

POLICY ZONE D: STRONDOIR BAY TO SILVER CRAIGS

LANDSCAPE CHARACTERISTICS

The landscape is partially comprised of large-scale mosaic of forestry plantation and areas of open moorland. Smooth undulating slopes with hills not attaining the same altitude as of Strondoir Bay. Much of the coastal edge at Loch Gilp's hinterland is developed with settlement extending up hilly slopes. While Loch Gilp is not of notable scenic value, the loch has a naturalistic and simple, uncluttered character which provides an important contrast with the complex, developed coastal edge and hinterland. Some of the land around Ardrishaig and Lochgilphead is farmed for livestock and the upland areas are mostly coniferous forest plantation.

SEASCAPE CHARACTERISTICS

From Strondoir Bay to Ardrishaig, the coastline has a generally linear form, although is occasionally indented with shallow bays. The bay just south of Inverneill is picturesque and is one of the few on Loch Fyne with an area of hard-packed intertidal sand. In general though, the coastline consists of a narrow rocky shore, reinforced at places to protect the A83 trunk road, interspersed with shingle beaches.

Lower Loch Fyne indents into Loch Gilp at Ardrishaig. At this point the coastline becomes industrialised with a large seawall running along the coast in front of the town, and a breakwater and large commercial pier at the entrance to the Crinan Canal. At low tide, mud flats are exposed at the head of the loch.

Beyond Ardrishaig, the shore becomes rocky up to Lochgilphead with very shallow and intertidal mud flats from Lochgilphead across the bay to Ardrishaig. The coast from Castleton House to Silver Craigs is dominated by the relatively large islands of Eilean Mòr and Laith Eilean and their associated small skerries.



Intertidal area at Strondoir Bay



Coastline between Inverneill and Ardrishaig



Eastern coast of Loch Gilp



Coastline between Strondoir Bay and Inverneill

ACCESS

Strondoir Bay to Brenfield Point

At Strondoir Bay, Lighthouse Caledonia Ltd. has a private slipway at their shore base. At Inverneill, there appears to be private access from two points, the first from a dwelling on the point at Whitehouse Bay, and the other from a boathouse/workshop on the shore where small boats can be launched between rocky outcrops on the beach. There is a private slipway beside two shoreline holiday chalets at Brenfield Point.

Ardrishaig

There is a public slipway behind the British Waterways building. Ardrishaig boat club has a private slipway and boat storage facilities approximately 100 m beyond the public slipway. There is room for 3-4 berths at the entrance to the Crinan Canal, depending on the boat length and tide. Boats are not able to berth alongside the breakwater as this area dries at low tide.

Lochgilphead to Silver Craigs

There is a pier on the east side of Loch Gilp, although this is only accessible during high tide. There is no formalised public access to the loch from Lochgilphead round to Silver Craigs. Access to the shore in this area is limited to foot traffic through the Castleton Estate.



Whitehouse Bay and point at Inverneill



Breakwater/Pier at Lochgilphead

VISUAL AMENITY

The settlements of Inverneill, Ardrishaig and Lochgilphead have open views across the loch. From the trunk road, outlooks are generally open and there are a few stopping places from which the loch can be viewed. Views to the immediate sea area can be broad and distant over to the Cowal peninsula. From Ardrishaig, there are open views to Lochgilphead and vice versa. There are no formal hiking trails along this part of the coast, but there are numerous viewpoints overlooking Loch Fyne from the towns of Ardrishaig and Lochgilphead. South of Kilmory industrial estate, the trunk road is set back from the loch and views are obscured.



Coastline between Strondoir Bay and Inverneill



Looking north west from picturesque bay (Bagh an Tailleir) at Inverneill



View of southerly approaches to Loch Gilp. Channel markers indicate boat access into Ardrishaig and Lochgilphead

SETTLEMENTS

The shore side at Strondoir Bay is quite industrialised with a number of units housing a fish farm land base and other businesses. From Strondoir north, in between the settlements, there are a number of isolated dwellings along the roadside. Inverneill is a small, attractive, linear settlement. With the exception of a workshop/boathouse, the ruin of an old church and a dwelling, all properties are located on the landward side of the trunk road. The town of Ardrishaig is built on an east facing hillside overlooking Loch Gilp. Lochgilphead is the largest of the settlements around Loch Fyne and is located at the head of Loch Gilp, less than a kilometre north of Ardrishaig.



The town of Lochgilphead



Coastal works at Ardrishaig

CURRENT USES

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

Aquaculture

Aquaculture activities in this policy zone are currently restricted to a finfish lease at Strondoir Bay. Adjacent to this site is a land base facility and fish farm workboats are kept on moorings in the bay.

Current Aquaculture Sites						
Location	Species	Consented Equipment	Maximum Biomass	Operator	Shore-base Location	Development Status
Strondoir Bay	Salmon	10 x 100 m circular cages arranged 5 x 2	1408 tonnes	Lighthouse Caledonia	Strondoir Bay	Developed/Active

Fishing

The main fishing activity within the policy zone is scallop dredging, which is carried out from 40 m depth towards the shore in the south of the policy zone and around the exposed headlands at Castleton and the islands of Eilean Mòr and Laith Eilean. Prawn trawling and creeling activities occur further offshore and fishing activities do not extend into Loch Gilp.

Recreation

Sailing

Loch Gilp and its approaches are busy with recreational boat traffic. The Crinan Canal gives access to the west coast and is particularly popular during the summer months. Approximately 1300 boats pass through the locks annually.

There are a number of private moorings along this coast from Whitehouse Bay at Inverneill to the lee of Eilean Mòr. The largest accumulation of moorings lies adjacent to Ardrishaig, where the boat club have in excess of 30, and there are numerous private moorings. There are also moorings located between the breakwater and pier at the entrance to the Crinan Canal. In addition, there are three chartered anchorages, one at Glac Mhòr in the north of the policy zone and two at Ardrishaig (Houston 2004).

Diving - There is an offshore scenic dive site south of the island Liath Eilean, where there are opportunities to see basking sharks from July-August.

Angling - The loch area directly between Strondoir Bay and Castleton is popular with angling charter boats and shore angling is common in the upper reaches of Loch Gilp.

Commercial Shipping

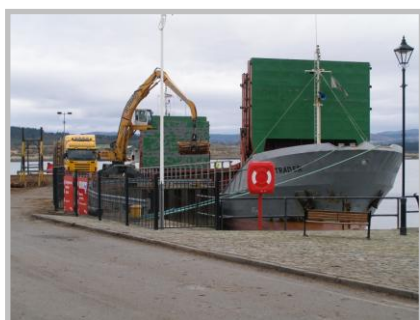
The pier at Ardrishaig is predominantly used for loading timber for sea transport. Approximately 150,000 tonnes of logs are shipped annually (Ports and Harbours of the UK 2008).

Discharges

There are a number of discharges via sea outfalls within this policy zone, including the consented discharge from Lingerton landfill site, which is located on the east coast of Loch Gilp. The other outfalls are of a private and local authority concern.

Marine Infrastructure

An out of service telephone cable runs adjacent to the shore from Port Ann and lands just north of Ardrishaig.



Timber being loaded for transportation at the Ardrishaig Pier



Recreational angling in Loch Gilp



The Lingerton landfill on the east side of Loch Gilp pictured from just south of Ardrishaig



Recreational angling in Loch Gilp



Holiday chalet at Brenfield Point

DESIGNATIONS

Refer to policy zone D map for areas covered.

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

- The majority of the coast immediately adjacent to this policy area is designated as 'Developed Coast' (a coastal area of Countryside around Settlement).
- South of Inverneill and South West of Creagan Beag, the coastline is designated as 'Undeveloped Coast' (a coastal area of Sensitive Countryside).
- Two Rural Opportunity Areas situated from Bagh Tigh-an-Droighinn to the north of Creagan Beag and heading inland from Whitehouse Bay.
- The waterfront area of Ardrishaig is an Area for Action and there are a further four waterfront Areas for Action at the head of Loch Gilp within the settlement of Lochgilphead.
- The coastal hinterland from Rubha Caolard to Silver Craigs is designated as an Area of Panoramic Quality.

Other Designations

- The 'Loch Fyne Coastal Strip' Shellfish Growing Water extends partially through the policy zone, ending at Creag a'Ghuail and starting from Glac Bheag (excluding the coastal area around Ardrishaig and Lochgilphead).
- Lochgilphead town centre and waterfront, the west waterfront, Miller's Bridge, Ardrishaig south village centre and the Crinan Canal have been identified as an Area For Action.

WILDLIFE

Three rivers flow into this policy zone, the Inverneill Burn, the Cuilarstich and the Stronachulilin Burn. Each may have significance for wild salmon and sea trout populations and are all part of the loch wide restoration project. Shore birds accumulate in the productive brackish areas where these rivers enter the loch.

The large mud flats at the head of Loch Gilp harbour a large diversity of common and rare birds including: oyster catchers, grey plover, red shank, black-backed gull, wigeon, herring gulls, sandwich terns, mallard and eider duck. The islands of Eilean Mòr and Laith Eilean are known as seal haul-outs and bird nesting sites. Basking sharks are often sighted in this policy zone.



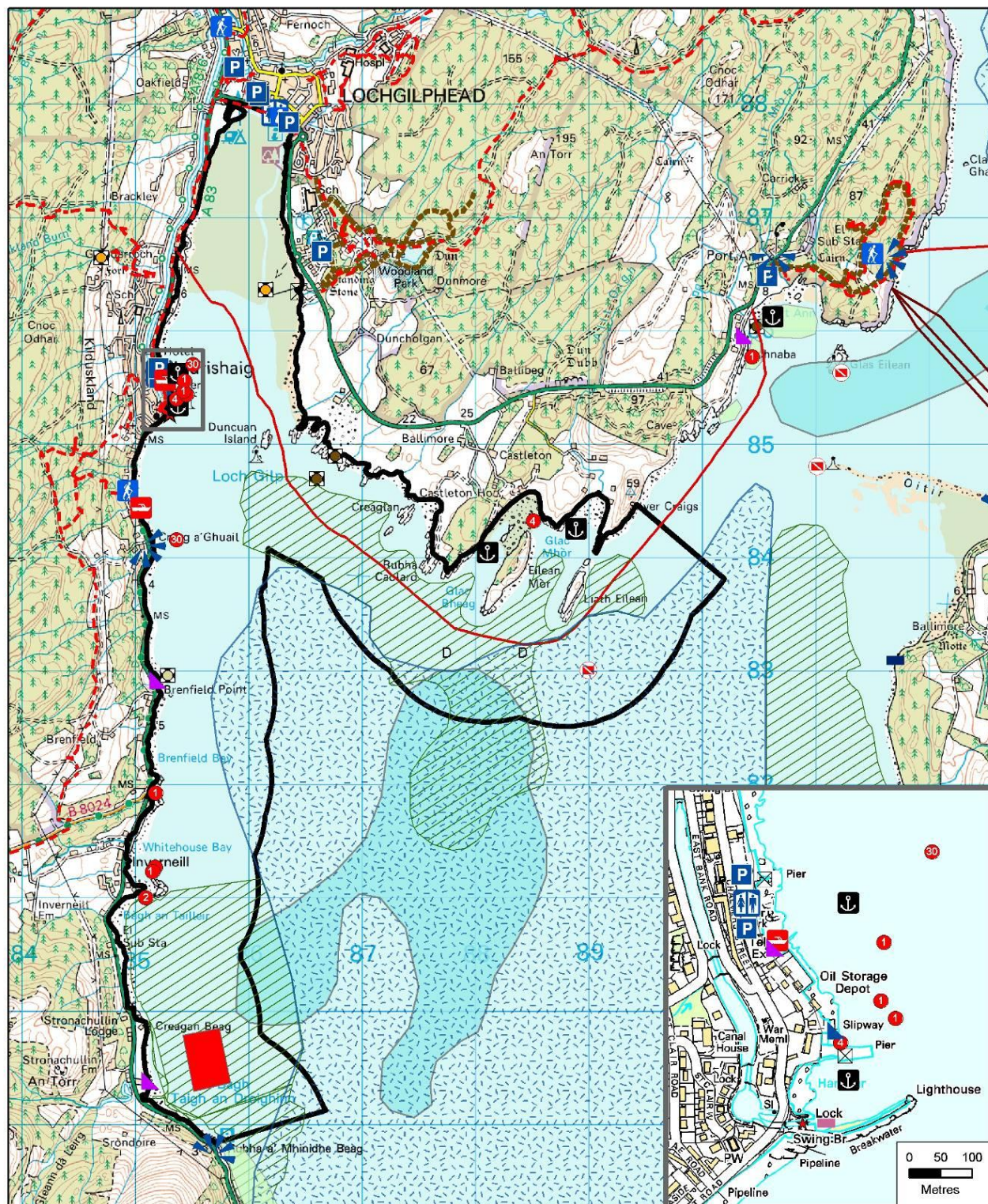
Large intertidal sand and mud flat in Loch Gilp that hosts many common and rare birds. species.

HISTORICAL FEATURES

























There are numerous scheduled ancient monuments and listed buildings along this coast, but most are centred in Inverneill, Ardrishaig and Lochgilphead. The main historical features that are notable because of their proximity to the coast include the following:

- Inverneill Parish Church, which is located on a promontory separating Whitehouse Bay and Bagh an Tailleir;
- Pier and breakwater at Ardrishaig (Category B listed), which was built in 1837 for steam ships;
- German style clock lodge on the east side of Loch Gilp built in the mid 1800s; and
- Crinan Canal, Cairnbaan - Ardrishaig is a scheduled ancient monument.

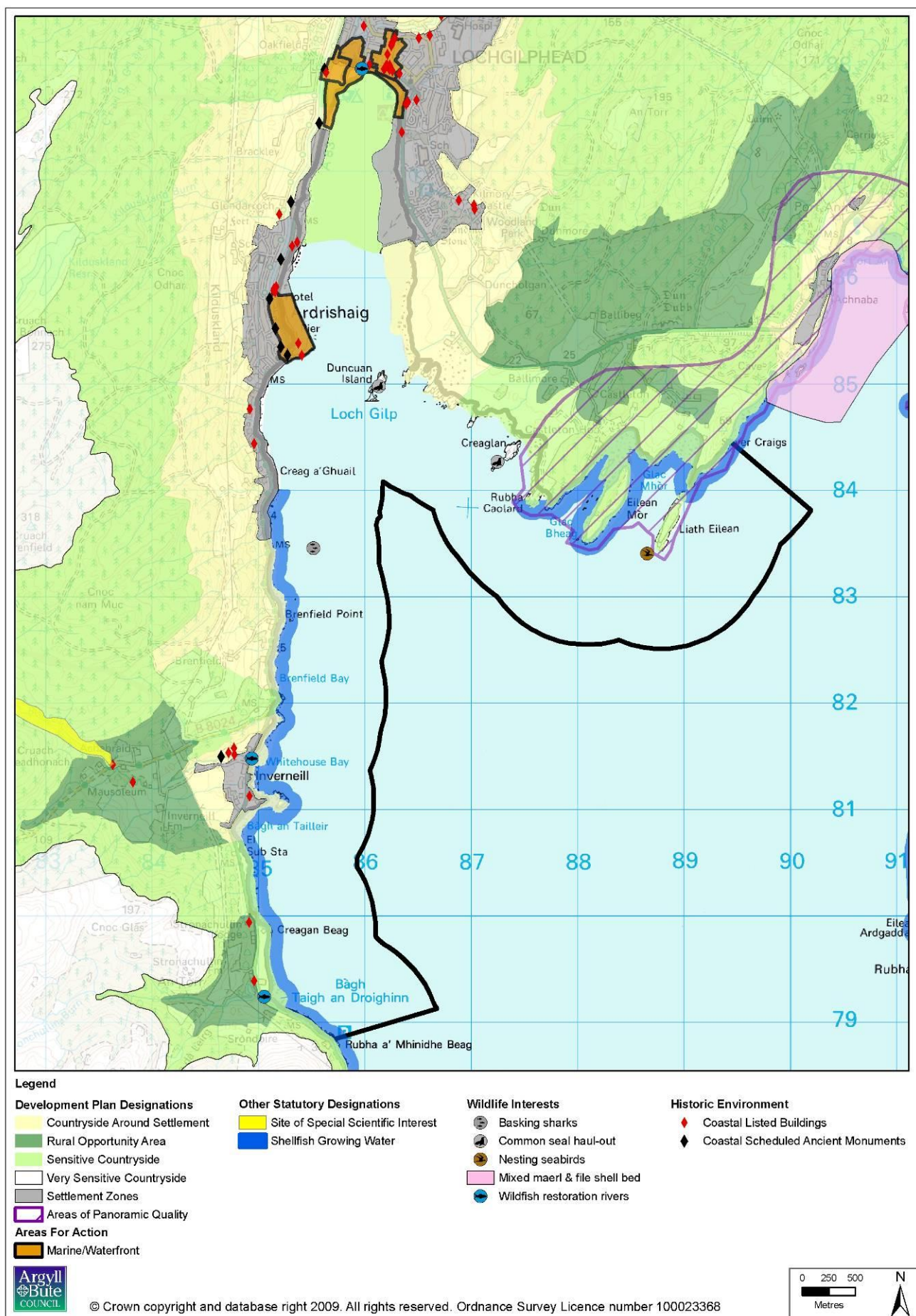
POLICY ZONE D MAP – Current Uses & Activities



Legend

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| Commercial Fishing | Infrastructure & Discharges | Loch Access | Recreation & Tourism | |
|  Scallop dredging |  Subsea telephone cable |  Pier |  Preferred angling areas |  Dive sites |
|  Nephrops trawling/creeling |  Subsea power cable |  Private jetty |  Proposed core path |  Viewpoint |
|  Scallop diving |  Local authority outfall |  Private slipway |  Coastal forest path |  Parking |
| Aquaculture |  Private outfall |  Public slipway |  Coastal path location |  Public Conveniences |
|  Finfish lease |  Sewage/waste water treatment |  Anchorage |  Boat/Yacht clubs |  Tourist information |
| | |  Canal access | | |

POLICY ZONE D MAP – Designations, Wildlife Interests & Historic Features



OPPORTUNITIES AND CONSTRAINTS FOR FUTURE USE AND DEVELOPMENT

Constraints

<i>Future Use</i>	
Condition of Coastal Infrastructure	Coastal infrastructure at Ardrishaig is currently poor although the town is listed as an area for action in the Argyll and Bute Development Plan (Structure & Local Plan).
Areas sensitive to disturbance	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>	
Financial Investment	The financial investment necessary for harbour improvements at Ardrishaig are likely to be substantial.
Navigation	Marine development may affect safe navigation due to the large amount of marine traffic that continually passes through and by this policy zone en route to the Crinan Canal and Ardrishaig.
Fishing	Correspondence with the fishing industry has identified that the development of the existing salmon farm has resulted in a loss of scallop fishing ground. Further development over existing fishing grounds may therefore meet with opposition from fishermen.
Landscape	Visual amenity is likely to be an issue for any aquaculture development in this policy zone.
Physical Characteristics	Physical characteristics (exposure and water depths) of most of this policy zone do not lend themselves to aquaculture development.
Discharges	The coastal area around Ardrishaig and Lochgilphead is unlikely to be suitable for shellfish growing due to the regulated discharges from these settlements.
Wild migratory salmonids	Any increase in tonnage at existing sites may present a greater risk to the health and survival of wild migratory salmonids, due to an increase in the number of hosts, which in turn may increase infection levels on wild fish.

Opportunities¹

<i>Future Use</i>	
Recreational Boating	<p>Great potential exists to develop the coastal area of Ardrishaig to provide facilities for sailors who intend to pass through the Crinan Canal including toilets/showers, changing rooms, yacht chandlery, and waterside dining developments. This might encourage sailors to stay overnight or longer.</p> <p>A recent marine leisure assessment of sailing in the Clyde estuary (MacKenzie Wilson Partnership 2006) has indicated that leisure boating is a growing sector and facilities need to be developed or improved for the Clyde area to benefit fully from this growth.</p>
Marine Access	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.
Shellfish Ranching	Scallop ranching could be developed in the north of this policy zone, in the shallow waters either side of the island Eilean Mòr.

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

Development	
On-shore Aquaculture	Appropriately designed and located aquaculture land base facilities could potentially merge with the existing settlements.
Aquaculture	There is potential for expansion of the existing salmon farm in this policy zone without adversely affecting the landscape character.
	The 'Loch Fyne Coastal Strip' Shellfish Growing Water extends throughout the length of the policy zone, excluding the coastal area around Ardrishaig and Lochgilphead. Coastal water quality should be maintained at an appropriate standard for shellfish growing.
Coastal Infrastructure	Marina facilities such as pontoons with berths, more accessible slipways and public moorings would be of economic benefit to the area, as there is increasing demand for step-ashore facilities in the Clyde area.
	Strategic coastal infrastructure development and improvements would bring significant economic development opportunities to the area.
Strategic Development	Ardrishaig is listed as an area for action in the Argyll and Bute Development Plan (Structure & Local Plan) and is therefore identified as a priority area for strategic development and environmental improvements.

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 PZD-1

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

Justification

- In the area from Strondoir Bay to Ardrishaig, the landscape/seascape capacity study indicates that due to the presence of the existing fish farm, any new developments in this stretch of coastline would create negative cumulative visual impacts from the A83 (Grant 2007).
- No potential to accommodate aquaculture was identified within Loch Gilp due to visual impacts from settlements and the A83 (Grant 2007).
- Shallow depths in much of this policy zone mean there are few areas that would be suitable for finfish development (Marine and Coastal Development Unit 2009).
- Loch Gilp and its approaches are particularly busy with commercial and recreational boat traffic.
- Commercial queen scallop fishing occurs around the Castleton headland (Loch Fyne ICZM Group).

Marine Finfish Development Policy PZD-2

There will be a general presumption in favour of expansion to the existing finfish site at Strondoir Bay, or any proposed change of use from salmon to mussel, scallop or other finfish species, subject to no significant adverse impacts.

See Table PZD for additional guidance

Justification

- There is some limited scope for additional cages to be added to the existing development with no effective impact on existing visual capacity (Grant 2007).

² 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

Marine Shellfish Development Policy PZD-3

There will be a general presumption against any scale of new shellfish farm development within this policy zone, other than the change of use identified in Policy PZD-2.

Justification

- In the area from Strondoir Bay to Ardrishaig, the landscape/seascape capacity study indicates that due to the presence of the existing fish farm, any new aquaculture developments in this stretch of coastline would create negative cumulative visual impacts from the A83 (Grant 2007).
- No potential to accommodate shellfish aquaculture was identified within Loch Gilp, due to visual impacts from settlements (Grant 2007) and potential water quality issues.
- Shallow depths in much of this policy zone mean there are few areas that would be suitable for mussel and scallop development.
- Loch Gilp and its approaches are particularly busy with commercial and recreational boat traffic.
- Commercial queen scallop fishing occurs around the Castleton headland (Loch Fyne ICZM Group).

ON-SHORE AQUACULTURE-RELATED DEVELOPMENT POLICY

On-shore Aquaculture-Related Development Policy PZD-4

There will be a general presumption in favour of expansion to the current land-base facilities at Strondoir Bay or new developments within existing settled areas along the coast, subject to there being no significant adverse impacts.

See Table PZD for additional guidance

Justification

- Appropriately designed and located aquaculture land base facilities could potentially merge with the existing settlements (Grant 2007).

SUPPLEMENTARY GUIDANCE ON POTENTIAL AQUACULTURE DEVELOPMENTS

TABLE PZD - Guidance on location, scale and other considerations

Development Type	Location	Suggested Maximum Scale	Comments
Expansion of existing fish farm	Strondoir Bay Fish Farm	Up to 20% expansion in water surface area	<p>New cages should extend existing development parallel with the coast.</p> <p>The design of the development should aim for consistently simple structures in an ordered layout with minimal visual clutter.</p> <p>Any expansion should only be to the NW or SW of the existing lease area to minimise effects on fishing grounds.</p> <p>SEPA CAR consent would be required for any increase in production. Developers would need to demonstrate that lice management can be adequately controlled within levels dictated by best practice guidance prescribed in the Code of Good Practice for Scottish Finfish Aquaculture and on-going monitoring of wild fish health and survival.</p>
Change of use from salmon to mussel, scallop or other finfish	Strondoir Bay Fish Farm	Current surface and seabed area of existing salmon farm	<p>For shellfish development, a larger surface area may be acceptable on landscape grounds, if it can be shown that the visual impacts are no greater than the existing salmon farm.</p> <p>Any increase in the seabed area of this site may further restrict commercial trawling ground and agreement should be reached with fishing interests.</p>

On-shore aquaculture development	Strondoir Bay and existing settled areas	-	New land-based facilities should be located within existing settled areas. These settlements are designated as '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.
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Future relinquishment of existing developments

If the existing fish farm at Strondoir Bay is 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	Finfish Expansion	Change of Use	On-shore Aquaculture
Argyll Fisheries Trust	✓	✓	
Ardishaig Community Council	✓	✓	✓
British Telecom	✓	✓	
Clyde Area Management Group	✓	✓	✓
Clyde Fishermen's Association	✓	✓	
Clyde Inshore Fisheries Group	✓	✓	
Scottish Creelers and Divers Association	✓	✓	
Lighthouse Caledonia Scotland Ltd	✓	✓	✓
Lochgilphead Community Council			✓
Royal Yachting Association	✓	✓	
Scottish Federation of Sea Anglers	✓	✓	
Scottish Sea Angling Conservation Network	✓	✓	