

Draft Supplementary Guidance 34

Planning and Water Quality





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Water quality covers two separate but related areas of concern to Planning:

- the Plan area contains a number of drinking water supply catchments, within which potentially polluting activities will clearly be of concern; and
- the statutory duties and procedures relating to the protection and enhancement of the whole water environment.

Introduction

Water quality is important as a general measure of the quality and health of the environment, and because water is a resource, a habitat and a landscape element.

Water management in one form or another is very significant over most of the Plan area. Climate change brings the prospect of different or more severe flooding problems (see SG18). New legislation governing river basin management and dealing with flood risk is in place, and there are additional or different roles and responsibilities for SEPA, Scottish Water, Local Authorities and others. The Marine Scotland Act (2010) may introduce new requirements affecting the tidal waters of the Forth Estuary within the Council area.

SEPA is the principal regulating agency responsible for water quality in Scotland, while Scottish Water operate most of the infrastructure involved in water collection, storage, distribution and treatment for public water supply, and for the treatment of waste water.



Water Supply

Regional Drinking Water supply:

Availability of water supply is important for enabling development and over the Plan area water supply is generally adequate and can be augmented if required. Any new developments or activities using high volumes of water may be more difficult to accommodate in some areas. There are significant water supply catchments in the Plan area; agriculture relies to an extent on water for stock and irrigation; and some specialist activities rely on pure water sources, eg fish farming/research, distilleries. PP15(2) requires developments in water supply catchment areas to have regard to potential impacts.

Most of the Local Development Plan area receives its water supply from the Loch Turret reservoir in Perthshire. A number of small local supplies have been replaced by it in recent years, eg the Touch Reservoirs. Importantly the southern hill area also contains reservoirs that supply water to other areas, notably Carron Valley Reservoir.

Paradoxically, the reservoirs and aqueducts and redistribution of water associated with water supply are classed as impacts detrimental to the water environment in the River Basin Management Planning process. Restoration to natural river flows may be achievable in some cases when and if reservoirs become redundant. However, the Touch reservoir is proposed as a site for on-going use for hydro-power generation.

Local / private water supply:

Several hundred rural properties, mostly houses, derive their water from private sources, such as burn intakes. The Council's Environmental Health service monitors these private supplies, and should be consulted if there is a possibility



The Water Environment

River Basin Management Planning:

The European Union Water Framework Directive has been transposed into Scots law by the Water Environment and Water Services (Scotland) Act 2003 (the 'WEWS' Act). The Directive has as its primary aim the maintenance, and where possible the improvement, of water quality in inland waters, coastal waters and groundwater. The Act embodies the principle that all rivers and coastal waters with entirely Scottish catchments form one River Basin District for catchment management purposes. The Scotland River Basin Plan and the first round of Area River Basin Management Plans (RBMP) were adopted by Ministers in December 2009. They contain water environment status targets for 2015 and beyond and will be updated on a six – year cycle. The Northern part of the Local Development Plan area is in the Tay catchment area; most of the Southern part (and the areas likely to be affected by significant development proposals) is in the Forth basin, and in the south-west the Endrick and Blane valleys are part of the Clyde drainage catchment. SEPA is the lead Authority for RBMPs and Councils are involved as 'responsible authorities' supporting the process, as Area Advisory Group members and as management and regulatory authorities.

The WEWS Act places a requirement on Scottish Ministers, SEPA and responsible authorities to "so far as practicable ... integrate and co-ordinate the exercise of their respective functions". The Act also states that, in exercising their functions (so far as affecting a river basin district) all public bodies must have regard to River Basin Management Plans.

Section.

The following notes describe each category, and give guidance on how to obtain permission for tree works in each case.



For RBMP purposes ‘water quality’ encompasses ‘traditional’ chemical purity measures plus ecological measures and physical characteristics, and is assessed for each ‘water body’ (rivers, lochs, wetlands and groundwater or sections thereof). Because of the morphology factor in particular, rivers and lochs in the area apparently do not rate so highly as under the previous classification system. This is largely due to the number of water supply and hydro – power installations in the Council area (and the National Park), but also to the straightening of channels for agricultural or other drainage purposes. The RBMP process has consisted of setting out the definitions of water bodies, establishing their current status (‘classification’ - ‘good ecological status’ is the baseline objective) and ‘measures’ aimed at maintaining or, preferably, improving their status. The ‘measures’ are the policies, plans, projects, operating practices, etc that are gathered together in these wide-ranging Plans as contributing to maintaining or improving one or more aspects of water quality. They range from funding policies encouraging reductions in polluting run-off from agricultural land (‘diffuse pollution’), to specific projects such as upgrading a waste water treatment works or removing a barrier to migratory fish passage.

For links to the Scotland and Area RBMPs see:

http://www.sepa.org.uk/water/river_basin_planning.aspx

Overall, diffuse pollution from agriculture is the greatest problem in terms of the water body classification in the Local Development Plan area. The River Basin Management Plan processes acknowledge the significance of the plan-led Development Planning system, but many, if not most, of the actions and activities potentially affecting water bodies are regulated through other Agencies (such as SEPA’s CARS and other regulations and licensing systems). Joint working with SEPA, Scottish Water and other partners will be maintained through the RBMP Area Advisory Groups (AAG) as well as by direct consultation on individual proposals.



The Council, in considering planning proposals, will assess whether the development applied for is likely to:

- adversely impact upon a water body, directly or in terms of effluents; and/or
- interfere with (or conversely provide opportunities for) 'measures' to maintain or enhance the water environment;
- cumulatively with other developments and activities adversely impact upon, or provide opportunities to positively or negatively influence the status of a water body or the wider water environment.

The aim will be to support or control development in ways that reinforce positive improvements and avoid adverse impacts.

Sustainable drainage, green infrastructure, etc:

The Council is also supporting protection and improvement of the water environment by seeking to raise the quality of developments (place-making policies and SG01), requiring sustainable drainage systems (SuDS) and where possible integrating them with green corridors (SG18, SG02), and improving river corridors so that rainwater run-off from developments is less likely to find its way into the water environment (SG02).





River catchment profiles

As part of the information base for RBMP, these profiles have been drafted by SEPA. They will summarise the current water environment situation, the reasons for less than good status, planned improvement measures, and the likelihood of improvements being achieved in future plan cycles. They will afford a generalised picture, including maps, of areas where the water environment may be vulnerable to deterioration if inappropriate land use change or development occurs. Conversely, developments accompanied by measures leading to improved water quality may be welcomed in these areas.

Obviously the catchment boundaries do not fit neatly into the Stirling LDP area.

Reference should be made to the following catchment profiles, when available; at http://www.sepa.org.uk/water/river_basin_planning/area_advisory_groups.aspx:

Forth River Forth
 River Carron
 Allan Water
 Stirling Coastal

Tay River Tay
 River Earn

Clyde Endrick Water (R Leven/L Lomond)



Further Information

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