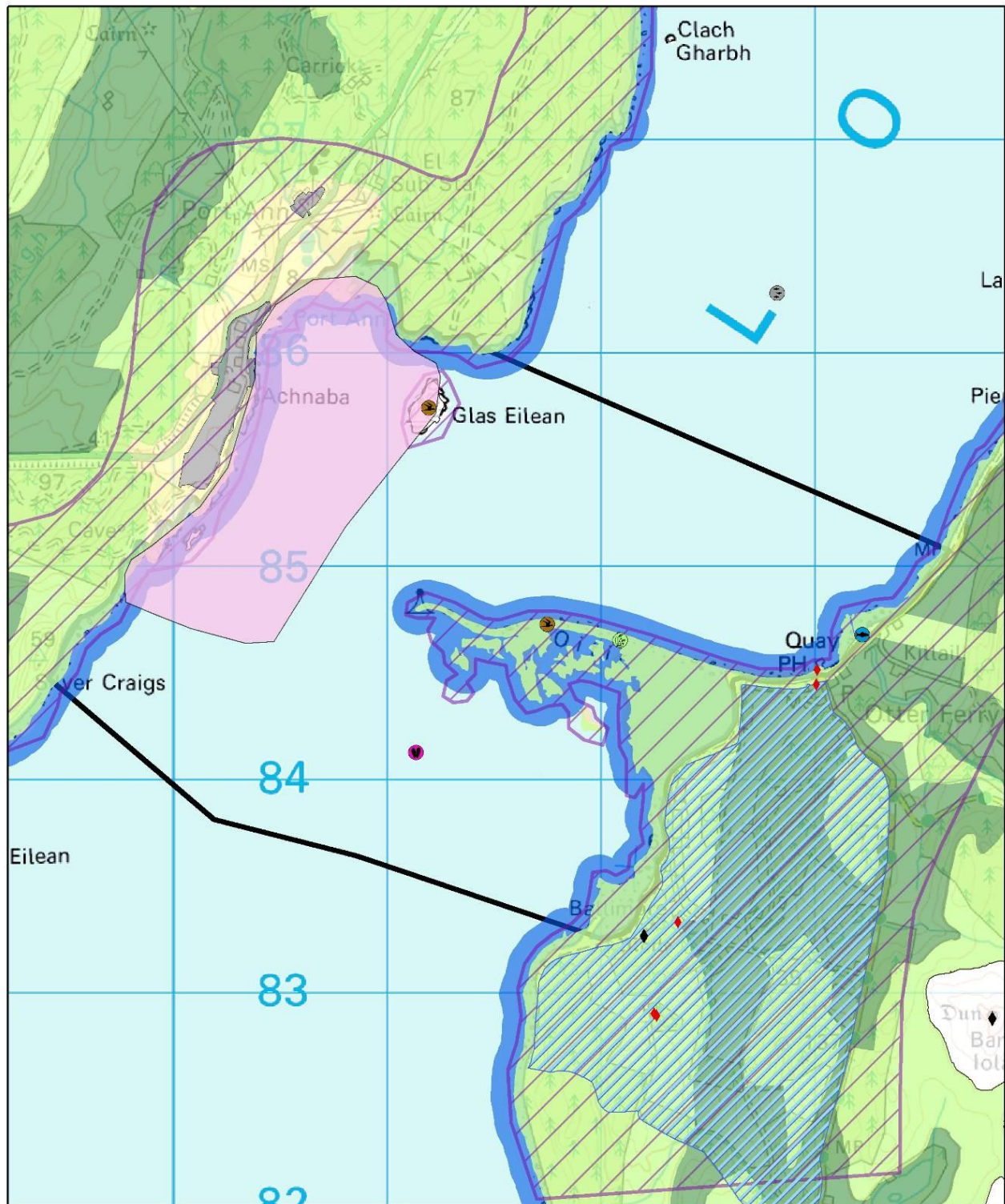


# POLICY ZONE E MAP – Current Uses & Activities





# POLICY ZONE E MAP – Designations, Wildlife Interests & Historic Features



## Legend

**Development Plan Designations**

- Countryside Around Settlement
- Rural Opportunity Area
- Sensitive Countryside
- Very Sensitive Countryside
- Settlement Zones
- Areas of Panoramic Quality

**Other Statutory Designations**

- Gardens & Designated Landscapes
- Shellfish Growing Water

**Wildlife Interests**

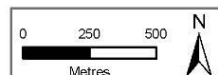
- Basking sharks
- File shells
- Nesting seabirds
- Special habitat interest - Otter Spit
- Mixed maerl & file shell bed
- Wildfish restoration rivers

**Historic Environment**

- Coastal Listed Buildings
- Coastal Scheduled Ancient Monuments



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## OPPORTUNITIES AND CONSTRAINTS FOR FUTURE USE AND DEVELOPMENT

### Constraints

<i>Future Use</i>	
<b>Infrastructure</b>	Subsea cables in this policy zone could be damaged by trawling or dredging, and anchoring of commercial and recreational vessels. The presence of these cables restricts trawling and dredging in much of the policy zone. Mariners should take care not to anchor close to, or over, the subsea cables.
<b>Areas sensitive to disturbance</b>	High speed motorised water-sports and other water craft should avoid disturbance to islands/skerries that are important for seabirds and seals, particularly during sensitive periods such as breeding seasons (see SMWWC – Appendix VII).

<i>Development</i>	
<b>Biodiversity</b>	Much of the seabed and intertidal area in this policy zone is particularly sensitive to physical damage or disturbance from aquaculture or mooring development.
<b>Seascape</b>	Opportunities for development are limited by the narrowing of the channel of water around Otter Spit creating a sense of 'gateway' into the inner loch, experienced from the sea.
<b>Historic setting</b>	<p>The setting of the spit itself and the woodlands associated with the designed landscape at Ballimore are sensitive to aquaculture development.</p> <p>The setting of the scheduled monument Cnoc Mhic Eoghainn Motte near Ballimore is sensitive to coastal development and should be considered separately to the surrounding designed landscape. Developers are therefore recommended to consult Historic Scotland at an early stage regarding any proposals in the vicinity.</p>
<b>Navigation</b>	Marine development in much of this policy zone is likely to affect safe navigation around Otter Spit.
<b>Infrastructure</b>	Aquaculture and mooring development is restricted by the location of subsea power cables in the north of the policy zone.
<b>Activities</b>	Areas not identified as sensitive in wildlife terms are already utilised by activities such as recreational angling and commercial fishing.

### Opportunities<sup>1</sup>

<i>Future Use</i>	
<b>Recreation</b>	<p>The stone pier and pontoon at Otter Ferry should be maintained in good condition and promoted to recreational boaters.</p> <p>Additional facilities for recreational boaters could be developed at Otter Ferry as part of an overall strategy to promote sailing in upper Loch Fyne. Such developments could include a public slipway at Otter Ferry, which would be particularly useful for sea anglers, additional car parking, and a shower facility for yachtsmen.</p>
<i>Development</i>	
<b>Recreation</b>	<p>Opportunities exist to improve loch access at Achnaba and repair the existing breakwater.</p> <p>This is a scenic and biologically diverse part of Loch Fyne, and recreational boating could be developed further with improvements at nearby Ardrishaig which is an Area for Action in the Argyll and Bute Development Plan (Structure and Local Plan).</p> <p>This policy zone is close to both Lochgilphead and Ardrishaig, with easy access on the water to upper and lower Loch Fyne.</p>

<sup>1</sup> Opportunities identified are indicative, subject to obtaining the required consents, and do not preclude development applications and activities elsewhere.

## DEVELOPMENT POLICIES FOR AQUACULTURE<sup>2</sup>

Where the following development policies indicate presumption in favour of development, this will be subject to any development proposal being consistent with relevant policies within the Argyll and Bute Development Plan (Structure and Local Plan).

### FINFISH DEVELOPMENT POLICY

#### Finfish Development Policy PZE-1

There will be a general presumption against any scale of new finfish farm development within this policy zone.

##### Justification

- Landscape/seascape capacity study indicates that there is no potential to accommodate new finfish development due to the characteristic dynamics and scenic qualities of the coastline, with views to the shingle spit at Otter Ferry sensitive to encroaching development (Grant 2007).
- This area is important for recreational use (Loch Fyne ICZM Group)
- The presence of subsea cabling, anchorages, commercial fishing activities, recreational boating and potential conflict with wildlife interests (e.g. important salmonid spawning burn, maerl bed, file shell bed and resident bird populations) make this policy zone unsuitable for development (Marine and Coastal Development Unit 2009).

### SHELLFISH DEVELOPMENT POLICY

#### Shellfish Development Policy PZE-2

There will be a general presumption against any scale of new shellfish farm development or expansion to the existing oyster farm site within this policy zone.

##### Justification

- Landscape/seascape capacity study indicates that there is no potential to accommodate new shellfish development due to the characteristic dynamics and scenic qualities of the coastline, with views to the shingle spit at Otter Ferry sensitive to encroaching development (Grant 2007).
- This site is important for recreational use (Loch Fyne ICZM Group 2009)
- The presence of subsea cabling, anchorages, commercial fishing activities, recreational boating and potential conflict with wildlife interests (e.g. important salmonid spawning burn, maerl bed, file shell bed and resident bird populations) make this policy zone unsuitable for development (Marine and Coastal Development Unit 2009).
- Landscape/seascape analysis of the existing oyster farm development at Ballimore recommends that this development should not expand north into the remainder of the bay or onto the intertidal area south of the spit (Grant 2007).

### ON-SHORE AQUACULTURE-RELATED DEVELOPMENT POLICY

#### On-shore Aquaculture-Related Development Policy PZE-3

There will be a general presumption against all scales of on-shore aquaculture-related developments on land adjacent to policy zone E.

##### Justification

- Landscape/seascape capacity study indicates that there is no potential to accommodate new on-shore development (Grant 2007).
- Road transportation links are likely to be restrictive and there are no appropriate areas for land-based developments along the coast of this policy zone (Marine and Coastal Development Unit 2009).

<sup>2</sup> Policies do not preclude the submission of applications for shellfish or finfish development in areas where presumption against development has been identified.