

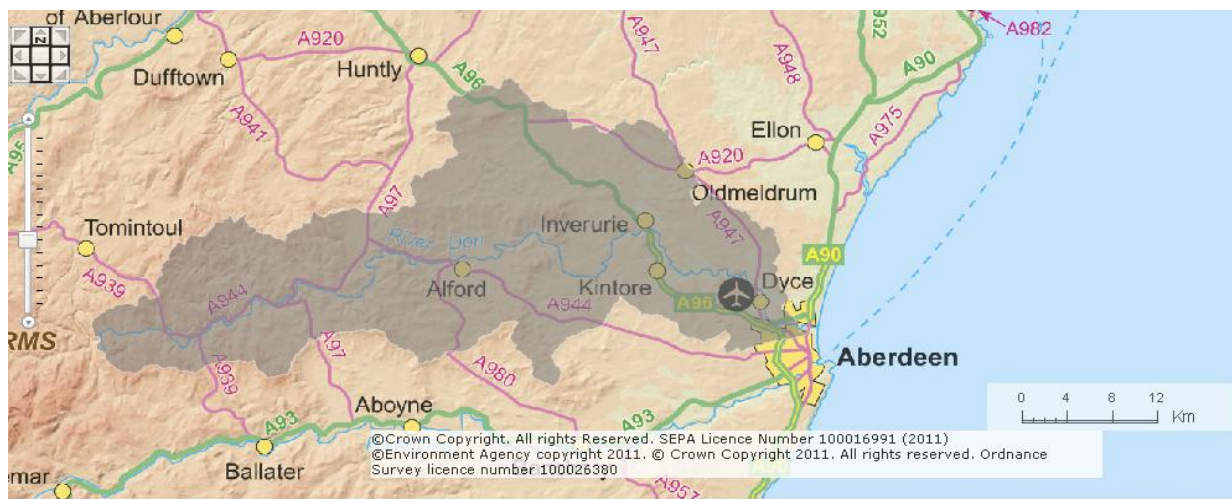
River Basin Management Planning

River Don catchment summary

1 Introduction

The River Don rises in the north east Grampians and flows east for over 130km before entering the North Sea just north of Old Aberdeen. Its tributaries include the Conrie, Carvie, Ernan, Nocht, Deskry, Buchat, Kindie, Leochel, Esset, Cluny, Elrick and River Urie.

Map 1: River Don catchment (shown in grey)



Much of the Don catchment is currently classified at good or high status, but some tributaries and the Don close to Aberdeen are not yet at good status. In general, tributaries in the upper catchment are more likely to be downgraded because of barriers to fish movement, while the river and tributaries closer to Aberdeen are affected by diffuse pollution from agriculture, morphological alterations such as straightening, and point source pollution from sewage disposal.

Further information on the River Don catchment can be found on SEPA's interactive map at www.sepa.org.uk/water/river_basin_planning.aspx

2 Classification summary of the catchment

SEPA constantly monitors the ecological status of the water environment and updates classification results annually. The summarised 2008 results show that the Don catchment contains:

- One water body at high ecological status.
- 18 water bodies at good ecological status.
- 13 water bodies at moderate ecological status and 6 water bodies at poor ecological status. Table 1 gives further details of these water bodies.
- There are no Heavily Modified Water Bodies in the catchment.

The groundwater bodies underlying the Don catchment are all currently at good status in terms of both water quality and water levels.

3 Details of pressures in the catchment

Point source pollution from sewage discharges currently impacts on the River Don (between Inverurie and the tidal limit), the River Urie (from Lochter Burn to the Don) and the Lochter Burn / Kings Burn, all of which are classified as moderate status. The Elrick Burn at Newmachar is classified as poor status, with point source pollution as a contributing factor. A number of actions have been developed or planned with Scottish Water, including work at Kemnay and Inverurie sewage treatment works. However, water bodies in the lower Don are not expected to achieve good status until 2021 (between Inverurie and Dyce) and 2027 (from Dyce to the tidal limit).

Diffuse source pollution linked to agriculture affects the lower River Don (Inverurie to the tidal limit) and tributaries, with the River Urie (Lochter to Don) and the Bucks, Black, Lochter/Kings, Cluny and Ton Burns all classified as moderate status because of diffuse pollution. Diffuse pollution also affects the Elrick, Newmill and Tuach/Tillakae Burns, but is not the primary reason for downgrading of these water bodies which have been classified at poor status.

The diffuse pollution programme being delivered by SEPA and partners will target farm advice visits and awareness-raising resources to tackle diffuse pollution and morphology changes relating to agriculture. It is expected that this will focus on the Don catchment between 2015 and 2021, so it is anticipated that these pressures will be tackled by 2021, resulting in good status for all but the Elrick Burn (which is not expected to achieve good status until 2027). The action plan for North East Scotland includes a number of measures for landowners, which should be supported and encouraged by SEPA's diffuse pollution programme, and the work of the North East Area Advisory Group.

The Leochel Burn, Esset Burn, Elrick Burn and River Don (source to Strathdon) are currently at poor status because of **barriers to fish passage**. Work is underway with the River Don Fisheries Trust to map and prioritise, and fund restoration work on fish barriers in the Don catchment.

Protected Area information

Bathing Waters

By 2015, all bathing waters are required to achieve sufficient status under the revised Bathing Water Directive. Aberdeen Ballroom has been subject to failures of the existing mandatory standards during periods of wet weather, contributed to by sewer outflows across the city and run-off from agricultural land. It is hoped that a planned Drainage Area Study will provide information regarding spill frequency and the adequacy of the existing sewerage infrastructure. Based on recent results, Aberdeen Ballroom would achieve poor status under the new Bathing Water standards.

Freshwater Fish

The River Don Freshwater Fish Area failed the imperative standard for non-ionised ammonia in 2006, but has achieved all imperative standards since then. Improved ammonia removal at Inverurie sewage treatment works by March 2014 should lead to reduced levels of ammonia in the river. Modelling of ammonia levels in the Don will indicate whether further improvements are required to ensure compliance with the directive.

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Special Areas of Conservation/ Special Protection Areas

Part of the Ladder Hills Special Area of Conservation lies within the upper Don catchment. It has been designated for blanket bog and dry heath features, and Scottish Natural Heritage have recorded that it is currently in a favourable condition.

4 Partnership working

The action plan for the Don will rely on landowners to deliver improvements, with support and advice from SEPA's diffuse pollution programme, and the north east area advisory group.

Up until 2015, the main priority in the Don catchment will be to address fish barrier pressures, and to secure some improvements in diffuse pollution (through general awareness raising) and sewage disposal pressures.

From 2015, efforts will focus on reducing diffuse pollution. This will need a strong partnership approach, and the area advisory group will play a critical role in raising awareness of the diffuse pollution initiative, helping to establish links with landowners and reviewing the effectiveness of measures to tackle diffuse pollution.

Action will also be required on projected work to tackle sewage pollution, improve the condition of beds and banks and a continued focus on fish barrier mitigation. In addition, there will be a need to maintain good status for all water bodies, and to identify and address new and emerging pressures.

The River Don Trust is working to improve the water environment in the catchment, and has produced a Biosecurity Plan. See www.riverdon.org.uk.

Table 1 – Summary of pressures and objectives for water bodies at less than good status in the River Don catchment

Water body	Current status	Pressures	Target	Action (who by)
R. Don (Dyce - tidal limit)	Moderate	Diffuse source pollution Point source pollution Alterations to beds / banks	Good by 2027	Reduce diffuse pollution and improve modified habitat (land managers) Reduce point source pollution (Scottish Water)
Bucks Burn	Moderate	Diffuse source pollution Alterations to beds/banks	Good by 2027	Reduce diffuse pollution and improve modified habitat (land managers)
Elrick Burn - d/s Newmachar WWTP	Poor	Diffuse source pollution Point source pollution Alterations to beds / banks	Good by 2027	Reduce diffuse pollution and improve modified habitat (land managers) Reduce point source pollution (Scottish Water)
Elrick Burn - u/s	Poor	Diffuse source pollution	Good by	Reduce diffuse pollution and improve modified habitat

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Newmachar WWTP		Alterations to beds / banks	2021	(land managers)
River Don - Inverurie to Dyce	Moderate	Diffuse source pollution Point source pollution	Good by 2021	Reduce diffuse pollution (land managers) Reduce point source pollution (Scottish Water)
Black Burn	Moderate	Diffuse source pollution Alterations to beds / banks	Good by 2021	Reduce diffuse pollution and improve modified habitat (land managers)
Newmill Burn	Poor	Diffuse source pollution Alterations to beds / banks	Good by 2021	Reduce diffuse pollution and improve modified habitat (land managers)
Tuach Burn / Tillakae Burn	Poor	Diffuse source pollution Alterations to beds / banks	Good by 2021	Reduce diffuse pollution and improve modified habitat (land managers)
River Urie - Lochter Burn to Don	Moderate	Diffuse source pollution Point source pollution	Good by 2021	Reduce diffuse pollution (land managers) Reduce point source pollution (Scottish Water)
Lochter Burn / Kings Burn	Moderate	Diffuse source pollution Alterations to beds / banks Point source pollution	Good by 2027	Reduce diffuse pollution and improve modified habitat (land managers) Reduce point source pollution (Scottish Water)
Burn of Durno	Moderate	Alterations to beds / banks	Good by 2021	Improve modified habitat (land managers)
Bonnyton Burn	Moderate	Alterations to beds / banks	Good by 2027	Improve modified habitat (land managers)
The Kellock	Moderate	Alteration to beds/banks	Good by 2027	Improve modified habitat (land managers)
River Don - source to Strathdon	Moderate	Alteration to beds/banks	Good by 2027	Remove / mitigate fish barrier (land managers)
Leochel Burn	Poor	Alteration to beds/banks	Good by 2027	Improve modified habitat (land managers)
Esset Burn	Poor	Alteration to beds/banks	Good by 2015	Improve modified habitat (land managers)
Brindy Burn	Moderate	Alteration to beds/banks	Good by 2027	Improve modified habitat (land managers)
Cluny Burn (upper)	Moderate	Diffuse source pollution	Good by	Reduce diffuse source pollution (land managers)

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catchment)			2021	
Ton Burn / Cluny Burn lower	Moderate	Diffuse source pollution Alteration to beds/banks	Good by 2021	Reduce diffuse source pollution, improve modified habitat (land managers)

