

## POLICY ZONE G: LOCH GAIR TO UNION BAY

### LANDSCAPE CHARACTERISTICS

The hinterland of Loch Gair is partially wooded and partially grazing meadows. The landscape from East Kames to Union Bay has a hummocky landform with rocky outcrops. Steep wooded slopes and forestry plantations are found adjacent to the foreshore, particularly at Ardcastle. The semi-enclosed water body of Loch Gair is immediately surrounded by gently sloping woodland and open moorland and forestry plantation.

### SEASCAPE CHARACTERISTICS

At the southern side of the Loch Gair inlet, a bedrock outcrop forms a promontory on which the Castle is located. Loch Gair itself is a distinct and well-defined sheltered semi-enclosed shallow water body with large intertidal areas along the northern and eastern parts.

The shoreline leading to Union Bay is a mix of bedrock outcrops interspersed with rock, boulder and pebble bays. The variation in the channel width creates a sense of expansiveness where the sea channel is at its widest, notably below Kilmichael Beg.



Shoreline north of Ardcastle



Loch Gair



Shoreline south of the Castle looking towards East Kames

### ACCESS

Walking path access exists at the Castle. Within Lochgair village, there is one private slipway and also public access from the road onto the shore for boats to be launched from trailers. In addition, there is one private jetty. The road through Lochgair village is single track and there is no reasonable turning area or suitable parking. On the east side of Loch Gair, the Ardcastle forest path skirts the coast with trail access to the shore beyond St. Brides Chapel and burial ground. Following round the Ardcastle wood path, the shore can be accessed at numerous points by foot, but vehicle access is limited along the forestry paths that lead to the coast, with parking approximately a mile from the coast just off the A83. There is a pier for marine access at Ardcastle wood that is currently used for recreational diving.



Private slipway in Loch Gair



Main access to shore at Ardcastle



Access to Loch Gair from Lochgair village

### VISUAL AMENITY

Views from the A83 trunk road are negligible. From Lochgair village, views overlook Loch Gair to the north and east shores, approximately 1 km away. The sheltered, contained character of the bay creates a natural harbour, and Lochgair village and Asknish are both orientated towards this as a focal point. Views from the network of paths in Ardcastle Forest are extensive to the north and south along the length of Loch Fyne and east to Cowal. There are a number of view points and picnic tables along this network of paths.



Entrance to Loch Gair



View north from shore at Ardcastle recreation and picnic area



View north from shore at Ardcastle recreation and picnic area

## SETTLEMENTS

The village of Lochgair hosts a small number of houses at Asknish and Kilmichael Beg.

## CURRENT USES

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

### Aquaculture

Details of current aquaculture leases in this policy zone are provided in the table below.

Current Aquaculture Sites						
Location	Species	Consented Equipment	Maximum Biomass	Operator	Shore-base Location	Development Status
Ardcastle	Salmon	14 x 80 m circular cages arranged 7 x 2	1560 tonnes	Lighthouse Caledonia	Crarae	Developed/Active

### Fishing

Trawling activities occur close to the shore leading up to Union Bay, skirting around the finfish farm between Ardcastle and Kilmichael Beg.

### Recreation

#### Anchoring and Mooring

The sheltered area of Loch Gair is a charted anchorage and contains a number of moorings. Anchoring or mooring of sailing vessels with longer fixed keels is restricted to deeper areas in the centre of the loch.

#### Angling

Small angling boats can be launched from the shore.

#### Diving

There are two scenic dive sites in this policy zone, both adjacent to Ardcastle Wood.

#### Coastal Paths

The well-maintained Ardcastle Forest path is well-used for walking and horse riding and is an asset to the area. Picnic facilities are located at various points on the path with views over the loch and good access to the shore.



Coastline at Ardcastle woodland

### Discharges

There is a single consented private discharge via a sea outfall in Loch Gair and several houses discharging from septic tanks into Lochgair.

## DESIGNATIONS

Refer to policy zone G 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 settlement of Lochgair is classified as 'Developed Coast' (a coastal area of Countryside Around Settlement).
- The coastal hinterland is part of the West Loch Fyne Coast Area of Panoramic Quality.

### **Other Designations**

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

### **WILDLIFE**

Few coastal/marine wildlife surveys have been carried out in this policy zone. However, the shore of Loch Gair and the area of Union Bay were surveyed in 1988 as part of the Marine Nature Conservation Review. The Loch Gair shore was classified as reduced salinity, sheltered, littoral stone, gravel and sediment flats with mussel beds and furoid seaweeds. Fauna in the sediments comprised mostly of bivalves and polychaete worms. The seabed of Union Bay was composed of coarse sediment, bedrock, cobbles and boulders with a dense covering of brittle stars. Otters are also present around the shores of Loch Gair and wading birds are also common in the intertidal area.

### **HISTORICAL FEATURES**

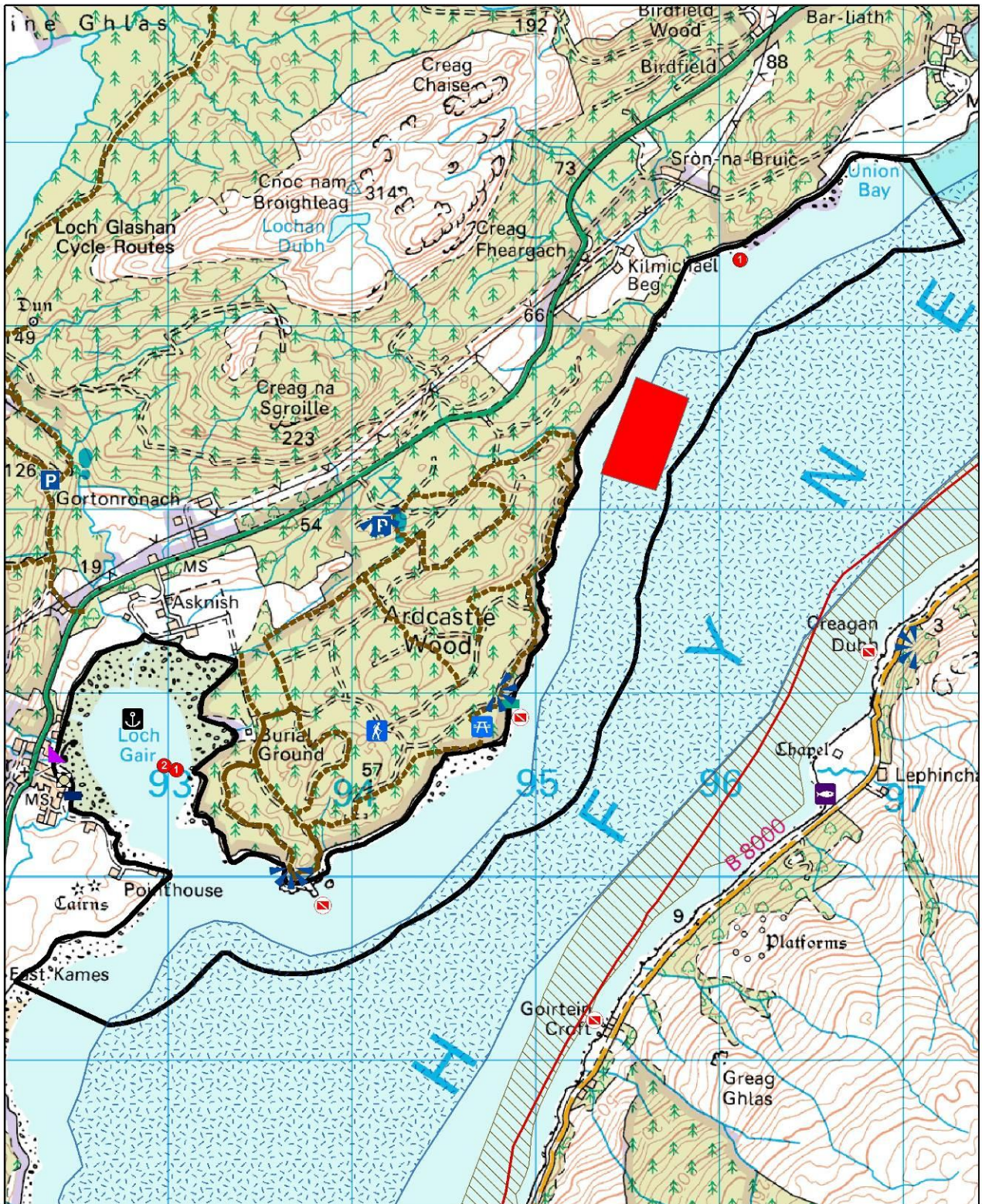
- The Castle (Point House) (category B listed Building) - an early 19<sup>th</sup> century Gothic building, which has recently been renovated.
- St. Brides chapel and graveyard in Ardcastle Forest.
- Lochgair House, (Asknish) (category B listed Building) - later 18th century. Georgian.
- Lochgair Sundial on lawn of Lochgair House, (Asknish) (category B listed Building)



The Castle at the entrance to Loch Gair, prior to renovation.



# POLICY ZONE G MAP – Current Uses & Activities



## Legend

### Commercial Fishing

- Nephrops trawling/creeling
- Previous queen scallop fishery

### Aquaculture

- Finfish lease
- Fish hatchery



### Infrastructure & Discharges

- Subsea telephone cable
- Private outfall

### Loch Access

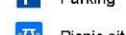
- Jetty
- Private jetty
- Private slipway
- Anchorage
- Moorings

### Recreation & Tourism

- Preferred angling areas
- Proposed core path
- Coastal forest path
- Coastal path location
- Dive sites



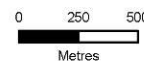
Viewpoint



Parking



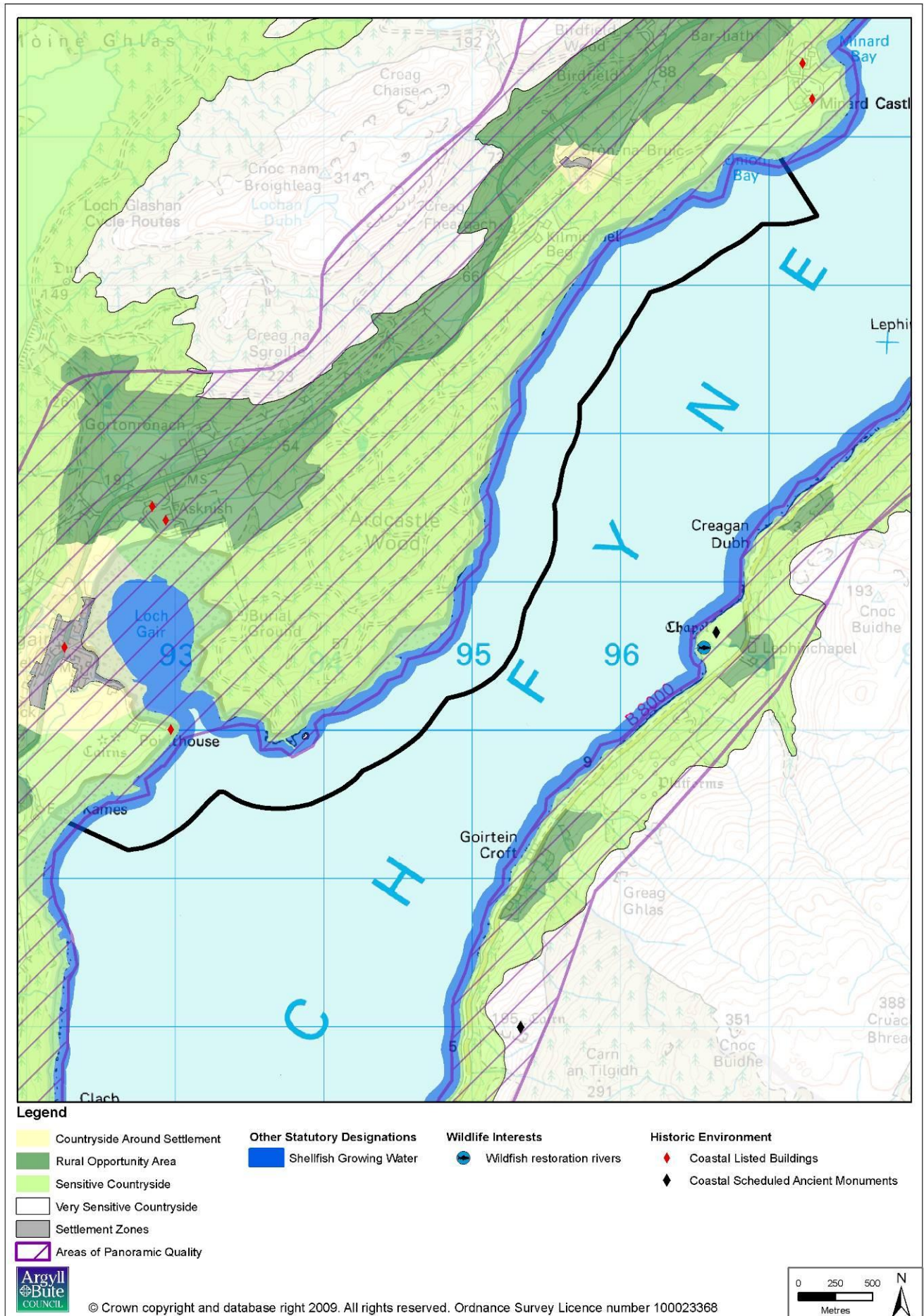
Picnic sites



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



## OPPORTUNITIES AND CONSTRAINTS FOR FUTURE USE AND DEVELOPMENT

### Constraints

<i>Future Use</i>	
<b>Enclosed Character</b>	Although it is a sheltered area of water with potential for the development of commercial marine leisure activities, Loch Gair is also very enclosed, and motorised activities such as jet or water-skiing would not be appropriate.
<b>Water Depth</b>	Loch Gair is a safe anchorage, but not suitable for boats with a deep draft.
<b>Marine Access</b>	Public access to the sheltered waters of Loch Gair is poor, and access improvements may be potentially expensive to allow for the safe launching of small vessels and related parking that would be necessary.

<i>Development</i>	
<b>Landscape</b>	Views from the shoreline picnic and viewpoint sites at Ardcastle are sensitive to marine development.  The enclosed character of Loch Gair may restrict the amount of development/activity that can occur here, and cumulative impacts may be apparent more quickly.
<b>Water Depth</b>	Shallow water depth precludes finfish, mussel or scallop farm development in Loch Gair.
<b>Road Infrastructure</b>	The quiet character of Lochgair village would have to be strongly considered before developing anything that may increase use of the single track road that leads through the village and along the coast.

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

<i>Future Use</i>	
<b>Marine Access</b>	Loch Gair is located very close to the A83 and access to the water body could be improved easily.  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.
<b>Recreation</b>	The water body would be suitable for teaching marine leisure activities such as kayaking, wind surfing and dingy sailing.

<i>Development</i>	
<b>Aquaculture</b>	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.
<b>On-shore Aquaculture</b>	There may be some potential for aquaculture shore-base facilities adjacent to the already industrial Scottish Power Station building.
<b>Shellfish Ranching</b>	As seabed ranching of oysters is not visible above the water surface, this could be an alternative method of growing shellfish in Loch Gair, to avoid visual impacts at surroundings viewpoints.

<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 POLICY

#### Marine Finfish Development Policy PZG-1

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

##### Justification

- There is no scope for additional developments from Union Bay to Loch Gair, as any other sites are likely to intrude upon the more intimate scale of bays in this section of coastline (Grant 2007).
- Views from the shoreline picnic and viewpoint sites on the Ardcastle Forest trail are sensitive to development (Grant 2007).
- Within Loch Gair, the small-scale of the loch would be quickly dominated by development which could be viewed from numerous surrounding viewpoints (Grant 2007).

#### Marine Finfish Development Policy PZG-2

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

*See Table PZG for additional guidance*

##### Justification

- The existing farm has some impact on fine views to the north from Ardcastle Forest Trail (Grant 2007).
- Further expansion of this farm may further restrict commercial trawling ground (Marine & Coastal Development Unit 2009).

### MARINE SHELLFISH DEVELOPMENT POLICIES

#### Marine Shellfish Development Policy PZG-3

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

##### Justification

- There is no scope for additional developments from Union Bay to Loch Gair, as sites are likely to intrude upon the more intimate scale of bays in this section of coastline (Grant 2007).
- Views from the shoreline picnic and viewpoint sites on the Ardcastle Forest trail are sensitive to development (Grant 2007).
- Within Loch Gair, the small-scale of the loch would be quickly dominated by development which could be viewed from numerous surrounding viewpoints (Grant 2007).

### ON-SHORE AQUACULTURE-RELATED DEVELOPMENT POLICY

#### On-shore Aquaculture-Related Infrastructure Development Policy PZG-4

There will be a general presumption in favour of small-scale on-shore aquaculture development at the edge of the Lochgair settlement zone, subject to no significant adverse impacts.

*See Table PZG for additional guidance*

##### Justification

- Lochgair is classified as an area of developed coast (a coastal area of Countryside Around Settlement) and is therefore considered appropriate for land based developments in line with Policy LP CST 1 of the Argyll and Bute Development Plan (Structure and Local Plan).

<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.



## SUPPLEMENTARY GUIDANCE ON POTENTIAL AQUACULTURE DEVELOPMENTS

**TABLE PZG - Guidance on location, scale and other considerations**

Development Type	Location	Suggested Maximum Scale	Comments
<b>Change of use from salmon to mussel, scallop or other finfish</b>	Ardcastle Salmon Farm	Current surface and seabed area of existing salmon farm	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.  Any increase in the seabed area of this site may further restrict commercial trawling ground.
<b>On-shore aquaculture development</b>	Loch Gair	Small-scale	The settlement of Lochgair 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.  Proposals should focus on the edge of the settlement zone, preferably adjacent to the already industrial Scottish Power Station building.

### Future relinquishment of existing developments

If the existing Ardcastle salmon farm 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	Change of Use	On-shore Aquaculture
Clyde Area Management Group	✓	✓
Clyde Fishermen's Association	✓	
Clyde Inshore Fisheries Group	✓	
Forestry Commission Scotland	✓	
Lighthouse Caledonia Ltd	✓	✓
Royal Yachting Association	✓	
Scottish Creelers and Divers Association	✓	
Scottish & Southern Energy		✓
Scottish Water		✓
Strachur Community Council	✓	
The Lochgair Association	✓	✓
West Lochfyne Community Council	✓	✓