

North Highland area management plan Guide to using catchment summaries

Introduction

The production of river basin management plans is a requirement of the European Water Framework Directive (WFD). In Scotland we have produced two river basin management plans - one for the Scotland river basin district and one for the cross border Solway Tweed river basin district. These are supplemented by a suite of ten area management plans, one of which covers North Highland. These plans will help to deliver Water Framework Directive requirements of improving all water bodies to good ecological status by 2015, or, if not feasible by 2015 by extended timescales up to 2027, and preventing any deterioration. The directive allows us to set less stringent objectives if there are other reasons such as technical infeasibility or disproportionate cost which would prevent water bodies reaching good ecological status. The overall aim is for 98% of North Highland's waters to be in a good condition by 2027.

Further information is available at: www.sepa.org.uk/water/river_basin_planning.aspx

The North Highland area management plan has three key components and is available on the SEPA website at:

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

The three key components are:

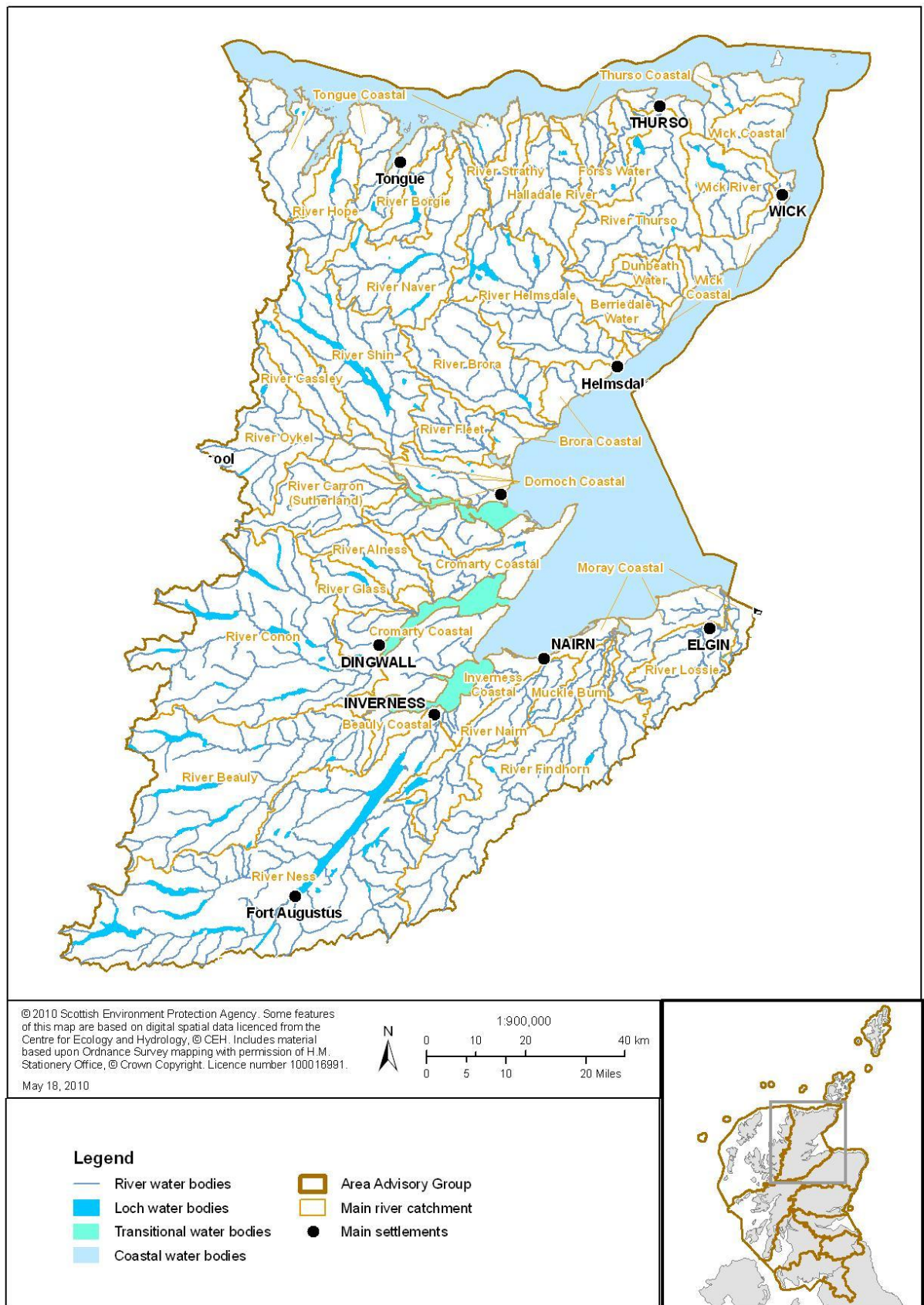
1. **Area management plan summary** - presents an overview of the North Highland advisory group area including classification, pressures, objectives, key measures and an outline of the work plan for the next year.
2. **Catchment summaries** – these provide information on classification, pressures, measures and objectives for each catchment and their neighbouring coastal and transitional water bodies. They will be kept as live documents during this first river basin planning cycle.
3. **Action plan** - details how the North Highland area advisory group will work together to deliver the area management plan and includes a record of where new actions are being developed. This will also be kept as a live document during the first river basin planning cycle.

Using catchment summaries

These are live documents reflecting the condition of the catchment at the publication date (noted on each). They will be updated to reflect any changes throughout the first river basin planning cycle as required. This means that only the versions on the web are controlled and that printed versions may become out of date.

Catchment summaries have been produced for all the catchments shown in Map 1. These can be found in the following documents:

- Caithness and Sutherland catchment summaries
- Moray Firth (North side) catchment summaries
- Moray Firth (Southside) catchment summaries
- Ness catchment summary
- Ground water bodies



Map 1: North Highland advisory group area showing main catchments

Each catchment summary contains the following information:

Current situation

- The total number and name of water bodies, including natural, heavily modified or artificial water bodies, within each catchment. The total number of water bodies within each classification class.
- The reasons why (pressures) those water bodies are not reaching good ecological status or potential.
- Any mitigation in place for each water body reaching good ecological potential
- The names of each water dependant protected area in each catchment and whether it is reached the required standards for the Water Framework Directive.
- The reasons why any protected area is not reaching its required standards for the Water Framework Directive.

Future action required

- The predicted date for each water body not yet at good ecological status or good ecological potential to reach its objective, together with actions (measures) to achieve this.
- The date for each protected not yet reaching its required standards for the Water Framework Directive to reach its objective, together with actions (measures) to achieve this.

Glossary

- **Artificial water body (AWB)** – A constructed water body eg a canal or lade.
- **Catchment** – The area from which surface run-off drains into a water body/water bodies.
- **Condition of Natura 2000 sites** – Information is given in the catchment summaries on Special Areas of Conservation (SACs) and Special Protection Areas (SPAs) that have water dependant features. Those SACs or SPAs that are unfavourable due to a water related pressure are detailed. Sometimes water dependent features are in an unfavourable condition due to a non water-related pressure. These are not discussed further in the catchment summaries. There may also be SACS or SPAs in each catchment with non-water dependent features. These are also not discussed further in the catchment summaries.

Included within sites in “favourable condition” are sites that are “unfavourable recovering”. This is because some features will take a long time to recover even when all appropriate measures are in place. When a feature is reported as “unfavourable recovering”, everything has been done to allow a feature to recover, but more time is needed before it could be reported as being in favourable condition. The target for Natura 2000 sites is therefore to reach “favourable” or “unfavourable recovering” condition.

- **Derogation** – A derogation is the process of agreeing an exemption from the requirement to meet the WFD objectives of preventing of deterioration of the ecological status, or potential, of water bodies. It also describes the process of agreeing an exemption from the requirement to achieve of an improvement objective such as reaching good status or potential by a given date i.e. setting a lesser objective.

- **Ecological potential (EP)** – Heavily modified water bodies are classified according to a similar spectrum of five classes: maximum, good, moderate, poor and bad, but by ecological **potential** instead of status. This is a measure of the extent to which the water bodies' ecological quality has been maximised given the limits imposed by the physical modifications (eg a dam) necessary for the water bodies' use. The same assessment applies to artificial water bodies such as canals. For more information on heavily modified and artificial water bodies see [Chapter 4 of the Scotland river basin district plan](#).
- **Ecological status (ES)** - For surface water bodies, ecological status is divided into five classes: high, good, moderate, poor and bad. This encompasses a spectrum ranging from water bodies in a near natural condition which are at high ecological status, to those whose ecological quality has been severely damaged and which are at bad ecological status. Ground waters are divided into two classes – good or poor ecological status.
- **Good ecological potential (GEP)** – The aim of the Water Framework Directive for all heavily modified and artificial water bodies to reach.
- **Good ecological status (GES)** - The aim of the Water Framework Directive for all water bodies to reach.
- **Heavily modified water body (HMWB)** - Water bodies which have been significantly altered for human uses, eg for hydropower generation, navigation, water supply, flood protection, urban development or other sustainable land management activities e.g. land drainage.
- **Measure** - An action taken to improve or maintain the condition of a water body.
- **Objective** - Targets set for the improvement in classification status of our water bodies towards good ecological status (or good ecological potential for heavily modified and artificial water bodies).
- **Pressure** – An impact on a water body. SEPA has identified five main pressure types: point source, diffuse source, abstraction (changing the amount of water in the water body eg by using for irrigation), flow regulation (changing the flow of a water body eg by installing a dam), morphological (changing the physical structure of a water body eg by building flood walls) and invasive non-native species.
- **Protected areas** – Water bodies identified as requiring special protection because of their sensitivity to pollution or their particular economic, social or environmental importance. This could be because they support economically important shellfish or freshwater fish stocks, have been designated as bathing waters, provide water for human consumption or support species or habitats identified as requiring special protection under European legislation eg Natura 2000 sites.

The objectives for these water bodies include any additional protection needed to achieve the purposes for which the protected area was established as well as achieving good ecological status or potential. Additional information on protected areas can be found in [Chapter 5 of the Scotland river basin district plan](#).

- **Water body** – A defined section of the water environment. This could be a river, loch, stretch of river, groundwater or part of a coastal or transitional area. SEPA

has divided the water environment into these units defined by their characteristics.

- **Water body category** – The Water Framework Directive requires consideration of five broad categories of water body – rivers, lochs/lakes, transitional, coastal and groundwaters.
- **Water body identification number (WB ID)** – SEPA and the Environment Agency have unique codes for every water body to enable consistent reporting of our results.