# POLICY ZONE K: STRONE POINT TO CREGGANS

# LANDSCAPE CHARACTERISTCS

The landscape at the head of Loch Fyne is characterised by a narrow and confined water body enclosed by steep slopes rising to individual summits on all sides. On the west, the hinterland is extensively wooded, down to the densely wooded foreshore which obscures views from the coastal road. To the north, the long, narrow head of Loch Fyne reaches back towards the glacial U-shaped valley of Glen Fyne, and the steep rising slopes create a tight enclosure. The narrow loch appears less enclosed along the eastern shore, where more gentle slopes extend down to the water. The hinterland here is a diverse mix of grazing land, woodland, lines of mature trees and the designed landscape associated with Ardkinglas House and Gardens.

#### SEASCAPE CHARACTERISTICS

From Strone Point to the head of the loch, the coastline extends alongside a narrow band of water, from where the opposite shore is clearly visible. The regularity of the coastline is only broken by the point at Dunderave Castle. The head of the loch is characterised by shallow waters, with a long tidal reach of mud and shingle revealed at low tide, a characteristic also found along the foreshore at Cairndow. The coastline is even, with few indentations, although the deposition at the head of the loch creates fragmented islands of shingle and alluvial deposit. From Cairndow to Creggans, the distinct bays and promontories create a more irregular shoreline than the opposite shore. South of St. Catherines, the coast becomes less indented and also slightly more exposed, as the loch widens.







West side of policy zone K

Shore at Ardno

Shoreline at Tighcladich

# **ACCESS**

From Strone Point to Clachan there is no formalised access to the water due to steep embankments. At the Loch Fyne Oyster Bar, sailors using the visitor moorings can tender ashore and walk up onto the road. There is a private slip at the Lighthouse Caledonia shore-base at Ardkinglas, and a slip on the estate at the Loch Fyne Oysters shellfish processing shore-base.



Shellfish depuration and processing facility at Ardkinglas



Access to shore at Ardkinglas to service oyster trestles

Access to the shore south of Cairndow until St. Catherines is restricted as the main road turns inland and the only access is via un-surfaced tracks through the Ardkinglas Estate. There are various points along the estate tracks where tractors can drive onto the shore to grade and harvest cultivated oysters. The shoreline track runs to Tighcladich at which point only walking access is possible further along the coast.

At St. Catherines, there is a narrow track cleared through the trees which allows vehicle access to the shore opposite the caravan site. Opposite the disused St. Catherines Hotel, there is a privately owned concrete pier/slipway that Argyll and Bute Council currently manage. From Creag a'Phuill, there is vehicle track running towards Ardnagowan which becomes a paved walking path parallel to the shore. At Ardnagowan, there is a narrow metal ramp into the loch and the Ministry of Defence have a private slip.



Coastline parallel to walking path south of Ardno



Jetty at Creggans Inn



Slip at Ardnagowan into MOD exclusion zone



Argyll and Bute Council slip at St. Catherine's

# **VISUAL AMENITY**

Throughout the year, views of the loch from the public road are obscured by trees from Strone Point to Dunderave, after which views are intermittent, becoming more open at the head of the loch. The settlement of Cairndow overlooks the upper loch and the woodland of the Ardkinglas Estate. From here, the relative lack of trees between the road and the shoreline allows frequent views of the loch. From the A815 heading south, there are intermittent long distance views of the loch in both directions until St. Catherines, where unobstructed views of the loch and Inveraray are re-established as the road becomes parallel with the shore. Along the track roads through the Ardkinglas Estate, on the coastal path at Ardno, and at Ardnagowan, views are channelled along the length of the loch in both directions. Between St. Catherines and Creggans, the shoreline is consistently overlooked, not so much from the road, but from the scattered settlements, which are tucked along the shoreline.

# **SETTLEMENTS**

From Strone Point to Clachan, the coast is largely unsettled with occasional houses, mostly on the landward side of the road. At the head of the loch, the main development is comprised of the Loch Fyne Oyster Bar and Shop, "Here we are" community and visitor centre, and a garden centre and gift shop. Further round the coast there is the occasional dwelling or farm property, until the small settlement of Cairndow is reached. There are a number of residential and commercial buildings located within the grounds of the Ardkinglas Estate, mostly linked with the aquaculture business.

Further south are a few isolated dwellings, recreational and farm buildings at Ardno and Tighcladich, and then the small linear settlement of St. Catherines. Between St. Catherines and Creggans, the coastline is relatively well-developed, with frequent small settlements and dispersed houses.

# **CURRENT USES**

Refer to policy zone K map for locations of current activities.

#### Aquaculture

Activities are mostly located on or in the sea area adjacent to the Ardkinglas Estate. Loch Fyne Oysters are based at Cairndow and have an oyster and mussel farm in this area. Lighthouse Caledonia Ltd. has their primary salmon processing plant, operational headquarters and engineering workshops at Cairndow. The Estate also houses a salmon smolt production facility, owned by Lakeland Marine. Lighthouse Caledonia is planning to relinquish an existing Crown Estate seabed lease for a salmon farm at Cairndow which has not been in use since 2006.



Mussel lines in upper Loch Fyne off Ardkinglas



Mussel farm barge and lines in upper Loch Fyne



Lighthouse Caledonia Shore Base at Ardkinglas



Mussel lines at Ardkinglas

Current Aquaculture Sites						
Location	Species	Consented Equipment	Maximum Biomass	Operator	Shore-base Location	Development Status
Ardkinglas	Mussel	15, 200 m longlines	n/a	Loch Fyne Oysters Ltd.	Cairndow	Developed/Active
Ardkinglas	Oyster	2500 trestles - 8 m long	n/a	Loch Fyne Oysters Ltd	Cairndow	Developed/Active

# Fishing

Creeling occurs throughout the policy zone. South of Dunderave down to Creggans, trawling occurs quite close to shore with the exception of a Ministry of Defence (MOD) exclusion area. An agreement with commercial trawler men restricts trawling in waters shallower than 50 m between Dunderave Castle and the head of the loch. On occasion, members of the public collect mussels from the shore north of Cairndow.

# Recreation

# **Diving**

There are three scenic dive sites, two of which are deep water dives at Creag a'Phuill and Dunderave Point, and a shore dive near St. Catherines. Concerns have been raised about groups of divers parking in passing places and private driveways near St, Catherines.

#### Sailing

Four visitor moorings are provided by the Loch Fyne Oyster Bar. There are numerous private boat moorings and three private slipways along the eastern stretch of this policy zone. There are also a number of small recreational boats tied up along the shore or sitting by coastal properties indicating a high recreational use in the area, particularly at St. Catherines, Creag a'Phuill, Ardnagowan and Creggans. Additionally, there is an anchorage just south of the point before Cairndow, opposite Ardkinglas House and a good anchorage exists opposite the war memorial just 500 m north of Cairndow (Houston 2004).



Bay at Creag a' Phuill

# Ministry of Defence (MOD)

All the sea area of the policy zone south of Ardchyline is within an MOD exercise area used for the running and turning of submarines and other vessels, which encompasses a smaller MOD hydrophone area.

#### Marine Infrastructure

Two in-service subsea telephone cables transect the loch from St. Catherines across to Inveraray and a trial cable across to Strone Point running into Loch Shira. A second telecommunications cable that is out of service runs parallel to the coastline from St. Catherines to just north of the MOD exclusion area.

# **Discharges**

There are a number of discharges via sea outfalls in the policy zone, including two SEPA consented discharge outfalls, two outfalls that are not designated at Rubha Mor, and two private discharge outfalls at Dhuinain.

#### **DESIGNATIONS**

Refer to policy zone K map for areas covered.

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

- The majority of land adjacent to this policy zone is designated as 'Undeveloped Coast' (a coastal area of Sensitive Countryside).
- The settlements of Cairndow, St. Catherines, Creag a'Phuill, Ardnagowan and Creggans are designated as 'Developed Coast' (a coastal area of Countryside Around Settlement).
- Rural Opportunity Areas exist around the head of Loch Fyne at Clachan, along the A815 above Ardkinglas and Ardno, each side of St. Catherines, and on the landward side of the road at Ardnagowan.
- The surrounding land area is part of the North Argyll & East Loch Fyne Coast Areas of Panoramic Quality.

# **Other Designations**

- The Ardkinglas Estate is listed in the Inventory of Historic Gardens and Designed Landscapes.
- Ardchyline Wood Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) is designated for ancient, semi-natural woodland.
- Strone Point, North Loch Fyne SSSI is designated for geological interests.
- Upper Loch Fyne, from a line between Dalchenna and Creag a'Phuill to the head of the loch, is a Marine Consultation Area.
- The 'Loch Fyne Coastal Strip' Shellfish Growing Water extends throughout the length of the policy zone.
- Inverfyne has been identified as an Area For Action.

# **WILDLIFE**

Soft undisturbed mud is found at the head of the loch, down to about 15 m. A recent Seasearch survey in April 2008 recorded dense populations of the fireworks anemone (*Pachycerianthus multiplicatus*) at two sites at the head of the loch, just north of Ardgenavan, which were comparable with densities found in Loch Shira. Many streams run into this policy area from the steep slopes surrounding the upper loch. Two major rivers, the Fyne and Ardkinglas, are significant wild fish rivers and are both part of restoration efforts in the area. Many species of bird are common along the shores of this policy zone including oyster catchers, shags, eider ducks and goldeneyes, particularly around the shellfish farms.

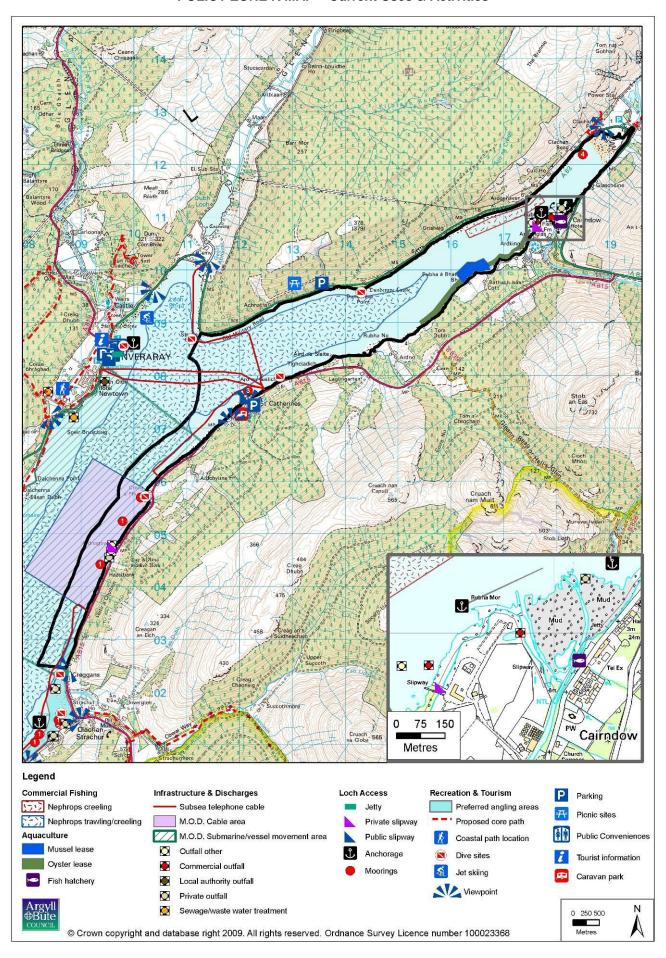
# HISTORICAL FEATURES

- Dunderave Castle A listed building, built in 1596.
- Telford Bridge built in 1745 to span the River Fyne and carries an old military road.
- Ardkinglas House and Gardens built in 1906–08 on the site of the Medieval Ardkinglas Castle which was destroyed in 1769.
- Late medieval Chapel of Kilkatarine at St. Catherines.
- Cairndow Inn and St. Catherines Hotel both are category C(S) listed buildings.
- Kirk at Cairndow A listed category church building.

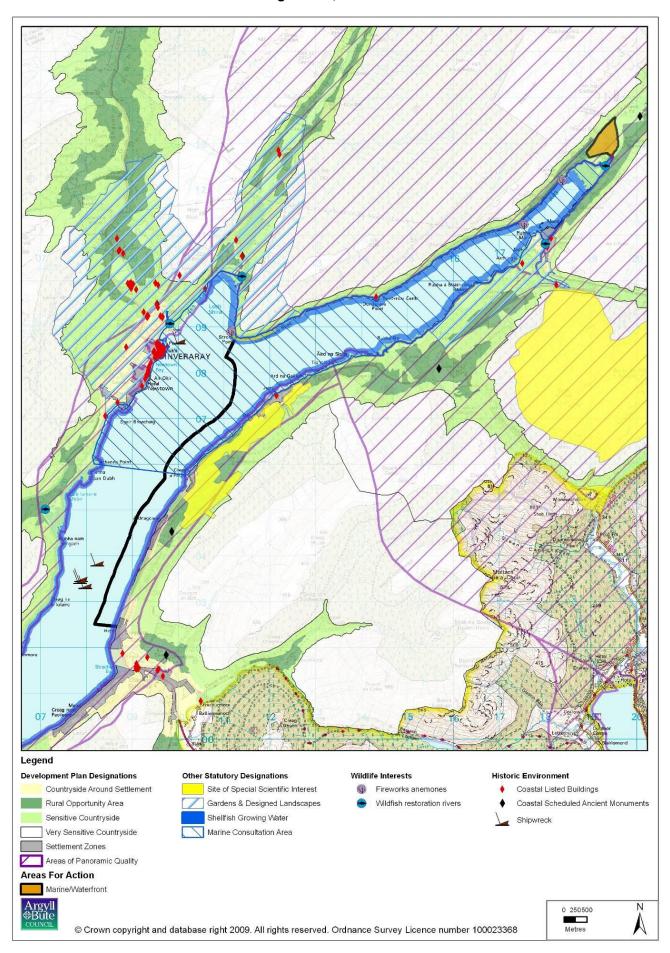


**Dunderave Castle** 

# **POLICY ZONE K MAP - Current Uses & Activities**



POLICY ZONE K MAP - Designations, Wildlife Interests & Historic Features



# OPPORTUNITIES AND CONSTRAINTS FOR FUTURE USE AND DEVELOPMENT

#### **Constraints**

Future Use	
Investment	This policy area is a considerable distance from the mouth of Loch Fyne and Crinan Canal where most sailboats originating in the Firth of Clyde will head to access the west coast. It is likely to take significant investment to encourage boaters to explore the upper end of Loch Fyne.
Infrastructure	The in-service and out of service telecommunications cables in this policy zone could be damaged by trawling or anchoring of commercial and recreational vessels.
Anchoring	Anchoring of vessels is prohibited within the MOD hydrophone area, as anchoring has the potential to damage sensitive equipment on the seabed and vessels could become a navigational hazard.
Development	

# Landscape

The narrowness and relatively small-scale of this part of the loch would be quickly dominated by additional aquaculture structures located on the water surface.

The existing aquaculture leases occupy a considerable stretch of the coastline and therefore potential cumulative impacts limit additional development.

The setting of Dunderave Castle, although a relatively minor landscape feature, is sensitive to poorly located development.

The views across the loch above Cairndow are strategically important as they are experienced on arrival from the east on the A83, and are therefore often the first views for visitors.

This part of the loch is overlooked from Cairndow, the tourist development at Clachan and from individual dwellings.

The setting of Ardkinglas House and Gardens, although largely detached from the coast, may be sensitive to poorly sited marine development.

Any onshore development at Cairndow would have to ensure that the important and sensitive settings of the A-listed kirk, Ardkinglas and its encompassing designed landscape are protected.

# Wild Salmonids

New salmon or trout farms in this policy zone would increase the risk of interactions between farmed and wild salmonids, and is likely to be detrimental to restoration of freshwater fisheries in the Rivers, Douglas, Aray, Shira, Fyne and Kinglas

For expansion of existing onshore sites, detailed consideration would need to be given to any proposal to increase water abstraction from rivers and its potential effects on wild fish habitats, appropriate screening of intakes and in the case of smolt hatcheries, effective containment of farmed smolts.

# **Physical Characteristics**

Poor water exchange in this policy area restricts further aquaculture development.

At the head of the loch, the shallow waters and extensive tidal reach are practical limits to development, and also the semi-natural character and dynamism of the mud flats would be compromised by development.

#### Infrastructure

Subsea telecommunications cables could be damaged by new moorings or the anchoring/mooring of new finfish or shellfish farms. Aquaculture development or new moorings would not be permitted directly over or immediately adjacent to the in-service cables running from St. Catherines to Inveraray.

	Aquaculture, mooring and onshore development should avoid locations where these cables come ashore to allow maintenance.				
	The out of service telephone cable, running parallel to the coastline does not preclude development, but British Telecom (BT) should be consulted on any proposals made in the vicinity of this cable.				
MOD	Finfish or shellfish development is not appropriate within the MOD exercise area as any aquaculture equipment situated in the water has potential to interfere with sound measurements in the MOD hydrophone area and present a recreational hazard to MOD vessels. Aquaculture development is therefore precluded south of Ardchyline.				
	The development of moorings would not be permitted within the MOD hydrophone area, as they could be an obstruction, could damage equipment on the sea bed and generate additional noise that would affect testing.				
Fishing	Further aquaculture development in this policy zone is restricted by commercial fishing grounds.				

# Opportunities<sup>1</sup>

Е.	.4	WO.	П	60

# Recreation There is potential to develop a strategic plan to promote the upper loch to boaters. Any increase in visitors could provide economic benefits to the communities of other upper loch locations such as Strachur, Minard and Furnace. Marine Access In response to local concerns about groups of divers accessing the shore near St.

anglers in this policy zone should be explored.

There is an opportunity to improve access to the water for recreational users as part of any new coastal infrastructure development proposals. Such proposals could explore the potential for allowing tour boat operators, boaters/kayakers, divers and anglers to access any proposed infrastructure or to provide additional parking, dedicated launching points or toilet facilities. Such dedicated access points could take the pressure off less suitable locations and could provide economic benefit to nearby services.

Catherines, the potential for the provision of dedicated access points for divers and

Development			
Aquaculture	The 'Loch Fyne Coastal Strip' Shellfish Growing Water extends throughout the length of the policy zone and coastal water quality should be maintained at an appropriate standard for shellfish growing.		
	Potential for new scallop or mussel farm development. However, evidence from the Loch Fyne ICZM Group suggests that scallops are unlikely to grow in this area.		
	Existing shore-base infrastructure could potentially allow for easy processing and transportation of products from new developments. The positive economic impact of additional development and the creation of additional jobs would be beneficial to the marginal communities in the upper loch.		
Recreation	<ul> <li>Recreational boating facilities could be developed with:</li> <li>Improvements to the slip at St. Catherines in conjunction with provision of facilities for boaters and other visitors.</li> <li>Shore access improvements at the Creggans Inn.</li> </ul>		

<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).

#### MARINE FINFISH DEVELOPMENT POLICIES

#### Marine Finfish Development Policy PZK-1

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

# **Justification**

- No potential to site new finfish development was identified, due to the amount of existing development and the small-scale and narrow channel of the water surface of much of the policy zone which would be quickly dominated by structures (Grant 2007).
- Ardnachyline to Creggans: aquaculture development is not possible as this area of coast is a Ministry of Defence exclusion zone and vessel area (Marine and Coastal Development Unit 2009).
- New salmon or trout farms are not appropriate in this policy zone because of the potential for interaction between farmed and wild fish (Marine and Coastal Development Unit 2009)\*.

#### MARINE SHELLFISH DEVELOPMENT POLICIES

#### Marine Shellfish Development Policy PZK-2

There will be a general presumption in favour of new mussel or scallop development, in the areas identified in Table PZK, subject to there being no significant adverse impacts.

# See Table PZK for additional guidance

#### Justification

- New mussel or scallop lines could be accommodated within the stretch of coastline occupied by the most southerly existing oyster lease (Grant 2007).
- Landscape/seascape capacity study identifies potential for mussel or scallop lines between Strone Point and Ardgenavan (Grant 2007).
- Landscape/seascape capacity study indicates that the small-scale and narrow channel of the water surface would be quickly dominated by aquaculture structures except in the specific areas outlined in table PZK (Grant 2007).
- From Ardnachlyline to Creggans, aquaculture development is not possible as this is a Ministry of Defence exclusion zone and vessel area (Marine and Coastal Development Unit 2009).

# **Marine Shellfish Development Policy PZK-3**

There will be a general presumption in favour of new scallop development, between Ardno and St. Catherines, subject to there being no significant adverse impacts.

# See Table PZK for additional guidance

# Justification

- Scallop lines could be accommodated between Cairndow and St. Catherines, but only if they could be located where they are not clearly seen alongside existing shellfish structures (Grant 2007).
- From Ardnachlyline to Creggans, aquaculture development is not possible as this is a Ministry of Defence exclusion zone and vessel area (Marine and Coastal Development Unit 2009).

<sup>&</sup>lt;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.

# Marine Shellfish Development Policy PZK-4

There will be a general presumption against expansion of the existing mussel farm at Ardkinglas, but presumption in favour of change of use from mussel to scallop farming, subject to no significant adverse impacts.

See Table PZK for additional guidance

# Justification

- Following a small-scale expansion of this mussel farm in October 2008, this farm no longer has any
  potential for further expansion. Additional mussel lines would intrude into the centre of the loch, which is
  narrow at this location.
- No opportunities were identified to expand the length of coast occupied by the existing mussel lease as this would occupy a disproportionate amount of coastline, dominating the experience when travelling along the coastal track, which is at the moment relatively well-balanced (Grant 2007).

# **Marine Shellfish Development Policy PZK-5**

There will be a general presumption against expansion, in terms of surface area, of the existing oyster leases at Ardkinglas.

# **Justification**

- No opportunities were identified to expand the length of coast occupied by the existing oyster lease, which
  extends northwards towards Rubha Mòr, as this would occupy a disproportionate amount of coastline,
  dominating the experience when travelling along the coastal track, which is at the moment relatively well
  balanced (Grant 2007).
- The existing lease area that extends southwards towards Rubha No has not been developed and is not suitable for growing oysters on trestles (Marine and Coastal Development Unit 2009).
- It may however, be possible to accommodate additional oyster trestles within the currently developed lease area (Marine and Coastal Development Unit 2009).

# ON-SHORE AQUACULTURE-RELATED DEVELOPMENT POLICY

# On-shore Aquaculture-Related Development Policy PZK-6

There will be a general presumption in favour of limited expansion of existing on-shore facilities at Cairndow, subject to there being no significant adverse impacts.

See Table PZK for additional guidance

# **Justification**

 There is little opportunity to site on-shore development within existing settled areas along this stretch of coast and further development is preferable in existing established areas (Marine and Coastal Development Unit 2009).

# SUPPLEMENTARY GUIDANCE ON POTENTIAL AQUACULTURE DEVELOPMENTS

# TABLE PZK - Guidance on location, scale and other considerations

Maximum of two new developments in this Policy Zone with potential for only one new development between Cairndow and St. Catherines and one development between Strone Point and Ardgenavan.

Development Type	Location	Suggested Maximum Scale	Comments		
New Mussel or Scallop farm	Stretch of coast occupied by most southerly Ardkinglas oyster lease	Medium- scale	The most southerly oyster lease near Ardkinglas is currently being used for on-growing oysters as the shore at this location is not suitable for trestles. The adja waters are however suitable for mussel farm development The main constraining factor to the scale of development this location is the narrow width of the loch. Development should therefore avoid intruding significantly into the centre.  Additional longlines should be sited parallel to the shore.		
New Mussel or Scallop Farm	Strone Point – Ardgenavan	Small-scale	Preference for south end of this area away from keyiewpoints at Achnatra and Dunderave Point. Particular consideration should be given to creeling and trawling areas Development should avoid impacts on creel fishing area around Ardgenavan.  Development should use a wooded backdrop as a immediate setting and structures should be aligned paralleto coastal edge and located close to shore.		
New Scallop Farm	Ardno – St. Catherines	Small-scale	Preference for area, between Carraig á Bruich and Áird Slaite. Development should be away from signific viewpoints from A83 and detached from existing structuto avoid visual clutter.		
Change of Use from Mussel to Scallop	Ardkinglas  Mussel farm  Current surface and seabed area of existing farm  Scallop longling surface and seabed area of existing farm		Scallop longlines should be located parallel to the coast.		
On-shore Aquaculture Development	The settlements of Cairndow, St. Catherines, Creag à Phuill & Ardnagowan.	-	Any development proposals would need to be consistent with Local Plan Policy LP CST 1, and any other relevant Development Plan policies.  For expansion of existing on-shore sites, detailed consideration would need to be given to any proposal to increase water abstraction from rivers and its potential effects on wild fish habitats, the need for any improvements to screening of existing abstraction intakes and in the case of smolt hatcheries, assurances that any expansion would still allow effective containment of farmed smolts.		

# Future relinquishment of existing developments

\*In 2006, Lighthouse Caledonia Ltd. consolidated their operations in Loch Fyne and has now removed two salmon farms north of Furnace at Kenmore and a third farm at Cairndow. Cessation of farming at these three sites, which are closest to the mouths of the Rivers Fyne, Aray and Douglas was agreed through the Loch Fyne Area Management Agreement (now the Clyde AMA) to help improve wild salmon and trout populations. Therefore, if the existing mussel farm at Ardkinglas was relinquished in the future, new salmon or trout farm development would not be appropriate in this policy zone, but a new scallop farm development may be appropriate.

A current Crown Estate seabed lease for salmon farming at Cairndow is no longer operational and Lighthouse Caledonia Ltd. are planning to relinquish this lease which should not be developed in the future. When this site was in use, prior to 2006, it was out of place within the small-scale and narrow channel of the water surface of the loch (Grant 2007). Reinstatement of this site as a salmon farm would increase the risk of interactions between wildfish and caged fish (Marine and Coastal Development Unit 2009).

# CONSULTATION FOR AQUACULTURE DEVELOPMENT

As part of the development process, potential developers (during pre-application development scoping) and Argyll and Bute Council Planning Officers (during assessment of applications) are encouraged to consult with the following individuals and organisations in addition to the normal statutory consultees (see Appendix VI). Contact details for statutory and non-statutory consultees are provided in Appendix XI.

Consultees	New Mussel/ Scallop*	New Scallop**	Mussel Change of Use	On-shore Development
British Telecom	✓			✓
Cairndow Community Council	✓	✓	✓	✓
Clyde Area Management Group	✓	✓	✓	✓
Clyde Fishermen's Association	✓	✓	✓	
Clyde Inshore Fisheries Group	✓	✓	✓	
Inveraray Community Council	✓	✓		
Lighthouse Caledonia	✓	✓	✓	✓
Loch Fyne Oysters	✓	✓		✓
Ministry of Defence	✓	✓		✓
Royal Yachting Association	✓	✓	✓	
Scottish Creelers and Divers Association	✓	✓	✓	
Strachur Community Council		✓		✓

<sup>\*</sup> relates to development at Ardkinglas and between Strone Point and Ardgenavan

<sup>\*\*</sup> relates to development between Ardno and St. Catherines