

Working together to protect and improve Scotland's water environment:

Getting involved in developing the second river basin plan



River Clyde

What is this consultation about?

This consultation:

- outlines the timetable and work programme for the development of the second river basin management plan in 2015;
- highlights the opportunities and structures/groups in place to enable you to influence the development of the second plan;
- provides you with the opportunity to let us know of any additional ways in which you would like to get involved in river basin planning;
- sets out how we propose to develop a second plan that enables more efficient and integrated management.

Who do we want to respond?

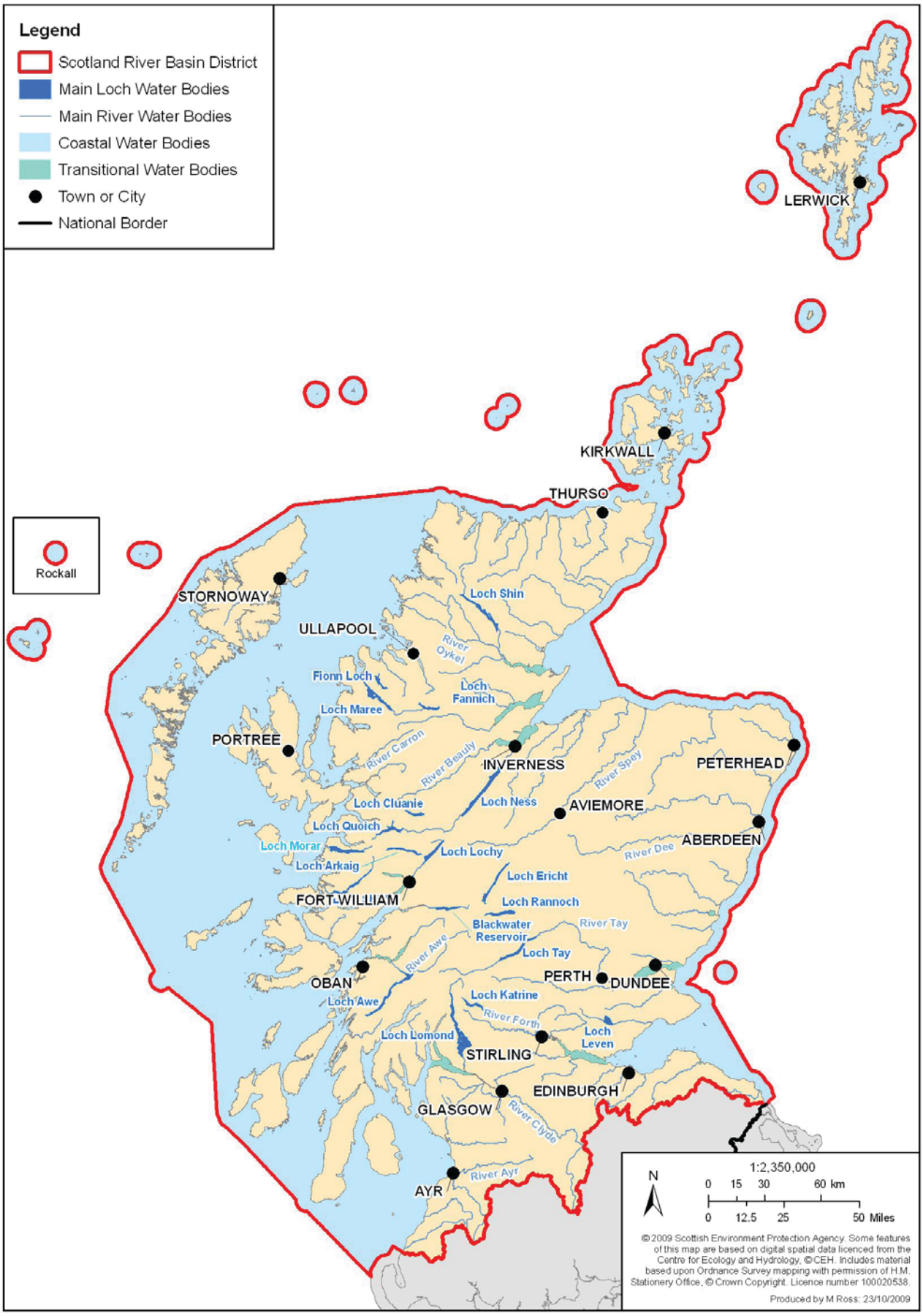
This consultation is aimed at public bodies involved in management of the water environment, together with land and water managers, and commercial users.

Why is protecting and improving Scotland's water environment important?

We all enjoy the benefits of a clean and healthy water environment. Our rivers, lochs and groundwater provide all of our drinking water and the water needed for irrigation and livestock watering. Water is still at the heart of the economic success for many of our rural towns and villages, and our world-renowned whisky and fish farming industries depend on its high environmental quality.

Our rivers, lochs, estuaries, coasts and wetlands attract large numbers of people of all ages, from home and overseas, to take part in a wide range of recreational activities. A healthy water environment is also fundamental to the wellbeing of communities. Our waters support a great diversity of wildlife and a significant number are identified as protected areas because of their importance for the conservation of internationally rare or endangered species. Some of the best salmon runs in the UK are found in Scotland's rivers and many of the best known landscapes are associated with water.

Figure 1: Map of Scotland RBD



What is river basin planning?

River basin planning is the process we use to prioritise and co-ordinate efforts to protect and improve Scotland's water environment. It is an ongoing and cyclical process, involving public bodies[1] working alongside land managers and users of the water environment to develop and deliver a river basin management plan. The plan is developed around river catchments (or river basins) because what happens in one part of a river catchment can affect other parts of the catchment. The Scottish Environment Protection Agency (SEPA) is responsible for leading and co-ordinating the planning process.

River basin planning involves:

- assessing pressures and impacts to identify where improvements to the water environment, or action to prevent its deterioration, may be required;
- reviewing and updating our targets (objectives) to improve the condition and/or prevent deterioration of the water environment;
- identifying the most appropriate actions (measures) and determining the most appropriate organisation/individual to take action;
- monitoring the condition to see if it has improved or been safeguarded from deterioration.

Every six years a river basin management plan is published – an update to the previous plan – which sets out what has been achieved and where efforts are needed to continue to protect and improve our water environment over the next six years.

In 2009, Scotland's first river basin management plan was published; highlighting that 65% of water bodies are in a good or better condition. This plan has been fundamental in starting to drive forward and co-ordinate improvement action and, as a result, we're already seeing a wide range of measures starting to be delivered on the ground.

We are now at the stage of formally reviewing progress in relation to delivery of the first river basin management plan measures[2] and working towards producing a second river basin management plan by 2015. This document sets out how the second river basin plan will develop and how we will encourage your participation in this process.

It is important that you are involved

Effective river basin management planning requires the active involvement of those public bodies with a legal role in managing the water environment, together with land and water managers, and commercial users that use or impact on the water environment.

We are asking a number of questions throughout this document to help guide your response, but we are interested in any of your views at this stage.

[1] These public bodies are the responsible authorities listed in schedule 2 of The Water Environment (Relevant Enactments and Designation of Responsible Authorities and Functions) (Scotland) Order 2011 and include Scottish Natural Heritage, Scottish Water, Forestry Commission Scotland, Scottish Canals, local authorities, national park authorities and district salmon fisheries boards.

[2] Progress will be published within our 'action update' report which is required to be submitted to Europe by December 2012.

How you can respond to this consultation

You can respond by:

- completing the online response form on the SEPA website
- sending a response by email to **rbmp@sepa.org.uk**
- sending a written response to:

River basin planning – consultation response
SEPA
7 Whitefriars Crescent
Perth
PH2 0PA

If you wish your comments to remain confidential, please state this clearly as part of your response.

Consultation responses should be returned by **28 February 2013**.

Next steps

Your comments will be used to shape how the updated river basin plan will be developed. A summary of the consultation responses will be published by June 2013 explaining how your input has been used to influence the river basin planning process. It will be distributed to those who have submitted comments as well as being published on our website.

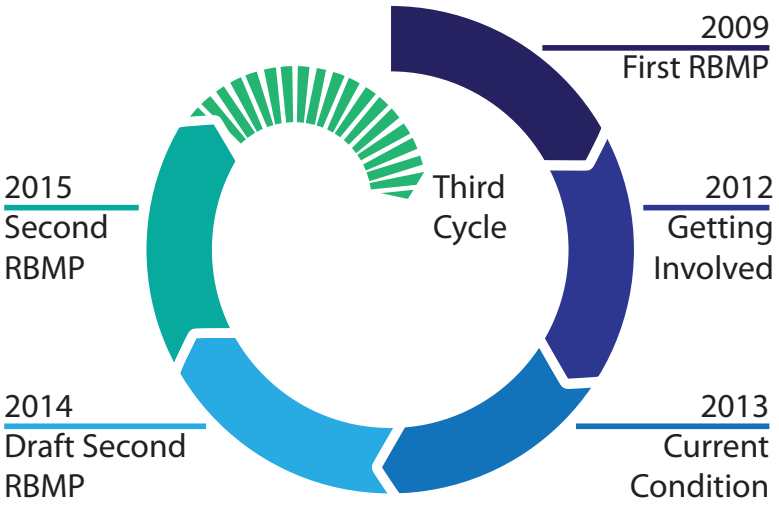


Loch Lomond triathlon

Developing the updated river basin management plan: timetable and work programme

There are a number of steps (statutory requirements[3]) we have to take in the process of producing the second river basin management plan (Figure 2). The purpose of each step is outlined in Table 1. In addition to these, we are also planning to undertake, and consult on, an assessment of whether additional water bodies should be identified as heavily modified.

Figure 2: Cycle diagram



To make it easier for you to be informed and get involved, we will publish a document at each step, either for information or consultation. Your responses to each consultation will influence the next step in the process, ultimately informing the second river basin management plan and ensuring it is fit for purpose.

Further to the formal consultations described in Table 1, at the end of 2012 we will also be publishing an action update which will review progress in the implementation of the planned programme of first cycle measures. We will use this to identify gaps in delivery and help prioritise action.

[3] These steps are required by the EU Water Framework Directive and set out in the Water Environment and Water Services (Scotland) Act 2003.

Table 1: Timetable and work programme for the development of the second river basin management plan

RBMP publication	Purpose	Consultation period
Getting involved in developing the second river basin plan (this consultation)	Sets out the timetable and work programme to produce the second RBMP. Explains how people can get involved in river basin planning. Highlights the specific points in the river basin planning cycle where their active input is required and the consultation measures we will undertake to ensure their involvement. Asks stakeholders to suggest new ways to get involved.	28 August 2012 – 28 February 2013
Current condition and challenges for the future[4]	Risk assessment of the attainment of objectives set out in the first river basin plan and provides evidence base for updating and reviewing objectives and the programme of measures. Description of the services (social, economic and environmental benefits) a healthy water environment provides. Identifies and consults on the significant water management issues that should be the focus for the development of the draft river basin management plan and future implementation.	22 December 2013 – 22 June 2014
Consultation on changes to heavily modified water bodies	Proposal to designate new or make changes to the existing list of heavily modified water bodies.	22 December 2013 – 22 June 2014
Strategic environmental assessment scoping report	Determines the detail and scope of the assessment of the second river basin management plan and the proposed consultation arrangements for the environmental report.	22 December 2013 – 22 March 2014
Draft river basin management plan	Presents the story of implementation of the first plan. Consultation to propose revised environmental objectives for water bodies and updates to the programmes of measures, including new national measures and strategies.	22 December 2014 – 22 June 2015
Strategic environmental assessment - environmental report	Sets out potential environmental effects of implementation of the plan, mitigation of impact, and investigates and presents reasonable alternatives to the plan.	22 December 2014 – 22 March 2015
Habitat regulations appraisal	Determines the impact of the plan on Special Protection Areas and Special Areas of Conservation, undertaking an appropriate assessment if the plan would have a likely significant effect on any of these sites.	Appraisal will be completed before 22 December 2015.
Second river basin management plan	Sets out the objectives for the water environment and presents the strategy for meeting those objectives between 2015 and 2021.	No consultation required. Document will be published on 22 December 2015.

4 For the first plan we produced three separate documents at this stage: an environmental characterisation of the water environment; an economic characterisation of the water environment; and a summary of significant water management issues. The Water Framework Directive only requires formal consultation on the summary of significant water management issues. This time we are combining these documents into one formal consultation.

Strategic environmental assessment statement	Summarises how the strategic environmental assessment and any views expressed on the environmental report and/or draft river basin management plan have been taken into account.	No consultation required. Document will be published on 22 December 2015.

For each consultation we will:

- post easily accessible electronic consultation documents on our website;
- provide hard copies free of charge on request;
- inform statutory consultees;
- advertise the consultation through relevant national and local media and on our Facebook and Twitter webpages;
- provide advisory group members with a non-technical electronic newsletter/factsheet that they can distribute to their networks to raise awareness of the consultation;
- investigate options to provide displays/hard copies in key locations e.g. libraries, community centres in more remote locations;
- provide a list of questions to guide consultation responses;
- provide facilities for both electronic and paper-based response to the consultations;
- resolve any differing views by negotiation, or if this is not possible, then the matter will be referred to the Scottish Ministers.

Question 1

Will the consultation opportunities outlined above enable you to contribute to the river basin planning process? If not, can you suggest any additional methods? Please also let us know if you feel that any of the methods are not appropriate and should not be a priority?

Involving you in developing the second river basin plan

Production of the first river basin management plan was underpinned by considerable stakeholder engagement, with three national and eight area advisory groups set up between 2006 and 2009, and wider stakeholders involved via a network of area advisory fora. Working with the advisory groups and through resources on our website, a wide range of stakeholders interested in the water environment were able to get involved in the planning process.

This engagement resulted in the publication of a good quality, ambitious, river basin management plan and a challenging programme of measures. We wish to build on and strengthen this approach and propose that the development of the second plan will also be underpinned by a high level of stakeholder involvement.

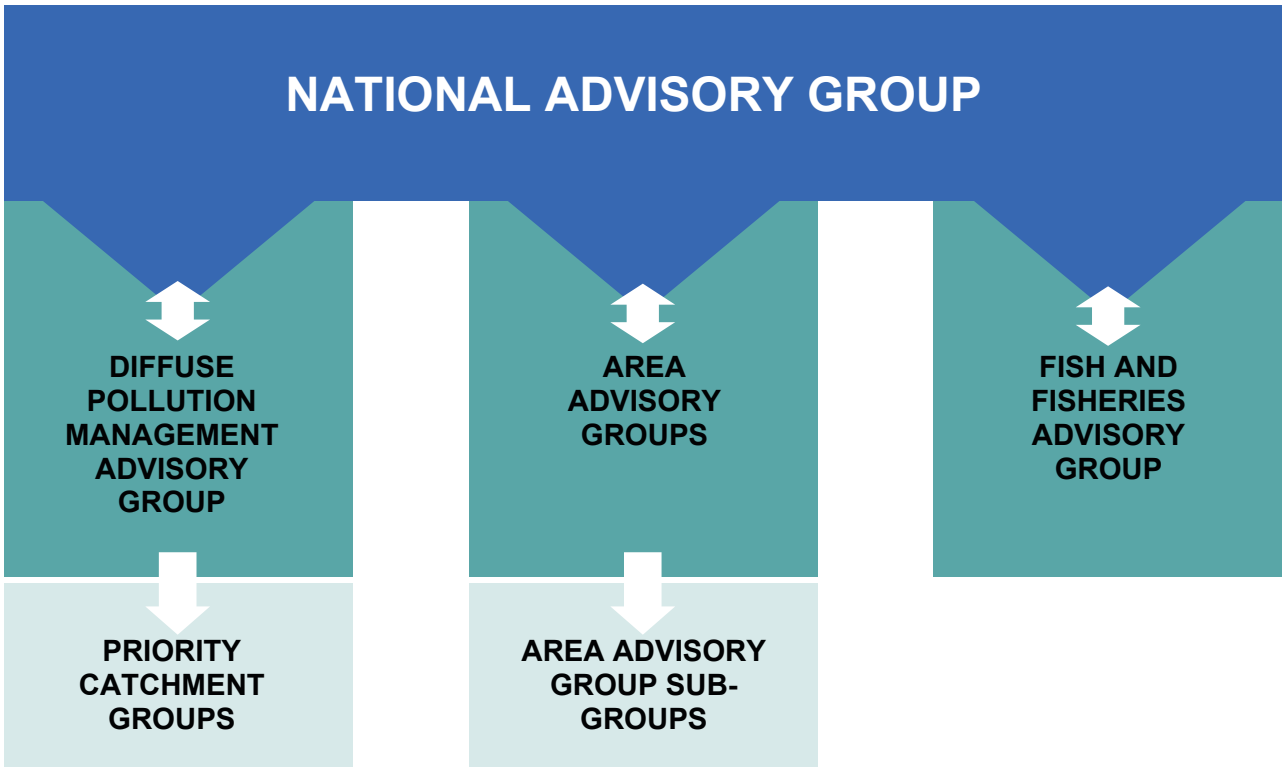
We would like you to make suggestions about how we can make our engagement work as well for you as possible, making the best use of the resources that we have.

Advisory groups

With the exception of some minor changes, we will continue to maintain and strengthen the advisory groups set up to deliver the first plan, drawing on the expertise of the members to inform and advise on river basin planning.

The key work areas and membership for each advisory group is set out below. We would like you to make suggestions about how we can improve these groups.

Figure 3: Diagram of all advisory groups



National Advisory Group

Key work areas:

- Help identify national river basin management planning priorities for action and contribute to the delivery of action.
- Help co-ordinate the integration of the river basin management plan with other national plans and policies.
- Improve awareness of river basin planning in Scotland through communication within own organisation and wider sector.
- Provide national support to area advisory groups.
- Help inform government policy on water environment issues.

Membership: Association of Scottish Shellfish Growers; British Hydropower Association; British Ports Association; Confederation of British Industry Scotland; Chemical Industries Association Coal Authority; Confederation of Paper Industries; Convention of Scottish Local Authorities; District Salmon Fisheries Boards Scotland; Environment Agency; Federation of Scottish Aquaculture Producers; Forestry Commission Scotland; Highlands and Islands Enterprise; National Park Authorities; National Farmers Union, Scotland; Rivers and Fisheries Trusts Scotland; Scotch Whisky Association and Malt Distillers Association; Scottish and Southern Energy; Scottish Canals; Scottish Coastal Forum; Scottish Council for Development and Industry; Scottish Enterprise; Scottish Environmental Link; Scottish Government; Scottish Land and Estates; Scottish Salmon Producers Organisation; Heads of Planning Scotland; Scottish Water; Scottish Sports Association; Scottish Environment Protection Agency; Scottish Natural Heritage; SportScotland; The Crown Estate; UK Major Ports Group; Waterwatch Scotland.

Meeting frequency: Twice a year.

Diffuse Pollution Management Advisory Group

Key work areas:

- Provide a decision-making and co-ordination framework for the effective delivery of rural diffuse pollution mitigation in Scotland, ensuring input from a cross section of rural, environmental and biodiversity interests.
- Deliver the **rural diffuse pollution plan** and associated action plan, which promotes national awareness and a focused priority catchment approach.
- Help inform government policy on diffuse pollution matters and integration with wider agriculture policy.
- Deliver a communications plan to co-ordinate awareness raising.
- Ongoing support to the priority catchment approach. Ensuring that action to tackle diffuse pollution is integrated, where feasible, with action to restore physical changes to the water environment that are associated with rural land use.
- Task groups working on embedding river basin planning objectives with the Scottish Rural Development Programme and developing a one-stop-shop diffuse pollution guidance note.

Membership: Association of District Salmon Fishery Boards; Confor; Forestry Commission Scotland; National Park Authorities; National Farmers Union Scotland; Scottish Environment link (Royal Society for the Protection of Birds and WWF Scotland); Scottish Environment Protection Agency; Scottish Government; Scottish Land and Estates; Tenant Farmers Association; Scottish Natural Heritage; Scottish Water; Scottish Golf Environment Group.

Meeting frequency: Quarterly.

Fish and Fisheries Advisory Group

Key work areas:

- Provide strategic advice on monitoring and classification of fish populations, and protection of fish populations and fisheries interests when regulating activities which affect the water environment, specifically hydropower development and marine renewables.
- Provide national guidance on fish passes and screens.

Membership: Association of District Salmon Fishery Boards; Environment Agency; the Rivers and Fishery Trusts of Scotland; Scottish Environment Protection Agency; Scottish Natural Heritage and Marine Scotland.

Meeting frequency: Three times a year.

Area Advisory Groups

Key work areas:

- Provide local advice on river basin planning.
- Identify pressures, measures and inform objective setting.
- Preparation of information which outlines the pressures and objectives for the water environment at the sub-basin or catchment scale, which also sets out how the area advisory group is working locally to protect and improve the water environment.
- Individual advisory group members have a role to ensure that they share information and promote the objectives of river basin planning more widely within their respective organisations.
- Ensure river basin planning objectives to protect and improve the water environment are embedded within local planning processes and policies.
- Assist with the co-ordination of local measures delivery. Local sub-group/task group working to tackle issues such as pressures on small water bodies, invasive non-native species, diffuse pollution, deliver multiple benefits, and raise awareness of key river basin planning messages.

Membership: Coal Authority; Forestry Commission Scotland; District Salmon Fisheries Boards/Fisheries Trusts; local authorities; local coastal partnerships; National Farmers Union Scotland; Scottish Land and Estates; ports authorities; local businesses e.g. hydropower, distilleries, National Park Authorities, Royal Society for the Protection of Birds, Scottish Canals; Scottish Government; Scottish Water; Scottish Environment Protection Agency; Scottish Natural Heritage.

Meeting frequency: Twice a year.

Question 2

As we move towards the second river basin planning cycle, are there any ways that the advisory groups can work more efficiently and effectively so they work better for you and for river basin planning?

Question 3

One of the key roles of individual advisory group members is to ensure that they share information and promote the objectives of river basin planning more widely within their respective organisations. How do you disseminate river basin planning information to other relevant departments within your organisation? Are there any ways we could support you more effectively to promote river basin planning information and objectives to all relevant departments within your organisation?

Changes to area advisory group boundaries

The area advisory groups have now been active for six years and this consultation provides an opportunity to re-visit the boundaries that were previously delineated.

Orkney and Shetland: When the area advisory groups were set up, Orkney and Shetland were combined into one area. However, in reality Orkney and Shetland have been managed as two separate area advisory groups. This is primarily because the islands have very different pressures associated with the differing land-uses; therefore meetings focus on the pressures unique to the islands, often involving a different group of stakeholders. Given that individual members have requested two separate groups, together with the reality that it is logistically more practical to administer the groups separately, it is proposed that we formally create two separate advisory groups.

Question 4

Do you agree with the proposal to formally split the Orkney and Shetland Area Advisory Group into two separate groups? If not, then please give your reasons.

Co-ordination between flood risk management local advisory groups and area advisory groups

Since the first river basin management plan was published, Scotland has adopted a new approach to manage the risk of flooding through the Flood Risk Management (Scotland) Act 2009[5] (FRM Act). The FRM Act requires flood risk management to be co-ordinated with river basin management planning[6] in order to ensure that we make the best use of the time and resources of those involved in both processes.

We will help achieve this through linking and co-ordinating the flood risk management local advisory groups[7] with river basin planning area advisory groups. To help enable this, the 14 flood risk management local plan districts have attempted to link with the existing area advisory group boundaries (Figure 4). However, this has not been possible in all cases. To enable integration of the groups, we propose to make some minor adjustments (Figure 5) to the area advisory group boundaries to bring them closer to the boundaries of the flood risk management local plan districts:

- North East Scotland Area Advisory Group boundary to move westwards to align with the boundary between flood risk management local plan district 1 (Highland and Argyll) and local plan district 5 (Findhorn, Nairn and Speyside).
- The boundary between West Highland and North Highland Area Advisory Groups to move westwards so that it aligns with the west coast and with the boundary between flood risk management local plan district 1 (Highland and Argyll) and local plan district 2 (Outer Hebrides).

[5] The FRM Act came into force in November 2009 transposing the EU Floods Directive and amending the Reservoirs Act 1975.
[6] Article 9(3)
[7] The FRM local advisory groups have a critical and statutory role in providing advice on the co-ordination and integration of flood risk management planning with other strategic plans and policies, particularly river basin management planning.

Figure 4: Map of existing AAG areas

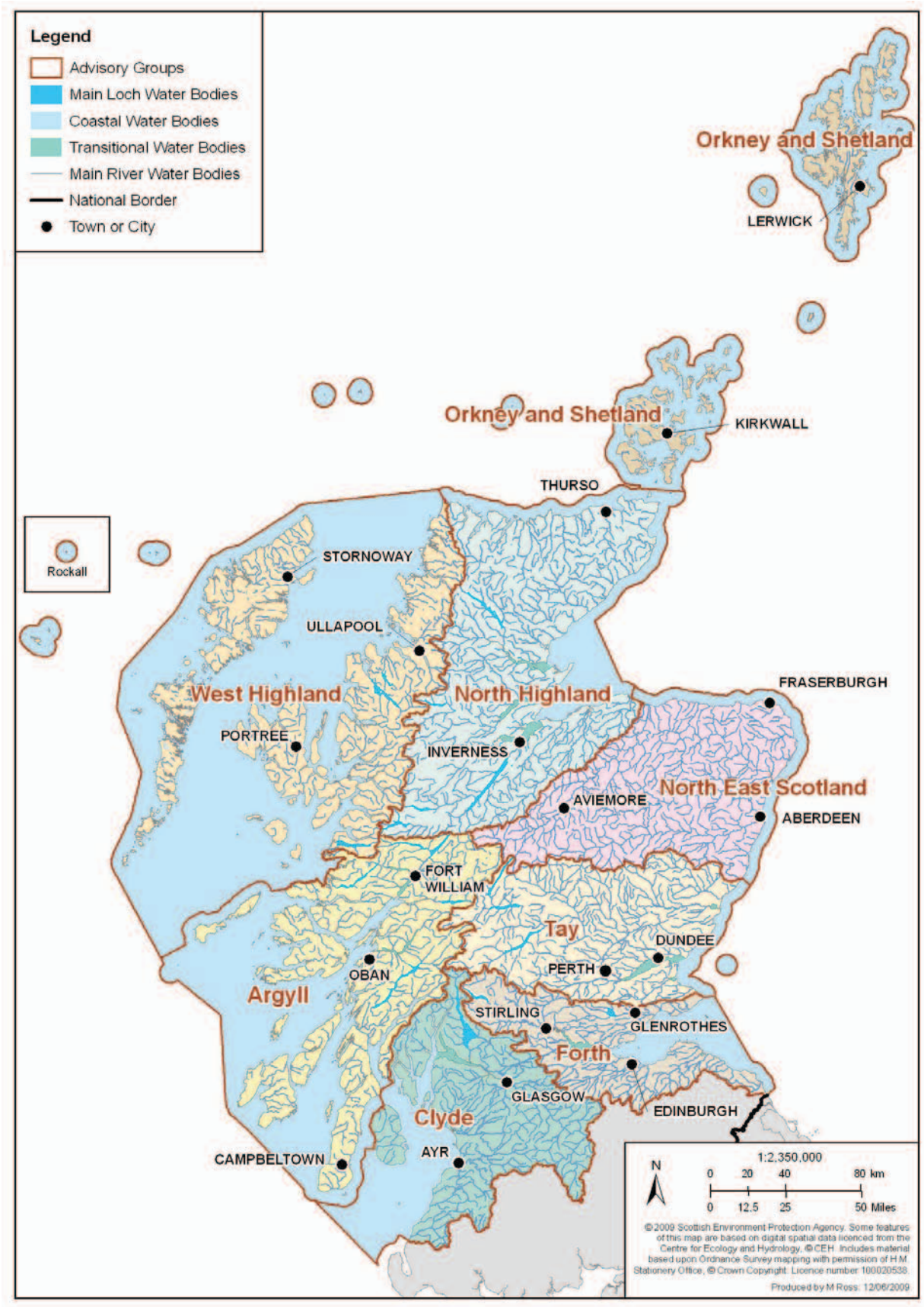
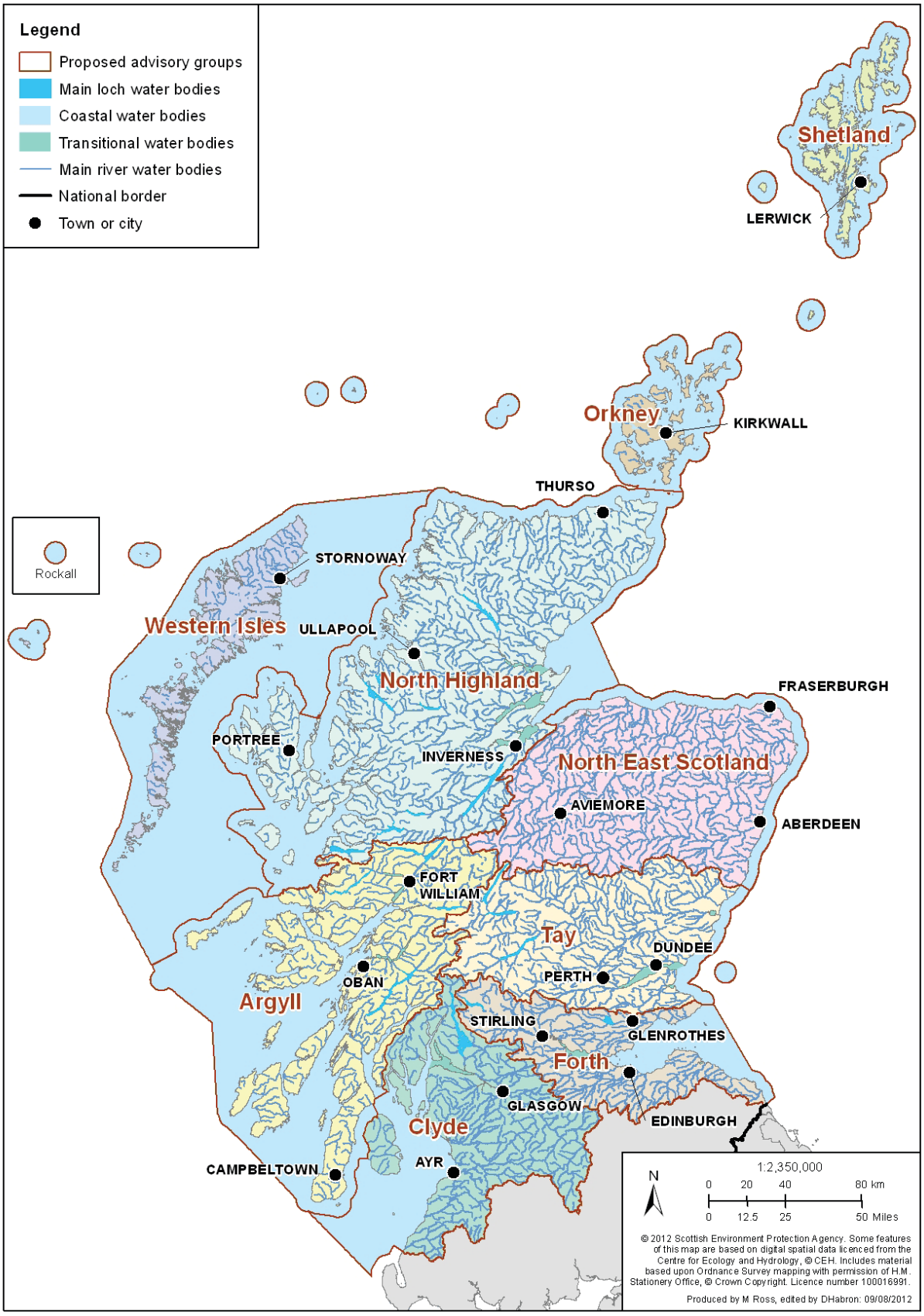


Figure 5: Maps of proposed new AAG areas



Question 5

Do you support the proposed changes to move AAG boundaries to enable better integration with flood risk management?

Question 6

Do you think we should consider making changes to any other area advisory group boundaries at this time?

Area advisory group fora

Engaging wider stakeholders involved in the management of the water environment remains a key priority. However, experience has shown that delivering events for each area advisory forum is not the most effective way to do this.

The area advisory forum network was set up in 2006 to raise the profile of river basin planning and to enable a wider group of water managers and users to find out more about, and comment on, river basin management planning through a series of local events held across Scotland between 2006 and 2011. The fora events have been valuable, but as we have moved into plan implementation, this wider range of stakeholders have been more effectively involved in other ways e.g. through area advisory groups setting up sub-groups to tackle specific issues or focus on specific catchments.

It is proposed that we focus on engaging wider stakeholders by:

- continuing to use newly established sub-groups and catchment groups to engage those working at the grassroots level;
- working with advisory group members to make more effective use of partnership events and their contact networks;
- investigating delivery of larger scale awareness raising events at key points as we work to produce the updated plan to enable wider stakeholders to be engaged.

Question 7

Do you agree with the proposal to reduce the emphasis on delivering area advisory forum events and use the mechanisms outlined above instead? Please give your reasons why.

Engaging with key sectors

Focused involvement with specific sectors through regular ongoing engagement or through workshops held at key points in the river basin planning cycle played a very important role in the development of the first river basin plan. The dialogue allowed us to gather data on environmental pressures and their associated impacts, and identify the measures required to deliver improvements. This process resulted in increased confidence in the data and the production of a river basin management plan that was better informed. Feedback from this involvement has been positive and we propose to continue this approach as we develop the second river basin plan.

We will continue this ongoing engagement with key sectors such as Scottish Water, local authorities, hydro-power operators, distilleries, and fishery trusts and boards.

In addition to continuing to engage the sectors listed previously, we propose to focus efforts to work closely with the rural land use sector, recognising that they have a key role to play in the heavily modified water body[8] review and in the implementation of the rural diffuse pollution plan and *Improving the physical condition of the water environment* when published.

[8] SEPA has identified surface water bodies for designation as heavily modified where they have been substantially altered in character for purposes such as navigation, power generation, public water supply provision, recreation, land drainage and other important human sustainable development activities and where their physical characteristics cannot be restored without significant adverse impacts on the uses served by the alterations or on the wider environment.

Question 8

We have found focused workshops a really good way of working with you. What kind of workshop can you or your sector contribute to? We will consider all suggestions and the feasibility of resourcing them.

Question 9

Should we be considering other ways to involve you in river basin planning? Please provide suggestions as to how you would like to be involved.

Question 10

Are there any barriers which you or your organisation face which may curtail or prevent you from participating in river basin planning? How can these barriers be lessened?

Producing a plan that enables more efficient and integrated management

Producing the second plan provides an opportunity to learn from experience, build on what we achieved first time round and take into account new issues. We can also consider how the plan can be better integrated with other plans and polices, therefore making it more useful to public bodies, land and water managers, and commercial users.

We have identified four key areas where we would like to do this:

1. Sharing river basin planning data.
2. Working at the catchment scale.
3. Identifying what benefits the water environment provides people.
4. Considering the influences of climate change.

1. Sharing river basin planning data

We will continue to work with key sectors in a timely way, considering their data and information to ensure that the second river basin management plan is based on the best available information.

Furthermore, we want to continue to make data available to stakeholders, which is easy to use on a day-to-day basis and which clearly communicates the priorities for the water environment at a scale which is meaningful.

We propose to continue to increase accessibility to data by:

- updating the RBMP web tools at appropriate points e.g. interactive map, water body information sheets and the data download tool;
- continuing to place information on classification updates on our website on an annual basis and linking to the information to be presented on Scotland's Environment Web;
- investigating how we can improve sharing our map-based information so that we can hand over spatial information to you;
- producing information to help identify where the water environment can accommodate further sustainable development without deterioration, and where preventative action needs to be targeted because the water environment is at risk of deterioration.

Question 11

Please tell us what river basin planning data would be most useful to you as we move into the second cycle?

2. Working at the catchment scale

Working on a catchment scale, considering the whole area of land drained by the river and its tributaries, allows us to consider all the potential impacts on that river system, rather than looking at problems in isolation. A whole catchment approach allows complimentary solutions and projects to be designed, making best use of resources and providing multiple benefits.

Working at a catchment scale is well-established and is already delivering great results in parts of the Scotland river basin district. In addition, implementation of the first river basin management plan has started to use a catchment approach. This has included the **diffuse pollution priority catchment initiative**, the emergence of catchment-scale invasive non-native species projects across Scotland and the creation of catchment sub-groups by some area advisory groups.

Moving towards the second cycle we will start to identify catchments for focused catchment-scale improvement action. The criteria used to identify these will vary across Scotland, but is likely to include:

- the consideration of the nature and extent of pressures;
- links with other regulatory drivers such as the management of protected areas or flood risk management opportunities;
- where links can be established with existing partnerships or projects;
- availability of data to help identify multiple benefit opportunities.

Stakeholder feedback to the first plan was that the presentation of pressures, measures and objectives information at the water body scale was not the most useful way to communicate the priorities for the water environment. It did not enable full consideration of the inter-related upstream and downstream pressures. This influenced us to start producing catchment profiles[9]. Where completed, these profiles highlight areas where action is required to address river basin planning pressures and are being used to help co-ordinate and prioritise on the ground action.

Resources and time will prevent every catchment in the Scotland river basin district from having an individual profile produced, but where we can; this is the approach we would like to adopt for the second cycle.

We want to continue to invest time and effort to make our catchment working more successful as we implement the first plan's objectives and work towards production of the second plan. We will do this by:

- investigating how we can best communicate and present catchment-scale river basin planning information e.g. through the preparation of detailed catchment profiles;
- continuing to support catchment-level working, setting up catchment task groups where required;
- continuing and expanding the diffuse pollution priority catchment initiative;
- linking with and supporting catchment-wide invasive non-native species projects through the implementation of relevant biosecurity plans and processes;
- implementing the restoration strategy and ensure that restoration projects consider catchment-scale restoration issues, where possible, to ensure that we can maximise restoration potential;
- ensuring that our catchment working considers multiple benefits associated with restoration, natural flood management, biodiversity, climate change and green networks.

[9] Completed catchment profiles are available to download on the area advisory group webpages

Question 12

As we move towards the second river basin planning cycle, are there any ways that we can work more efficiently and effectively at a catchment-scale?

Question 13

Are there geographic areas or issues we should treat as a priority for a catchment-scale approach, and why?

Part of securing catchment scale delivery is ensuring that we are effectively co-ordinating and integrating with relevant plans and processes.

The river basin management plan is not the only plan that will help to protect and improve the water environment. Continuing to seek integration and ensuring that key river basin planning objectives are reflected within the plans, policies and processes of our partners is essential to ensure that we follow a joined-up approach.

We also need to collaborate in a strategic way to ensure that the delivery of river basin planning objectives enables the attainment of wider policy objectives such as green networks, flood risk management and climate change adaptation, and vice versa, prioritising those projects which deliver these multiple environmental benefits.

As we move towards the second river basin plan, we will continue to ensure this happens by building on the partnerships and relationships developed through the area advisory groups; formal responses to consultations; and by continuing to deliver tailored workshops to raise the profile of river basin planning where appropriate.

The following list highlights those areas where we are currently investing efforts to engage with:

- strategic and local development plans;
- Scottish Water investment planning;
- biosecurity plans;
- freshwater fisheries management plans;
- inshore fisheries management plans;
- biodiversity action plans;
- catchment management plans;
- forestry planning;
- marine and coastal planning;
- community planning;
- Scottish Rural Development Programme;
- Central Scotland Green Network.

The following are the areas where we need to focus efforts to ensure co-ordination during the second river basin planning cycle:

- **Flood risk management plans**

  Action to tackle flooding will be co-ordinated through flood risk management plans which are required to be produced by 2015. As the competent authority for implementation of flood risk management, we commit to ensuring linkages between the two planning processes to help identify where the plans are mutually supportive, and therefore where we can get complimentary solutions, or indeed where potential conflict between them needs to be managed.

- **Marine spatial plans**

  Management of activities in our marine and coastal environment will be co-ordinated through a national marine plan and, where developed, a suite of regional marine plans. Where a regional marine spatial plan is required, marine planning partnerships will be established to co-ordinate its preparation and implementation. We will ensure that we link effectively with the marine planning partnerships so that the marine spatial plans are developed to reflect river basin planning objectives.

- **Water shortage plans**

  Action to manage periods of low rainfall will be co-ordinated through a national water shortage plan and, where required, a series of sub-plans (either based on sectors or geographic areas). The national plan will undergo consultation during 2012 and sub-plans developed over the following two years. We will work closely with stakeholders to ensure the correct balance is made between ensuring the environment is protected and managing the consequences for human and economic activity.

Question 14

How can we better integrate or co-ordinate more effectively with other plans and processes to ensure RBMP objectives are incorporated? Can you suggest how we could do this?

Question 15

Are there key dates in your planning timetable we need to be aware of so we can plan to integrate during review or consultation opportunities?

3. Identifying how the water environment benefits people

The quality of Scotland's water environment is important for the economy and social well-being. We want to make sure that our efforts to protect and improve the water environment maintain and enhance these benefits. We can do this by focusing protection and improvement on waters that are making, or have the potential to make, the greatest contribution. These would include, for example, waters on which fisheries are based and those on which tourism businesses rely. It would also include waters that supply our drinking water; those which provide recreational opportunities and cultural connections in our towns, cities and the countryside; and those which contribute to the reputation for quality of some of our important industries, such as whisky and salmon production.

Population growth and climate change are likely to mean we will all need the water environment to do more; to provide us with more water; assimilate more waste waters; and store and dissipate flood waters. Improving ecosystem health in the right places can help maintain and increase its capacity to provide these services.

To get the most out of river basin management, we need to increase our understanding of where our actions can deliver the greatest benefits. One of the required steps in updating the river basin management plan is a review of the characteristics of our river basins, including an economic analysis of water use. As part of this, we will focus on gathering and analysing information to improve understanding of the potential wider economic, social and environmental benefits we could achieve by appropriate targeting of our efforts to protect and improve our waters.

We will update on progress with this in our consultation *Current condition and challenges for the future* to be published in 2013 (see Table 1).

4. Considering climate change

Some of the effects of climate change may have significant consequences for the water environment and its management. The predicted increased incidences of prolonged dry spells might lead to reduced water quality and exacerbate the impacts of water abstraction. More frequent heavy rainfall events may lead to increased run-off and leaching of sediments and pollutants. They may also lead to changes in the physical characteristics of rivers. Along our coasts and estuaries, sea level rise may affect the extent and quality of shore and intertidal zone habitats.

As part of the river basin planning process, we intend to start to build up a picture of how climate change may affect the water environment and its ability to meet our water needs and accommodate our waste effluents without deterioration. This will enable us to plan how to safeguard Scotland's high quality water environment under a changing climate.

Question 16

Do you agree with the key areas that we have suggested for making improvements to the second river basin plan and planning cycle?

List of consultation questions

Below is a reminder of all the questions that have been asked within this consultation document. The closing date to get your responses to us is 28 February 2013, and full details on how you can respond is covered on page 5.

We look forward to receiving your responses.

Question 1

Will the consultation opportunities outlined above enable you to contribute to the river basin planning process? If not, can you suggest any additional methods? Please also let us know if you feel that any of the methods are not appropriate and should not be a priority?

Question 2

As we move towards the second river basin planning cycle, are there any ways that the area advisory groups can work more efficiently and effectively so they work better for you and for river basin planning?

Question 3

One of the key roles of individual advisory group members is to ensure that they share information and promote the objectives of river basin planning more widely within their respective organisations. How do you disseminate river basin planning information to other relevant departments within your organisation? Are there any ways we could support you more effectively to promote river basin planning information and objectives to all relevant departments within your organisation?

Question 4

Do you agree with the proposal to formally split the Orkney and Shetland area advisory group into two separate groups? If not, then please give your reasons.

Question 5

Do you support the proposed changes to move AAG boundaries to enable better integration with flood risk management?

Question 6

Do you think we should consider making changes to any other area advisory group boundaries at this time?

Question 7

Do you agree with the proposal to reduce the emphasis on delivering area advisory forum events and use the mechanisms outlined above instead? Please give your reasons why.

Question 8

We have found focused workshops a really good way of working with you. What kind of workshop can you or your sector contribute to? We will consider all suggestions and the feasibility of resourcing them.

Question 9

Should we be considering other ways to involve you in river basin planning? Please provide suggestions as to how you would like to be involved.

Question 10

Are there any barriers which you or your organisation face which may curtail or prevent you from participating in river basin planning? How can these barriers be lessened?

Question 11

Please tell us what river basin planning data would be most useful to you as we move into the second cycle?

Question 12

As we move towards the second river basin planning cycle, are there any ways that we can work more efficiently and effectively at the catchment-scale?

Question 13

Are there geographic areas or issues we should treat as a priority for a catchment-scale approach, and why?

Question 14

How can we better integrate or co-ordinate more effectively with other plans and processes to ensure RBMP objectives are incorporated? Can you suggest how we could do this?

Question 15

Are there key dates in your planning timetable we need to be aware of so we can plan to integrate during review or consultation opportunities?

Question 16

Do you agree with the key areas that we have suggested above for making improvements to the second river basin plan and planning cycle?