

POLICY ZONE B: MEALDARROCH POINT/EAST LOCH TARBERT/AIRD NAN RÒN

LANDSCAPE CHARACTERISTICS

The landscape has an uneven hummocky landform with rocky outcrops. The hinterland generally comprises steep wooded, rugged hill slopes with occasional lower knolls occurring closer to the mouth of East Loch Tarbert. There is birch woodland immediately adjacent to the shore in some parts of the policy zone, which is separated from the forestry plantations by the trunk road.

SEASCAPE CHARACTERISTICS

The coastline is indented with bedrock outcrops, small rocky/boulder bays, small bedrock cliff-faces and some offshore islands/skerries. The main features of coastline are the sheltered harbour of East Loch Tarbert with its narrow entrance, and Barmore Island, which is attached by a narrow causeway to the mainland at Stonefield Castle. The northern end of policy zone beyond Barmore Island is a more open coastline with wider low relief boulder shores.



Narrow entrance to East Loch Tarbert with channel markers



Looking south towards Barmore Island and causeway that links it to the mainland



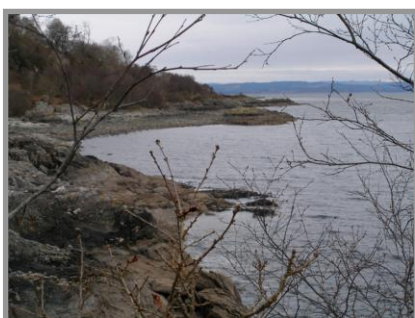
Shore and view south east from Stonefield Castle's North Lodge

ACCESS

In the south of the policy zone, Mealdarroch Point can be accessed by single track road which terminates at a view point. There is good access to Tarbert Harbour by trunk road and there is a popular hiking path (White Shore) to the north of the harbour. Beyond this, there is no access to the shore heading north until Stonefield as the trunk road is well-back from the coastline. The shore is overlooked from private roads around Stonefield Castle Hotel, but views of the immediate coast are poor. Barmore Island has a popular walking path. Beyond this, to the north, the policy zone can only be accessed by a single unsurfaced track, accessed at the North Lodge. Views from this track are just above sea-level and are intermittently restricted by birch woodland, bracken and other coastal vegetation. There are private jetties and moorings at Stonefield Castle and at the North Lodge; in addition, there is access to a public slipway at Tarbert Harbour.

VISUAL AMENITY

Views from the main trunk road are intermittent from Tarbert to Aird nan Ròn due to the road being set well-back from the coast, and dense vegetation between the road and the coast. The trunk road that follows around Tarbert Harbour, out to Mealdarroch Point has clear views of the harbour. The White Shore coastal path follows the coast on the northern side of East Loch Tarbert then cuts across to a shingle/rocky shore at the mouth of the harbour and a bedrock headland. Views are mostly back towards the harbour, but on the other side of the headland views are open to the north across some small skerries to Barmore Island. Existing shellfish lines in this area are unobtrusive. Views from Stonefield Castle are open to the north. High points on the Barmore Island Trail afford 360° views.



Slightly indented rocky shoreline running north up to Aird nan Ròn



View to southern tip of Barmore Island from the grounds of Stonefield Castle



View east from North Lodge, Stonefield Castle with private jetty in foreground

SETTLEMENTS

The picturesque village of Tarbert is built on the hillside around the harbour and overlooks this focal point. The village mostly comprises traditional looking dwellings, with some more modern constructions immediately adjacent to the harbour. To the north of Tarbert, there are isolated dwellings along the trunk road and some farm buildings. With a wide range of essential community facilities, the village of Tarbert is considered a key settlement in the Argyll and Bute Development Plan (Structure and Local Plan). Tarbert has a safe and well-used harbour with good road links, shellfish processing and transport facilities.



Tarbert Harbour entrance

CURRENT USES

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

Aquaculture

Scallops are being cultivated by Loch Fyne Seafarms Ltd. at three sites, one south (Port a' Ghuail) and two north of Barmore Island (Eilean an Dunain and Port na Dùnain). The scallop farms located north and south of Barmore Island are serviced from a land base at Stonefield Castle Hotel, where a well-hidden old building and its immediate surroundings are being used to store scallop lanterns, anchors and lines.

Current Aquaculture Sites

Location	Species	Consented Equipment	Maximum Biomass	Operator	Shore-base Location	Development Status
Eilean an Dùnain	Scallops	8 x 200 m longlines	-	Loch Fyne Seafarms Ltd.	Stonefield Castle Hotel	Developed/Active
Port na Dùnain	Scallops	10 x 200 m longlines	-	Loch Fyne Seafarms Ltd.	Stonefield Castle Hotel	Developed/Active
Port a' Ghuail	Scallops	5 x 200 m longlines	-	Loch Fyne Seafarms Ltd.	Stonefield Castle Hotel	Developed/Active

Fishing

Both creeling and trawling take place in this policy zone, although trawls seem to be restricted to the outer edge of the zone. Scallop dredging occurs from 40 m depth towards the shore around Barmore Island and to the north of the policy zone. Fishermen use a bay to the north of Tarbert Harbour as a creel keep.

Harbours

Tarbert Harbour is a busy port. Commercial trawl and creel boats use the harbour as a home port, where they off-load catch, refuel and store fishing gear. Recreational sailing and power vessels berth in the harbour and Tarbert sailing club is located on the south side near the entrance to the harbour.

The existing infrastructure includes: the main quayside and a floating pontoon on the south side of the harbour; the east pier further on the road to Mealdarroch Point; a public slipway; Caledonian MacBrayne slipway; floating pontoons with berths for yachts and power boats on the north side; private and public moorings; car parking; fish processing facilities; fish and shellfish transport facilities and storage facilities. East Pier is in a state of disrepair. Boat maintenance facilities are currently being constructed.



Fishing vessels tied up at Tarbert Harbour



Tarbert Sailing Club and slipway with fish processing facility in the background

Commercial Shipping

The Caledonian MacBrayne ferry service to Portavadie and Lochranza, Arran, departs from the roll-on roll-off ramp on the south side of the harbour.

Recreation

Sailing

Boating activities such as sailing occur out of Tarbert Harbour. There is a relatively exposed anchorage at the harbour entrance and anchorages in both the north and south bays of Barmore Island. The Barmore Island anchorages are occasional, as they dry out depending in the state of the tide. Visitor moorings for patrons of Stonefield Castle Hotel are present in the North Bay.

Coastal Paths

There are six forest paths in this policy zone. From Tarbert, there is the 'Tarbert Castle' path (1.4 km); Corranbuie path (2.8 km), Alternative Corranbuie path (5.5 km) and the 'Tarbert to Skipness' path (14 km). The 'White Shore path (0.5 km)' is located on the north shore of East Loch Tarbert and the coastal path around Barmore Island (1.4 km) can be accessed from Stonefield Castle Hotel.

Diving

There are three shallow water dive sites in this policy zone: a scenic dive off the pier at Loch Tarbert; the Arran III wreck (North of Sgeir Leathann, east of Barmore Island) and Sgeir Port a' Ghuail (north east of Loch Tarbert). Additionally, there are three deeper dive sites at Sgeir Mhaola Cinn, Barmore Island, and just north of Mealdarroch Point.

Discharges

There are no discharges via sea outfalls within this policy zone.



Floating pontoons for recreational sailing and power vessels in Tarbert Harbour



Shingle beach and headland at end of White Shores Trail

DESIGNATIONS

Refer to policy zone map B for areas covered.

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

- The area north of Mealdarroch Point to just north of Barfad is designated as 'Developed Coast' (a coastal area of Countryside Around Settlement).
- Land at Aird nan Ròn immediately adjoining the loch is designated as an area of 'Undeveloped Coast' (a coastal area of Sensitive Countryside).
- Land to west and southwest of Stonefield Castle is a Rural Opportunity Area.
- Tarbert is a Conservation Area.
- Tarbert harbour has been identified as an Area For Action.

Other Designations

- The 'Loch Fyne Coastal Strip' Shellfish Growing Water extends throughout the length of the policy zone.

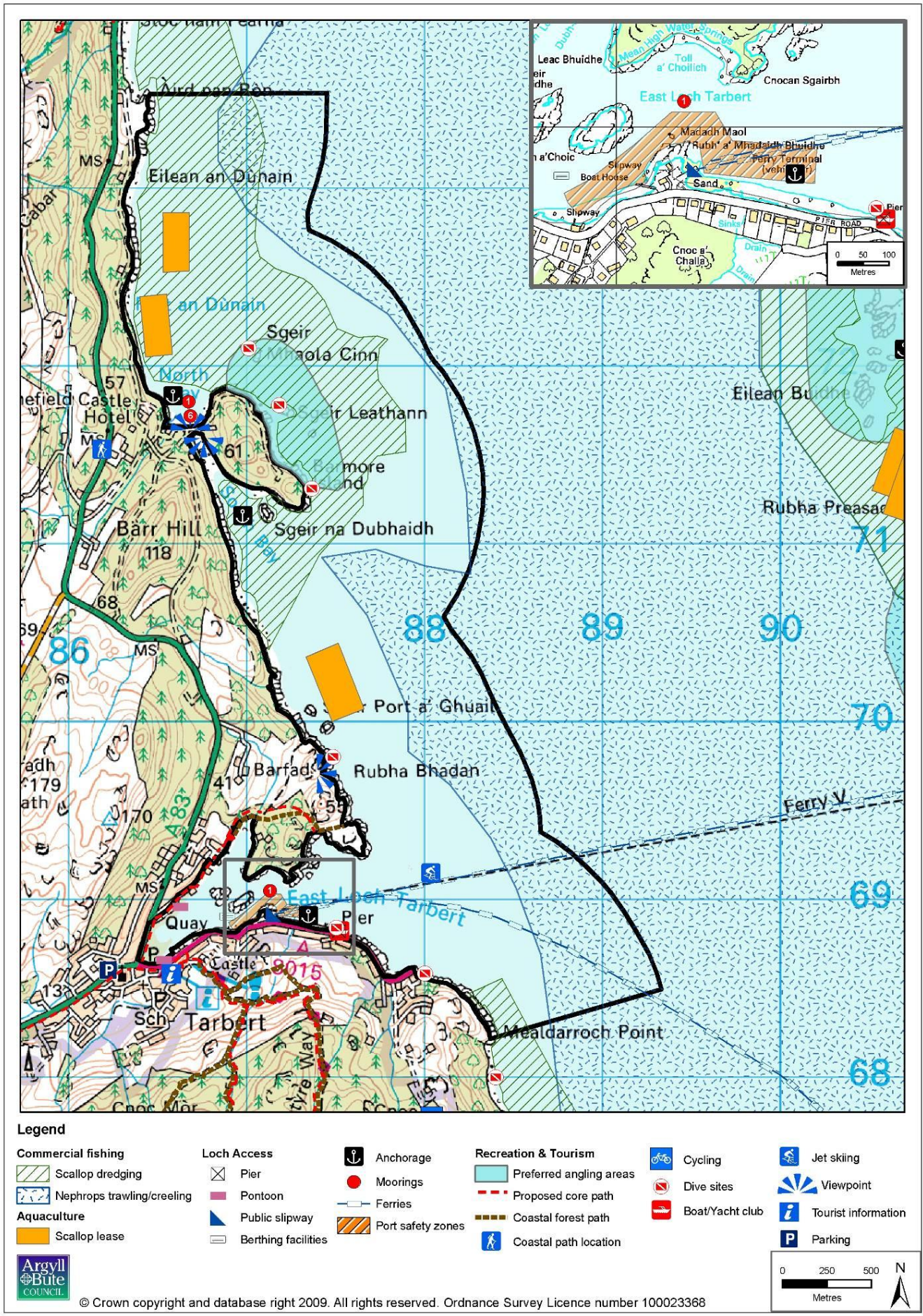
WILDLIFE

Skerries south and east of Barmore Island provide important habitat for seabirds. The Barmore Burn entering the loch at Stonefield may be a significant wild salmon spawning habitat. Seals and cetaceans are known to frequent the area.

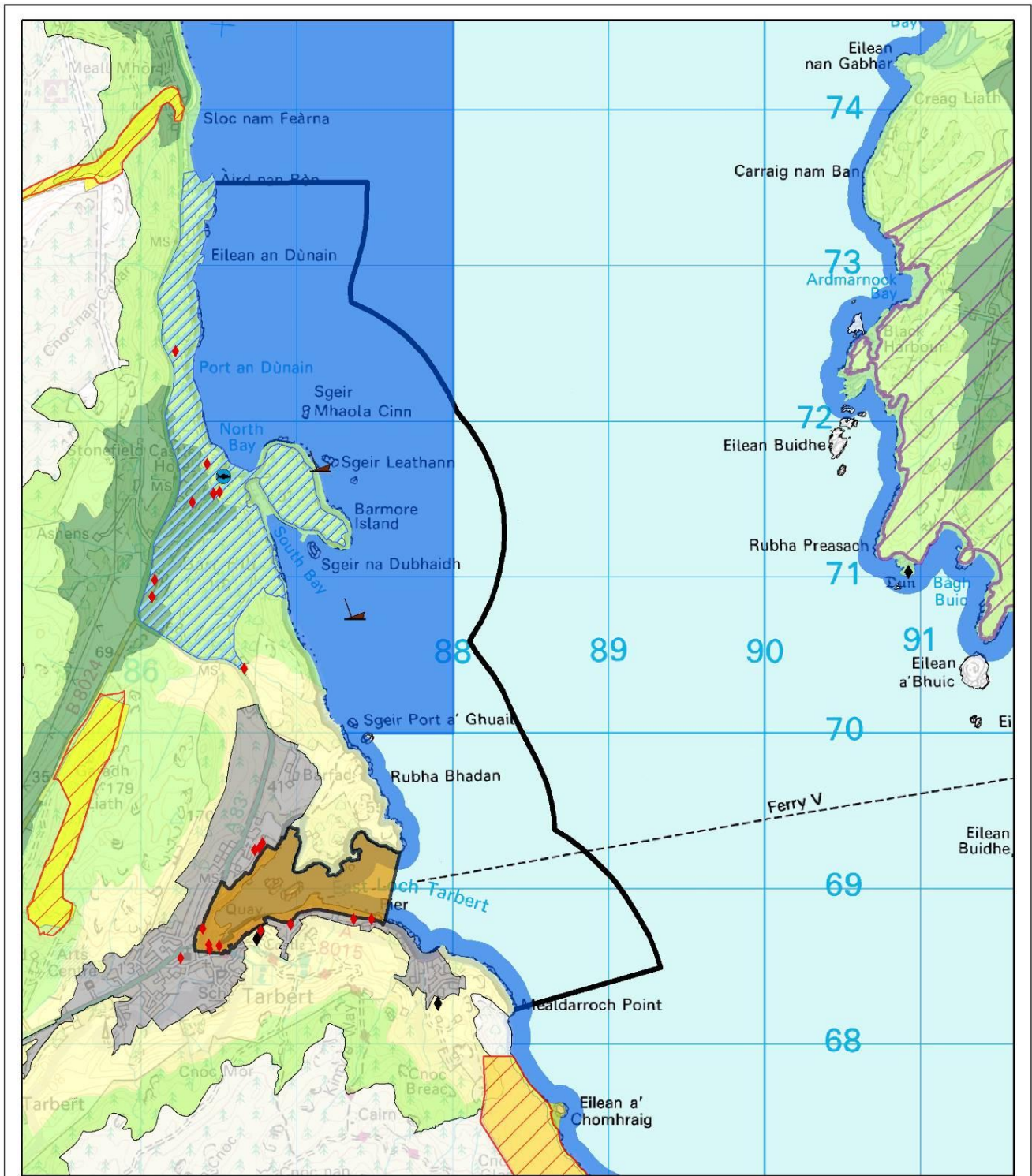
HISTORICAL FEATURES

- A number of category B listed buildings are set within the Stonefield Castle Hotel Historic Garden and Designed Landscape, including the Scots Baronial style Stonefield Castle Hotel, Campbell of Stonefield Mausoleum and Barmore Viaduct.
- The ruin of Tarbert Castle is of national importance as a scheduled monument and category B listed building, built between 1325 and 1330.
- Arran III shipwreck lies off east coast of Barmore Island and the shipwreck Margaret Niven to the south.

POLICY ZONE B MAP – Current Uses & Activities



POLICY ZONE B 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

Areas For Action

- Marine/Waterfront

Other Statutory Designations

- Special Area of Conservation
- Site of Special Scientific Interest
- National Nature Reserve
- Gardens & Designed Landscapes
- Shellfish Growing Water

Wildlife Interests

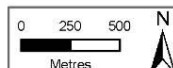
- Wildfish restoration rivers

Historic Environment

- Coastal Listed Buildings
- Coastal Scheduled Ancient Monuments
- Shipwreck



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OPPORTUNITIES AND CONSTRAINTS FOR FUTURE USE AND DEVELOPMENT

Constraints

Future Use

Investment	Much of the existing infrastructure is in need of refurbishment. Financial investment necessary for harbour improvements is likely to be substantial.
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Development

Landscape	High scenic quality and visual amenity of East Loch Tarbert, as experienced from coastal paths, roads, settlement and watercraft, limit potential for aquaculture development.
	There are visual constraints in relation to finfish cages being located too close to Stonefield Castle Hotel and Barmore Island.
Access	Access to service new aquaculture development, north of East Loch Tarbert would be predominantly by boat from Tarbert Harbour.
Navigation	Approaches to Tarbert Harbour are busy with commercial and recreational vessels, and would not be suitable for finfish or shellfish development.
Investment	Tarbert Harbour is currently very busy, particularly during the summer months, and significant investment would be necessary to facilitate any major increase in use for fish farm landings and shore base facilities.

Opportunities¹

Future Use

Coastal Infrastructure	Need for improved planning of space for Tarbert Harbour given its multiple commercial and recreational uses. More space is needed for fishing vessels, catch landing and transportation facilities could be better organised and located. Development should be considered with input from all harbour users, as industry specific needs will be important components of any future development.
	Tarbert would benefit from a strategic harbour development plan, and in response to a request by the Scottish Government in relation to modernisation of Trust Ports, the Tarbert (Loch Fyne) Harbour Authority are in the process of developing a five year improvement plan for the harbour, which outlines numerous improvements that are necessary for the East Pier, south and north pontoons, office facilities and public amenities.

Development

Aquaculture	Possible expansion of existing scallop farms at Port a Ghuaill.
	Shellfish development would benefit from the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Proximity to Tarbert Harbour, shellfish processing facilities, transportation links and a local work force. • 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.
	The coastline is fairly exposed to southerly and south-easterly winds, but not restrictive to fish farm and shellfish farm development.

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

On-shore Aquaculture	New aquaculture-related infrastructural developments at Tarbert Harbour could be part of overall improvements to harbour facilities.
Tarbert Harbour	Development of further infrastructure around Tarbert Harbour including: additional visitor moorings, additional car parking, storage facilities, and toilet and shower facilities. Improvements could bring enhanced economic development opportunities for the area.

DEVELOPMENT POLICIES FOR AQUACULTURE²

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 POLICY

Marine Finfish Development Policy PZB-1

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

Justification

- High scenic qualities and visual amenity of the area and the setting of the listed Stonefield Castle Estate would be affected by development (Grant 2007).
- Navigation issues of vessels travelling in and out of Tarbert Harbour (Marine & Coastal Development Unit 2009).
- A significant proportion of the policy zone is important commercial fishing ground (Marine & Coastal Development Unit 2009).

MARINE SHELLFISH DEVELOPMENT POLICY

Marine Shellfish Development Policy PZB-2

There will be a general presumption against any scale of new mussel, scallop or oyster farm development, other than the change of use identified in Policy PZB-3.

Justification

- High scenic qualities of the area and the setting of the listed Stonefield Castle Estate would be affected by further development (Grant 2006).
- The area around Barmore Island is a significant recreation resource in a highly scenic area which would be negatively affected by oyster trestle development on the shore (Grant 2007).
- Navigation issues of vessels travelling in and out of Tarbert Harbour (Marine & Coastal Development Unit 2009).
- A significant proportion of the policy zone is important fishing ground (Marine & Coastal Development Unit 2009).

Marine Shellfish Development Policy PZB-3

There will be a general presumption in favour of expansion to the existing scallop farms at Port a' Ghuail and at Eilean an Dùnain, and presumption in favour of any proposed change of use from scallop to mussel lines, subject to no significant adverse impacts.

See Table PZB for additional guidance

Justification

- Expansion should be away from North Bay (Port an Dùnain site) to minimise further cluttering of the water surface (Grant 2007).
- Expansion should use a similar unobtrusive shellfish line float system to that already being used (Marine & Coastal Development Unit 2009).

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

ON-SHORE AQUACULTURE-RELATED DEVELOPMENT POLICY

On-shore Aquaculture-Related Development Policy PZB-4

There will be a general presumption in favour of new onshore aquaculture-related developments at Tarbert Harbour which are connected with improvements to harbour facilities, subject to no significant adverse impacts.

See Table PZB for additional guidance

Justification

- A need was identified by the Loch Fyne ICZM Group for improvements to the harbour. Improvements could bring enhanced economic development opportunities to the area (Marine & Coastal Development Unit 2009).
- Onshore aquaculture developments are not appropriate around Barmore Island as this area of shoreline offers significant recreation resource in a highly scenic area (Grant 2007).
- There are no opportunities for onshore aquaculture development to be located within existing settlement, other than at Tarbert Harbour (Grant 2007).

SUPPLEMENTARY GUIDANCE ON POTENTIAL AQUACULTURE DEVELOPMENTS

TABLE PZB - Guidance on location, scale and other considerations

Development Type	Location	Suggested Maximum Scale	Comments
Expansion of existing scallop farms	Existing scallop farms (Port a' Ghuail, & Eilean an Dùnain)	Up to 20% increase in number of buoys	Expansion of lease at Port a' Ghuail should be to the north or south of the existing lease area only, giving consideration to existing fishing activities, dive site at Rubha Bhadan and the unnamed shipwreck. Expansion of the Eilean an Dùnain site should be to the west of the existing lease only, giving consideration to existing fishing activities. Any expansion should use a similar unobtrusive shellfish line float system to that already being used.
Change of use from scallop to mussel lines	Existing scallop farms (Port a' Ghuail, Port an Dùnain & Eilean an Dùnain)	Current surface and seabed area of existing scallop farms	For mussel line development, which is more visually intrusive than scallop lines, a smaller surface area may be necessary to avoid visual impacts. Mussel lines should be aligned parallel to the coast.
On-shore aquaculture development	Tarbert Harbour	-	The settlement of Tarbert is designated as an area of 'Developed Coast' in the Argyll and Bute Development Plan (Structure and Local Plan) and any development proposals would need to be consistent with Local Plan Policy LP CST 1, and any other relevant Development Plan policies.

Future relinquishment of existing developments

If one or all of the existing scallop farms are relinquished in the future, new finfish, mussel or scallop development may be appropriate in this policy zone.

CONSULTATION FOR AQUACULTURE DEVELOPMENTS

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	Scallop Farm Expansion	Change of Use	On-shore Aquaculture
Caledonian MacBrayne			✓
Clyde Area Management Group	✓	✓	✓
Clyde Fishermen's Association	✓	✓	
Clyde Inshore Fisheries Group	✓	✓	
Royal Yachting Association	✓	✓	
Tarbert and Skipness Community Council	✓	✓	✓
Tarbert (Loch Fyne) Harbour Authority			✓
Scottish Creelers and Divers Association	✓	✓	