



Section 1: General Policies

The policies within this Plan are designed to guide all marine and coastal users in terms of proposed and existing development(s) and activities. Users of this Plan must also comply with the National Marine Plan and other relevant legislation.

The general policies within this section of the Plan provide a framework for the sustainable development and use of the marine and coastal environment. The policies within this section can be considered cross-cutting, as they are all potentially relevant to any proposal for development or activity by any sector or user of the marine and coastal environment and should be adhered to in advance of the relevant sectoral policy. The chapters are laid out in the same order as they appear in the National Marine Plan.

Each chapter follows the same format, this includes:

- A context which sets out a summary of the main information relevant to the policy area. More information on each of the areas can be found within the [Clyde Marine Region Assessment](#).
- Objectives and policies; objectives provide a measurable strategic aim or goal for each policy area and policies which will deliver the objectives are set out underneath.
- Maps are included at the end of the chapter. For the latest available spatial data, see [National Marine Plan interactive](#) (NMPi). It is recommended that NMPi is used in conjunction with this Clyde Regional Marine Plan.
- Links to further information on the policy area.



Chapter 5: Natural Heritage

Clyde Marine Region Context

The Clyde Marine Region is home to a diverse range of coastal and marine habitats and species, including European protected species and sites. A variety of shallow water habitats exist including maerl beds, seagrass and flame shell beds where many other species can find shelter and protection. During the summer months, the upwelling of nutrients provides rich feeding for larger mobile species such as minke whale and basking shark. The deeper mud habitats of the Region support many burrowing creatures including the shellfish ‘Nephrops’, the current mainstay of the Clyde fishing industry. The area is also home to seals, porpoises and a variety of bird species, most famously perhaps the gannets on Ailsa Craig and the waterfowl on the intertidal mudflats of the inner estuary.



A common seal near the Isle of Arran.

The good health and condition of species and habitats contributes to the provision of many ecosystem services with benefits that we rely on, such as food provision, flood/storm protection, nutrient cycling and breakdown of waste. There are also other benefits, such as recreation, a sense of place and cultural heritage which contribute to our own wellbeing and provide opportunities for tourism. The ecosystem as a whole supports many socio-economic activities, some of which have taken place for decades, as well as new and emerging activities. More information on the condition of natural heritage in the Region can be found within [Section 5 of the Clyde Marine Region Assessment](#).

Sites designated for natural heritage in the Region include: Nature Conservation Marine Protected Areas, Special Protection Areas, Sites of Special Scientific Interest, Local Nature Reserves and a RAMSAR site. Sites which contribute to the network of Marine Protected Areas in the Clyde Marine Region are shown in Map NH 1. Features of designated sites can include their geodiversity – rock, fossils, natural processes, landforms and soils that shape the character and form of our landscape/seascape and environment. Designated sites and other data layers relating to species and habitats can be viewed on [National Marine Plan interactive](#). Development and activities in relation to these sites are managed in line with their conservation objectives.

[Priority Marine Features](#) are a prioritised list of marine habitats and species considered to be of national conservation importance - many are found in the Clyde Marine Region. They provide a focus for future conservation action and marine planning.

Objectives

	<p>Objective NH 1 The health of the marine and coastal natural heritage of the Clyde Marine Region is protected and, where appropriate, enhanced. MEASUREMENT: Designated site monitoring and reporting. Monitoring of Priority Marine Features.</p>
	<p>Objective NH 2 Development and use of the coastal and marine environment does not have significant negative impact on biodiversity, the Marine Protected Area network, other protected habitats and species and Priority Marine</p>

	<p>Features in line with the relevant conservation objectives and, where possible, contributes to their maintenance and/or enhancement (Map NH 1).</p> <p>MEASUREMENT: Marine Licence and Town and Country Planning determination processes as applicable, including reference to Local Biodiversity Action Plans and Reports.</p>
	<p>Objective NH 3 Knowledge and data on marine and coastal natural features within the Clyde Marine Region is improved to identify opportunities for their enhancement, to inform sustainable development, and to identify climate change adaptation options.</p>
	<p>MEASUREMENT: Research surveys and projects taking place in the Clyde Marine Region, including citizen science projects.</p>
	<p>Objective NH 4 The experience and knowledge of local people and visitors about the coastal and marine environment is enhanced through improved awareness of the natural heritage of the Clyde Marine Region.</p>
	<p>MEASUREMENT: Number of natural history related projects and events engaging with the public.</p>
<p>Policy – Authorisations and consents</p>	
<p>Policy NH 1</p>	<p>All marine and coastal development(s) and/or activities must:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • comply with international, national and local legal requirements for protected areas and species, • not result in significant impact on the national status of Priority Marine Features, and • protect and, where appropriate, enhance the health of the marine area through contributions to improvement of Priority Marine Features and their associated habitats, species and ecosystems. Where Priority Marine Features are known or found to exist, licence applications should demonstrate consideration of sensitivities and potential impacts through tools such as the Feature Activity Sensitivity Tool.
<p>Policy NH 2</p>	<p>Proposals for marine and coastal development(s) and/or activities will be supported where they demonstrate that they:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • avoid or mitigate negative impacts on non-designated areas of importance for Priority Marine Features and protected species (e.g. breeding grounds and aggregation areas), • consider opportunities for any potential associated environmental enhancement, have followed Biodiversity Net Gain¹ principles, and that they support delivery of actions identified in Local Biodiversity Action Plans of Planning Authorities within the Clyde Marine Region, and/or • contribute to the delivery of conservation objectives of Marine Protected Areas where appropriate.
<p>Policy NH 3</p>	<p>Applications for the harvesting of wild seaweed should demonstrate that</p>

¹ Biodiversity Net Gain is where development leaves biodiversity in a better state than before.

proposals are in accordance with evolving Scottish Government policy and any future guidance from Scottish Natural Heritage.

Policy NH 4 Any development(s) and/or activities limiting the ability of wild salmon and diadromous fish to migrate through the Clyde Marine Region will only be supported if suitable mitigation measures are in place.

Policy – Management

Policy NH 5 Users of the Clyde Marine Region should follow the guidance set out in the Marine Wildlife Watching Code and the Outdoor Access Code. Any activities taking place on the shoreline (e.g. beach cleaning activities, dog walking or landing vessels on the coast or islands in the Clyde Marine Region) should be aware of the potential to cause disturbance to ground nesting birds and hauled out seals and take appropriate action to avoid this.

Policy NH 6 Activities which contribute data and further knowledge of the natural heritage of the Clyde Marine Region will be supported, including those which give opportunities to other marine users (such as fishers and recreational users) to collect data, and citizen science projects. Organisations should, where possible, share MEDIN² compliant marine habitats and species data with others to facilitate partnership working and improved knowledge of the marine environment. Findings of Environmental Impact Assessments which contain data relating to Priority Marine Features should contribute to data in the public domain to improve decision-making processes and management of the marine and coastal environment. Of particular interest in the Clyde Marine Region are research and data which consider:

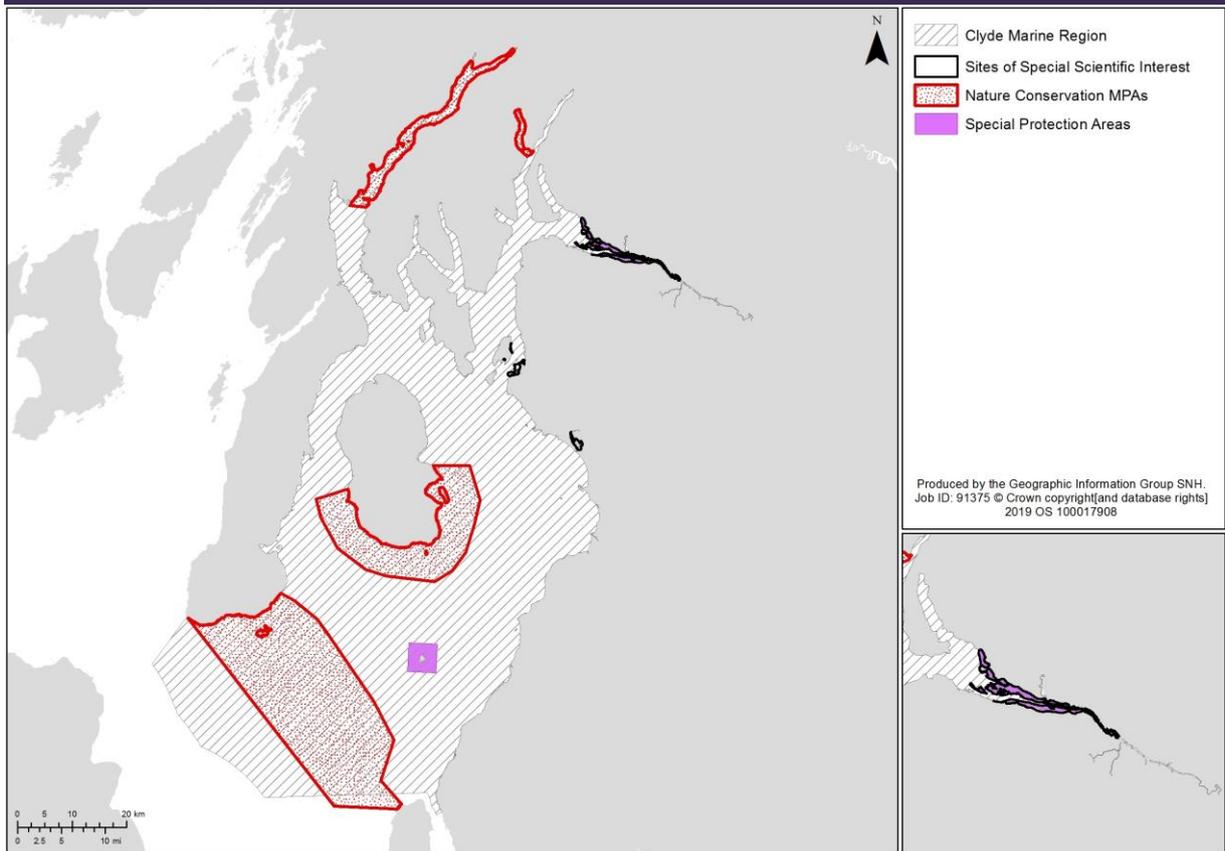
- the number, diversity, life history, behaviour and population dynamics of species, particularly Priority Marine Features and protected species,
- impacts on species and habitats, including cumulative impacts, and any locally specific impacts, interactions, sensitivities and pressures,
- areas of important habitat for the conservation and enhancement of Priority Marine Features and protected species, particularly sensitive areas,
- mapping of areas of sensitivity for both ecological enhancement and development and areas suitable for enhancement, within non-designated areas that contribute to ecological coherence,
- identifying opportunities where developments and activities can deliver environmental/societal benefits,
- climate change impacts within the Region (e.g. movement of species distribution, change in food web dynamics) and mitigation or adaptation options, and/or
- predator-prey interactions.

Policy NH 7 Activities which engage with those people living in and visiting the Clyde

² Marine Environmental Data and Information Network - <http://www.oceannet.org/>

Marine Region to improve their interest, awareness and knowledge of the natural heritage of the Clyde Marine Region will be supported when in line with this Plan. These activities should be accessible to all, including those with protected characteristics, and should help overcome physical, cultural and economic barriers to participation where practicable.

Map NH 1 – Marine Protected Area Network within the Clyde Marine Region.



These maps are indicative only. For up-to-date mapping with interactive features, visit [National Marine Plan interactive](#).

Further information

[Scottish Natural Heritage](#) is the public body responsible for natural heritage in Scotland. [Marine Scotland](#) is the government agency responsible for the integrated management of Scotland’s seas. They have provided guidance for Scottish Inshore Waters for [The protection of Marine European Protected Species from injury and disturbance](#).

[Scottish Marine Wildlife Watching Code](#) provides guidance to those watching marine wildlife or who may encounter it during other marine and coastal activities. [Scottish Outdoor Access Code](#) provides guidance on the looking after the environment when you are outdoors.

Local Biodiversity Action Plans: [Argyll and Bute Council](#), [Glasgow City Council](#), [Inverclyde Council](#), [Loch Lomond & The Trossachs National Park](#), [North Ayrshire Council](#), [Renfrewshire Council](#), [South Ayrshire Council](#), [South Lanarkshire Council](#), [West Dunbartonshire Council](#).

[Ten good practice principles for development](#) have been identified to achieve Biodiversity Net Gain.

[Feature Activity Sensitivity Tool](#)

The Scottish Biodiversity Strategy consists of the following two documents: [2020 Challenge for Scotland's Biodiversity](#) and [Scotland's Biodiversity: It's In Your Hands](#).