

Loch Ryan Management Plan

Consultation December 2013

**Using marine planning to identify
management needs and opportunities for
enhanced community amenity and economic
regeneration of the surrounding area**

Solway Firth

Partnership

Dumfries
& Galloway 
COUNCIL

The Brief

The importance of waterfront regeneration at Loch Ryan has been a key issue for Dumfries and Galloway Council since the relocation of the ferry terminal from Stranraer to Cairnryan in 2011.

Through public consultation, a wide variety of potential development opportunities have been identified in a regeneration development plan. These include power boating, yachting, wildlife watching, coastal path development, interpretation works and more. This in addition to existing use of the site which includes oyster farming and creel fishing.

Solway Firth Partnership has been commissioned by Dumfries and Galloway Council to establish a better understanding of how different parts of the Loch are used so that any potential conflict arising from changing patterns of use can be managed, wildlife can be protected, and appropriate development opportunities can be identified.

Stranraer waterfront - Nic Coombey



The Approach

Development of the marine leisure sector is already being supported by considerable investment set out in the Stranraer Waterfront Urban Design Strategy and Masterplan. Therefore, in addition to consideration of management needs arising from this, Solway Firth Partnership's focus has been on complementary development opportunities. The aim is to support the vision to 'reposition Stranraer and Loch Ryan as a distinctive and successful marine leisure destination'.

And to support the specific objectives already identified to:

- Promote Stranraer as a gateway to Scotland and a visitor destination
- Develop Stranraer and Loch Ryan as a centre of excellence for marine leisure and green tourism
- Foster and strengthen community cohesion

Sectoral Interactions

Solway Firth Partnership employed similar methodology to that applied more widely in the Solway Firth and in other parts of the UK to improve understanding of how the sea is used and the level of perceived conflict between different interests in the marine environment.

Structured interviews were conducted with a range of key stakeholders representing a wide variety of interests. A questionnaire was used to gather information on issues including seasonality of different types of use, trends in level of use, scope for improvements in integration between users and opportunities for development of the Loch and its surrounding area as a resource for the local community and as a driver for economic development.

Interaction categories

Interviews included an assessment of interactions between different sectors based on a range of categories. This information has been transposed into an interactions matrix which provides an overview of the compatibility of the different interests in the Loch.

Positive	<i>Where the activity of the other sector has a positive influence on your sector</i>
Neutral	<i>Where the activity of the other sector has no positive or negative influence on your sector</i>
Competition	<i>Where there is sustainable competition for access to the same resources or areas between the other sector and your sector</i>
Conflict	<i>Where conflict arises as a consequence of unmanaged competition between the other sector and your sector for access to the same resources or areas</i>
Incompatible	<i>Where there is a fundamental and unmanageable incompatibility between the activity of the other sector and your sector</i>

Spatial data

Map based information has been gathered in paper format and identifies the key area of the Loch used by feeding and roosting birds, and the main areas of use for leisure and commercial activities.

This identifies the importance of the Loch for birds with its significance bordering the qualifying threshold for Special Protection Area designation: the highest European designation for birds. Numbers of wildfowl and waders using the Loch is highest in winter with widespread distribution. Particularly critical feeding and roosting areas are to the east of the Loch off Innermessen and around the Wig.

The principal area of importance for recreational boating is the west side of the Loch between the marina and the sailing club. Peak activity is in summer. Spatial information has also been gathered for activities including fishing, angling and diving as well as features of historic and cultural interest.



Nic Coombey

Literature research

In addition, a review of information about the site including its history, archaeology, wildlife, culture, amenities and marketing has been undertaken. This has included:

- Stranraer Waterfront Urban Design Strategy and Masterplan 2009: Smith Scott Mullan Associates
- Stranraer Marine Leisure Study 2012: Leigh Fisher
- Loch Ryan Draft Management Plan 2012 prepared by Natural Capital
- Loch Ryan Management Plan 1999: Loch Ryan Forum
- Loch Ryan Coastal Path www.ayrshirecoastalpath.org
- Loch Ryan Coastal Path leaflet: The Rotary Club of Stranraer
- Assessing the economic impacts of nature based tourism in Scotland 2010: SNH
- Where to Watch Birds in Scotland: Mike Madders and Julia Welstead
- Best Birdwatching Sites - The Solway: John Miles

Conclusions of sectoral interactions work

Conflict between different types of use of Loch Ryan is not currently an issue. Stakeholders have stressed that there is considerable potential for conflict should there be a significant increase in the level of use. Key areas of concern are increased use of power boats and jet skis and their potential for disturbance of birds and conflict with users including recreational anglers. Most contributors felt that a zoning plan could satisfactorily address potential future conflict.

Therefore our draft recommendations are:

- That there is not a need for a zoning plan at present
- That a voluntary code of conduct and zoning plan is developed as required in accordance with increased levels of use in future
- That byelaws are instated in the event that a voluntary approach is not sufficiently effective

Black Guillemot
Keith Kirk



Development suggestions

A wide range of suggestions for improvements to the amenity value of Loch Ryan for the local community and development of its economic regeneration potential for the surrounding area have been proposed during previous community consultations and the course of the interviews carried out by Solway Firth Partnership. These include:

- Improvements to marketing of the Loch, particularly for marine leisure and birdwatching
- Development of boat based wildlife tours
- Improvements to interpretation at the Wig
- Provision of a sheltered viewing area at the Wig
- Provision of telescopes
- Habitat improvement works for birds
- Promotion of local shellfisheries
- Improved interpretation of heritage features
- A sea angling education programme for young people
- Access improvements for walkers and anglers
- Re-establishment of the Loch Ryan Forum
- Employment of a ranger

The Results

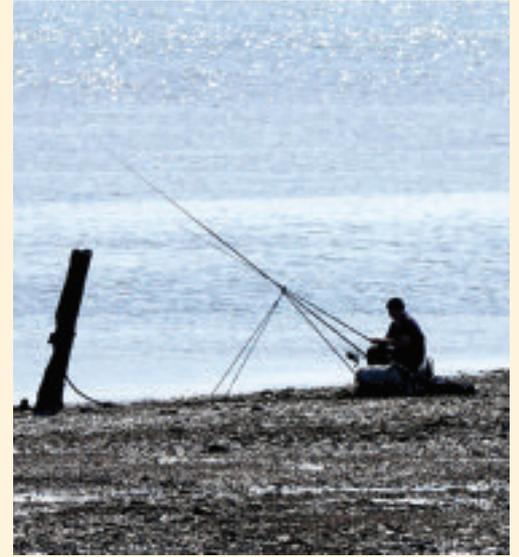
These suggestions have been evaluated on the basis of feasibility including any capital and maintenance costs and the extent to which they help to realise the objectives of enhancing community amenity, protecting the quality of the site and realising economic development potential.

As part of this evaluation process, Solway Firth Partnership undertook a full walkover survey of the coast and the condition of existing small scale infrastructure. The Partnership has brought its own collective experience to the process and has been able to take a strategic view of opportunities.

Therefore, a series of actions are proposed which are considered to be most effective, achievable and to offer best value. These options are being presented to the local community to obtain feedback prior to finalising the Management Plan for the Loch.



Nic Coombey



Alan Cairns

The Wig

The area adjacent to the village of Kirkcolm known as the Wig is a popular spot for locals and visitors. There is an attractive circular walk taking in a scenic part of the shoreline with considerable historic and natural heritage interest.

Most of the existing small scale infrastructure including picnic benches, interpretation and signage is in very poor condition. There is a derelict WWII lookout building on Kirkcolm Point which has potential for interpretation and improvement to create a birdwatching shelter. There may be opportunities for habitat improvement works at the site such as for breeding birds and control of invasive non native species.

The proximity of Kirkcolm community including its Primary School provides an opportunity for a collaborative approach involving community engagement and education initiatives as part of an overall package.

Angling development

Both shore and boat based recreational sea angling are popular in Loch Ryan and the surrounding area. There is an active Loch Ryan Angling Association, a long-established tackle shop in Stranraer and charter boats operate from the marina. Slipways around the Loch provide additional access for boats and access for shore anglers is generally good. The main issues raised by anglers were the decline in fish stocks and a lack of young people taking part.

Galloway Fisheries Trust is undertaking some habitat improvement works to burns around the Loch. Improvements in water quality in the Loch in recent years along with changes in wider marine management may all help to improve fish stocks.

There is an opportunity to develop a community engagement, education and habitat management programme to improve understanding of fish species and encourage young people to take up angling.

The West Pier

Investment in infrastructure on Stranraer waterfront and in the town centre is helping to create the ambience of a distinctive and successful marine leisure destination in line with the high level vision for Stranraer. The construction of the new West Pier along with the distinctive Harbour Office building are significant steps along the way.

There is an excellent opportunity to supplement the new building work in this area with interpretation about the history, wildlife and commercial use of the Loch and harbour.

A powerful telescope on the end of the West Pier would add to the amenity value of the waterfront complex and provide encouragement for people to walk out onto the structure.

Rob Lamont - fisherman and skipper
of the Vital Spark oyster fishing boat
Andy Smith



Marketing

Consultation highlighted the need to supplement investment in infrastructure at Loch Ryan with a comprehensive marketing package. This would support actions to promote the Loch for leisure boating as well as raising awareness of the quality of the natural and cultural heritage of the area. There are opportunities to improve marketing linkages between Loch Ryan and other birdwatching sites in Dumfries and Galloway including Mull of Galloway as well as with initiatives such as Wild Seasons.

A marketing strategy needs to span a wide range of media and web based material is clearly a key component of this. However, visitors interviewed during the course of site surveys commented on the patchy availability of internet access in the Loch Ryan area illustrating the need for print material as well. A key marketing opportunity is presented by the ferry terminals and an innovative approach to this could include production of a short film about Stranraer and Loch Ryan for screening on the crossing.

Loch Ryan Oyster Festival

Reflecting on the aspirations for Stranraer and Loch Ryan and ways in which the area can attract visitors in a highly competitive marketplace led to careful consideration of a unique selling point. This is provided by the Loch Ryan oyster fishery: the only native wild oyster fishery in Scotland.

The fishery has won a variety of awards for sustainable management and is providing a premium product with excellent marketing potential for Stranraer and the surrounding area.

The potential for seafood festivals to supplement the events calendar in Dumfries and Galloway has been recognised in a recent sea fisheries socio-economic study for Dumfries and Galloway Council. A Loch Ryan Oyster Festival provides an opportunity to market other local seafood and to make linkages with a range of other sectors under this marketing theme.

Please tell us what you think

We'd really like to hear your comments
on any aspect of these proposals.

Please contact :

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We will be preparing our final report
early in 2014 so please get in touch as
soon as you can if you would like to
make comments.

Many thanks

Pam Taylor & Clair McFarlan
Solway Firth Partnership

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