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Argyll and Lochaber area management plan catchment summaries

Etive coastal catchment summary

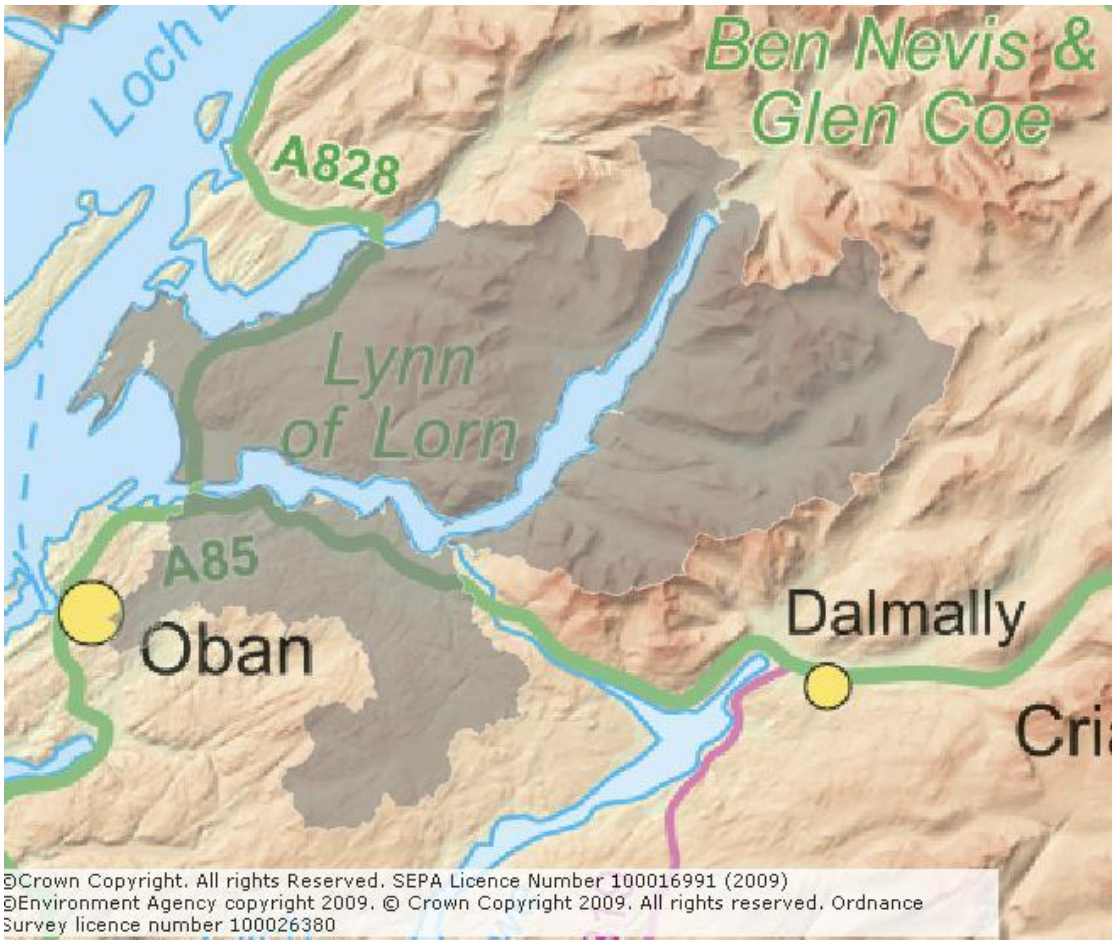
Introduction

The Etive coastal catchment, covering 400 km^2, surrounds Loch Etive from Benderloch along the south side of Loch Creran in the west to the east end of Glen Kinglass in the east. It extends south around Ben Cruachan, then takes in the area along the south side of Loch Etive including Loch Nant and the Black Lochs. It stops just east of Oban at the Falls of Lora as shown by the grey shading in Map 1.

The area is largely remote and mountainous. The main land and water uses are forestry, hydropower generation and some livestock farming.

The catchment:

- contains 14 water bodies, five of which are heavily modified water bodies (HMWBs);
- is adjacent to two coastal water bodies and one transitional one;
- contains/is adjacent to six protected areas.



Map 1: Area covered by Etive coastal catchment shown in grey

Further information on Etive coastal catchment is below and can be found on the river basin planning interactive map – www.sepa.org.uk/water/river_basin_planning.aspx

Classification summary

Ecological status (ES) or potential (EP)	No. WBs	WB ID	Name	WB category
High ES	2	10301	River Nant/Abhainn Cam Linne (u/s Loch Nant)	River
		100306	Allt Nathais	River
Good ES	5	10305	Lustagan Burn/Black Lochs	River
		10307	Dearg Abhainn	River
		10313	River Kinglass	River
		200073	Loch Etive	Transitional
		150075	Loch Awe and Glen Orchy	Groundwater
Good EP	4	100250	Loch Nant	Loch (HMWB)
		10300	River Nant (d/s Loch Nant)	River (HMWB)
		10311	River Noe	River (HMWB)
		10312	River Liver	River (HMWB)
Moderate ES	4	10310	Abhainn Dalach	River
		10314	Allt Easach	River
		200066	Firth of Lorn (North)	Coastal
		200075	Loch Creran	Coastal
Moderate EP	1	10309	Abhainn Teithil	River (HMWB)
Bad ES	1	10308	River Esragan	River

Protected areas

Protected area (PA) designation	Condition	No. WBs	PA ID	Name
Shellfish growing water	Failing guideline standards	3	UKS7992313	Loch Etive
			UKS7992332	Loch Creran
			UKS7992391	Lynn of Lorn
Special Area of Conservation (SAC) for reefs	Favourable[1]	1	UK0030190	Loch Creran
SAC for woodland habitats and otters		2	UK0012750	Loch Etive Woods
			UK0030155	Glen Creran Woods

[1] In some cases, other non-water dependent features are in unfavourable condition, but these are not discussed further here. If a water-dependent feature is unfavourable due to a non-water related pressure it is also not discussed further here.

Pressures, measures and objectives summary

No pressures – no deterioration objectives

No pressures exist on the seven water bodies which are at high or good ecological status. The objective for these is no deterioration in status by 2015. The same objective is in place for the four heavily modified water bodies at good ecological potential.

Morphology

The forestry adjacent to Abhainn Dalach (10310) and Allt Easach (10314) is scheduled to be restructured by the Forestry Commission by 2020 alleviating the morphology pressure (which is the sole pressure) on these water bodies causing them to be at moderate ecological status. The objective for these water bodies is therefore to be good ecological status by 2021.

Heavily modified water bodies (HMWBs)

All appropriate mitigation measures have been put in place for the abstraction and flow regulation pressures exerted by Scottish and Southern Energy hydro schemes on four of the HMWBs which are therefore reaching good ecological potential.

Forestry (which is a contributory pressure and therefore not downgrading the HMWB) adjacent to Loch Nant (10250) will be restructured by 2015.

Forestry adjacent to the Abhainn Teithil (10309) will be restructured by 2020. This means that this water body will improve from moderate to good ecological potential by 2021, providing all appropriate mitigation measures for the hydroscheme have been put in place.

Water resources pressures - derogations

The River Esragan (10308) is at bad ecological status due to the abstraction and flow regulation pressures from the Esragan hydroscheme. It has been judged that the benefits provided by this scheme in terms of renewable energy outweigh the environmental impacts caused by the scheme's operation. Given that all appropriate mitigation measures are in place a less stringent objective of bad ecological status can be set.

Coastal water bodies

Loch Creran (200075) and the Firth of Lorn (North) (200066) are part of a group of 10 coastal water bodies that were all classified as moderate ecological status for benthic invertebrates in 2008. This moderate classification was based on the combined results of monitoring at five sites in Loch Linnhe, five sites in Loch Creran and five sites in Loch Sunart. Samples obtained from deep water in Loch Linnhe returned the poorest results, but it is thought that this was due to the sea water column being highly stratified, such that levels of dissolved oxygen at the sea bed were very low. The low levels of dissolved oxygen were not considered to be attributable to any human activity, and the results from these sites were not therefore thought to be representative of conditions across a large proportion of the 10 water bodies in question. For this reason a new set of more representative monitoring sites was selected for the purposes of producing future classifications, and results will be reviewed when the 2009 classification is produced.

Protected areas

For the protected areas meeting their required standards the objective is no deterioration by 2015.

Shellfish Waters

Please see the Argyll and Lochaber Area Management Plan overview for further information on planning source tracking and measures for shellfish waters, including the use of Food Standards Agency Sanitary Survey Reports.

On Loch Etive (UKS7992312), Scottish Water improved Taynuilt STW in 2008, and is scheduled to provide first time sewerage for part of Bonawe by 2010. Improvements to existing works at Bonawe are expected by 2018. This shellfish water has been subject to bacterial source tracking studies which identified diffuse pollution from livestock as the main source of faecal contamination. Measures to deal with this diffuse pollution are scheduled to be effective by 2020 under the priority catchment programme, and the shellfish water is predicted to observe the guideline value for faecal coliforms by 2021 as a result.

Loch Creran (UKS7992332) and Lynn of Lorn (UKS7992391) are not predicted to meet the guideline value for faecal coliforms until 2021, and bacterial source tracking studies are required at the earliest opportunity to identify the main sources of diffuse pollution at both these sites.