

Policy Brief: Linking Catchments and Coasts Project

Background

Scotland's rivers, coasts and seas provide a critical resource for the Scottish economy and society. In the past, the links between human activities and the environment have been poorly managed leading to legacy of degradation. Global changes are giving rise to a range of new challenges such as increased flooding and changes in the structure of the coast while European legislation mandates the maintenance of good environmental quality in rivers and coastal waters.

Scotland is at a crucial juncture in developing the management for coasts and seas with a range of marine plans proposed at the national and regional scale. River Basin Planning has also opened opportunities for improving the management of catchments across Scotland. Innovative voluntary approaches through Coastal Partnerships and Integrated Catchment Management Partnerships have increased community support and deliver policy objectives by engaging those who need to act and directly influence the water environment.

However, the policy and planning framework is complex and it is a challenge to develop 'an ecosystem approach' which will harmonise policy across the freshwater and marine environments and ensure efficiency in policy delivery. This study explores the range of innovations needed to make these systems more effective and improve integrated catchment and coastal management.

Key Points

Figure 1 highlights the complex array of management instruments and processes in Scotland for managing coastal and catchment systems. Key points include:

- While boundaries will always fail to match, common sense and good relationships can work where there is minor overlap;
- Where significant overlaps occur, some integration would be helpful, especially when seeking to work on common objectives or apply for funding which covers common areas.
- Good leadership is one way to overcome mismatches;
- While core funding should focus on delivering priorities this should be balanced by recognising the benefits delivered by partnership working;
- Where feasible, groups should be combined or aligned to increase efficiency in planning and delivery

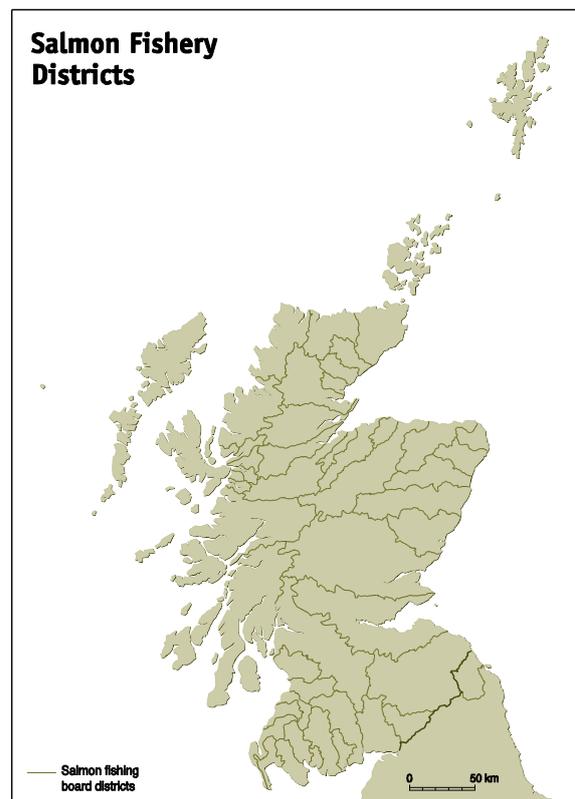
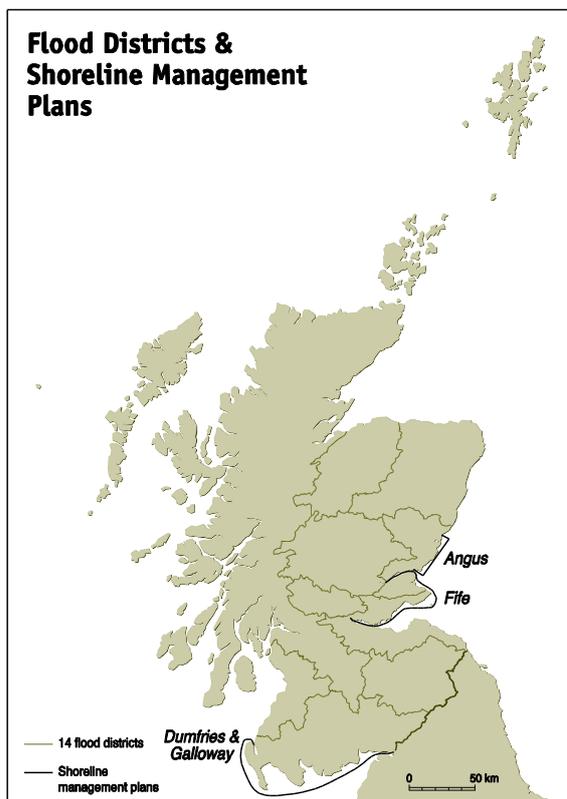
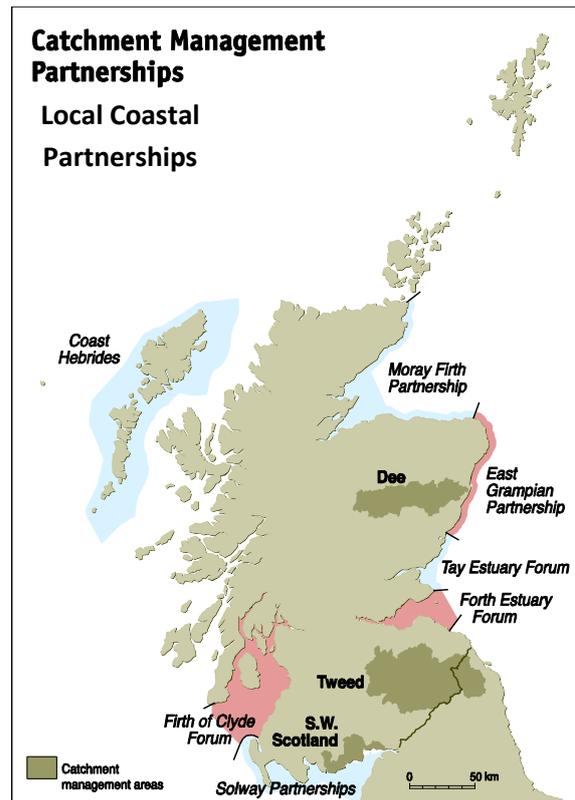
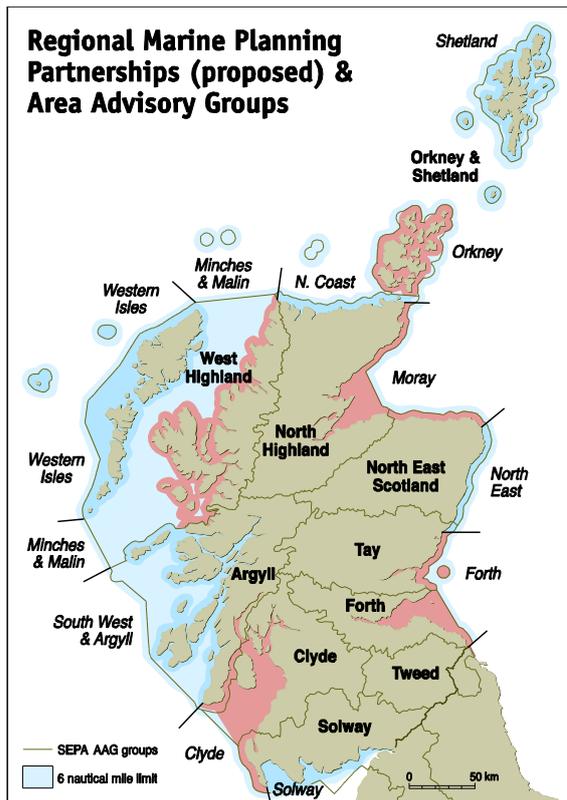


Figure 1. An example of the different boundaries that affect catchment, coastal and marine planning. A= AAGs vs MPPs B=CMPs vs CPs C=Flood Districts vs SMPs D=DSFBs

Policy Implications

“I agree we need to work closer, and take opportunities to work closer if they are apparent. [There is] definite overlap between the two including stakeholder members so combined projects and information exchange are the way forward.” (Catchment Management officer).

- Coastal issues could receive greater attention in the catchment management process. This could be achieved by overcoming boundaries between freshwater and coastal specialists and targeting the next generation of plans to tackle coastal issues where justified.
- Practical collaboration occurs at a local level, depending on *ad hoc* arrangements, personalities and resource capacity of initiatives. There is an asymmetry of representation of coastal stakeholders on catchment initiatives which is eroding the effectiveness of cross boundary partnerships.
- Strategic programs driven by legislation are not always responsive to the practical needs arising in coastal catchments and communities. Voluntary partnerships often tackle issues that fall through the gaps or have better local knowledge, but voluntary approaches have eroding support and require clear commitments.
- There are major unresolved questions about how the Water Framework Directive will coordinate with the Marine Strategy Framework Directive. Clear and concise direction is needed for Area Advisory Groups to input to forthcoming Marine Planning Partnerships, and in the interim work to achieve goals with Coastal Partnerships.
- Practical opportunities for collaboration exist, where catchment and coastal partnerships can join forces to identify and tackle tractable issues and use soft tools to encourage better management.

Where to get Further Information

Contact the authors or the CREW team for a copy of the full report.

Potts, T. Stojanovic, T.A. (2012) Linking Coasts and Catchments. A report to the CREW Programme as part of the CATCH2 Project. 20pp.

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