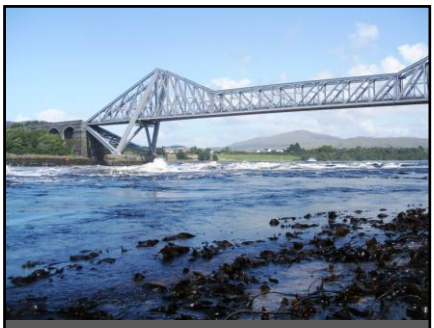
POLICY ZONE B: NORTH CONNEL TO ACHNACREE BAY (CONNEL NARROWS)

LANDSCAPE CHARACTERISTICS

This zone has a diverse range of adjacent coastal vegetation, including small cultivated fields and woodlands. A well developed hinterland contrasts with the simple uncluttered water surface and largely undeveloped shoreline. Settlement is broadly linear and parallel with the coast throughout the policy zone.

SEASCAPE CHARACTERISTICS

The seascape is characterised by a narrow elongated fast moving tidal channel, with some subtle bays west of Connel Bridge on the southern side of the Loch. Under the Connel Bridge, the tidal Falls of Lora are recognised as a major natural heritage feature and are a tourist attraction in their own right. Generally the water surface has a feeling of enclosure as the area is contained by low but pronounced slopes and the almost continuous presence of fast moving currents. However, a maritime presence is also reflected in the movement of boats, and the occasional view of open sea.



Connel Bridge & Narrows
Image courtesy of Argyll and Bute Council

North Connel shoreline looking east to Connel Bridge
Image courtesy of Argyll and Bute Council

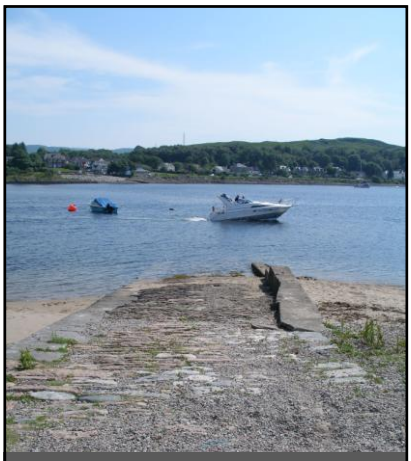
View east to Kilmaronig narrows from Connel Bridge
Image courtesy of Argyll and Bute Council

ACCESS

Access can be sought at a number of locations throughout this policy zone. There is good access to Ardmucknish Bay from the pontoon at Camas Bruaich Ruaidhe, although prior permission to use this pontoon must be sought. Access to Falls of Lora is via the two old ferry slipways. The slip at Connel opposite the Oyster Inn has limited car parking facilities and is suitable for shore divers and kayakers, however boats cannot be launched from this slip. Boat launching is possible at the North Connel slip with prior permission from the Lochnell Arms Hotel. Kayakers also use the old road section on the north side of the Connel Bridge to access the shore at this point.

Fishermen's Wharf, Camas Bruaich Ruaidhe
Image courtesy of Argyll and Bute Council

Slipway adjacent to the Oyster Inn, Connel
Image courtesy of Argyll and Bute Council



Slipway below Lochnell Arms Hotel, North Connel
Image courtesy of Argyll and Bute Council

VISUAL AMENITY

The loch is overlooked by elevated views from the Connel Bridge and by housing on both coastlines.

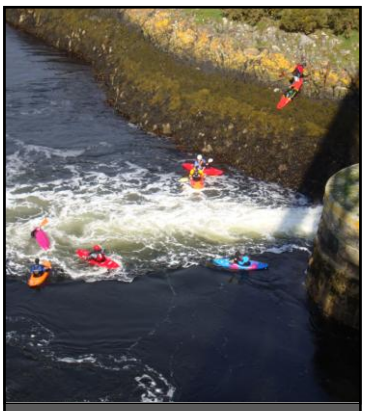
SETTLEMENTS

The village of Connel is the main focal point and overlooks most of the policy zone. On the northern shore the villages of North Connel and Black Crofts overlook the loch.

CURRENT USES

Refer to policy zone B map for locations of current activities.

Recreation



Kayakers at Falls of Lora
Image courtesy of Argyll and Bute Council

Kayakers at the Falls of Lora
Image courtesy of Argyll and Bute Council

Kayaking
The falls of Lora at the Connel narrows are considered to be of international importance as a site for challenging paddling conditions for both sea and white water paddlers[1], where 8 knot currents and white water features on salt water are directly accessible by road.

Angling
Shore angling is popular on either side of the Falls of Lora, directly under the Connel Bridge and the shoreline below the airport at North Connel is a popular shore fishing mark.

Sailing
Sailing is a common occurrence in this policy zone, with a significant numbers of vessels based at moorings in Camas Bruaidh Ruaidhe, and at both Connel and North Connel. Vessels also transit the policy zone to access the inner Loch.

Diving
There are three scenic dives and one wreck site in this policy zone: Rubha Riabhach; Falls of Lora; Dunfuinary Point and the Earl of Carrack (wreck of the Puffer). Access to Rubha Riabhach and the Earl of Carrack can be from the privately owned slip at Fishermen's Wharf (Camas Bruaich Ruaidhe), although permission is required. Access to the Falls of Lora can be made from the shore at the car park opposite the Oyster Inn. Access to Dunfuinary Point with prior permission, can be made from the steps next to the private house at Dunfuinary.

Gillies foot path, North Connel
Image courtesy of Argyll and Bute Council

Coastal Paths
A number of proposed core paths intersect at Connel. These routes include 'Oban to Connel via Glen Cruitten', 'Oban to Fort William (National Cycle Network) and 'Black Lochs, Kilvaree, Connel'. Part of the Oban to Appin route can link up with the coastal path location at Black Crofts.

Commercial Shipping

Quarry and timber transhipment vessels that are operated by Breedon Aggregates and Scottish Woodlands Ltd transit through Policy Zone B, whilst en-route to their respective destinations at Bonawe and the Glen Etive Estate.

Infrastructure and Discharges

Private infrastructure in this policy zone includes the pontoon at Camas Bruaich Ruaidhe and the old ferry slip at North Connel. The old ferry slip opposite the Oyster Inn is still in public ownership. There are also many commercial, private and association moorings in this policy zone, mostly around Camas Bruaich Ruaidhe, Connel, and North Connel.

Four public sewage discharges and associated emergency/combined sewage overflows are located at North Connel, Connel and Connel. There are also a number of private sewage discharges concentrated around Connel and Black Crofts.

[1] www.fallsoflora.info

DESIGNATIONS

Refer to policy zone B map for areas covered.

- **Argyll & Bute Development Plan (Structure and Local Plan) Designations**
- The coastline of North Connel, Camas Bruaich Ruaidhe and stretch of coast at Kilmaronaig are classified as an area of Sensitive Countryside.
- The land on the outskirts of Connel to Dunfuinary and North Connel to Black Crofts are classified as Countryside around Settlement.
- The Kilmaronaig Islands are classified as Very Sensitive Countryside and are a Local Nature Conservation Site.
- Areas for Action - AFA 5/5 (Dunstaffnage Bay) encompasses the marine area from western boundary of the policy zone to Connel Bridge and is identified for harbour/leisure development.
- The Potential Development Areas - PDA 5/54 is located around the bay at Camas Bruaich Ruaidhe and is identified for marina/golf course/leisure development.

Other Designations

- The 'Loch Etive Coastal Strip' Shellfish Growing Water commences from Kilmaronaig Islands and extends to the upper loch.
- The Loch Etive Marine Consultation Area covers the entire marine area of this policy zone.

BIODIVERSITY

The Kilmaronaig Islands are a sensitive breeding site for seabirds, estimated to support 500 pairs of breeding birds in 2005. The main species are Herring Gull, Common Gull with Mute Swan, Greater Black-backed Gull, Eider Duck, Oyster Catcher and other smaller species present. These islands are used by European Otters and as an occasional haul-out for Common Seals which can frequently be seen feeding within the narrows.

Kilmaronaig Islands
Image courtesy of Argyll and Bute Council

HISTORICAL FEATURES

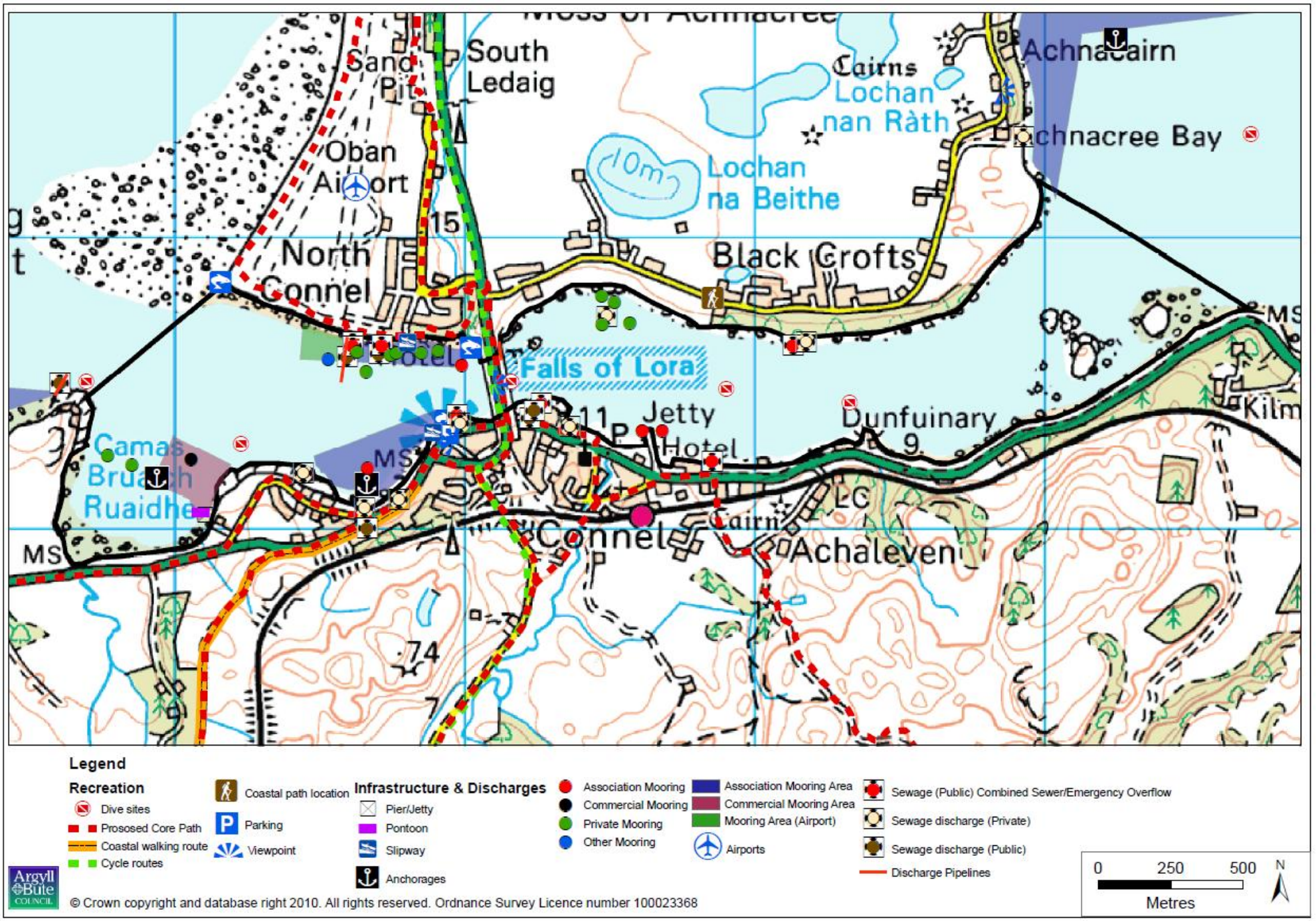
Coastal and marine historic features identified within and adjacent to this policy zone are:

- North Connel, barrow - a scheduled ancient monument.
- Connel Bridge, Loch Etive – Iron cantilevered bridge, constructed in 1903. Category B listed building.
- St. Oran's Church of Scotland, Connel - category B listed building.
- Lochan na Beithe Farmhouse, cairns - a scheduled ancient monument.
- Achaleven, cairn - a scheduled ancient monument.
- Kilmaronaig, buildings and enclosures - a scheduled ancient monument.
- Achnacree Moss, enclosure at South West end of Lochan nan Rath - a scheduled ancient monument.
- Achnacree Moss, cairn 135 m East of South end of Lochan nan Rath - a scheduled ancient monument.
- The undesignated wreck of the Earl of Carrick puffer is located in the middle of the channel between Black Crofts and Dunfuniary at 10 metres depth.
- Unscheduled site - Archaeological Watching Brief: Black Croft, North Connel.

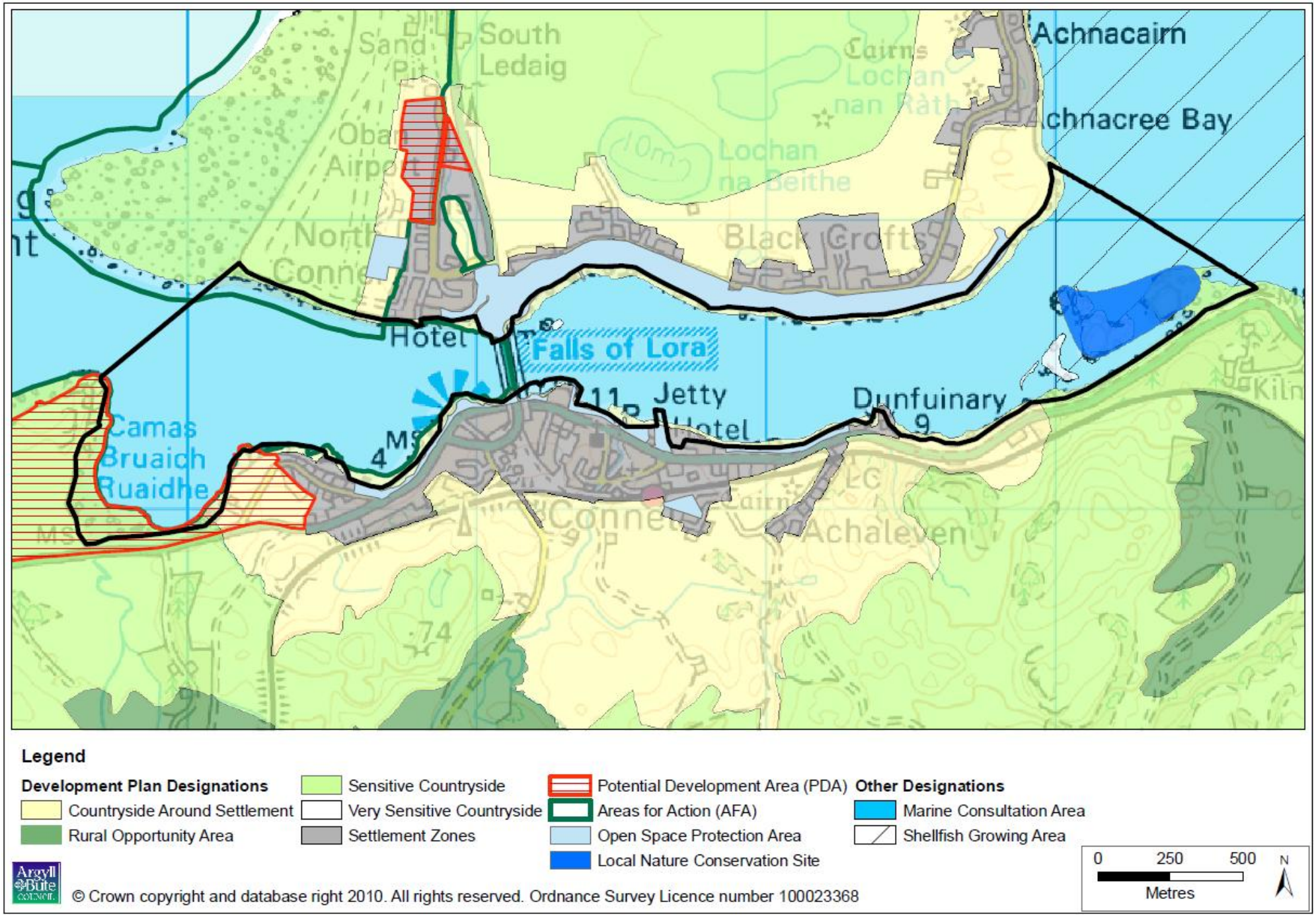
Connel Bridge
Image courtesy of Argyll and Bute Council

St. Oran's Church of Scotland
Image courtesy of Argyll and Bute Council

POLICY ZONE B MAP – Current Uses & Activities



POLICY ZONE B MAP – Designations



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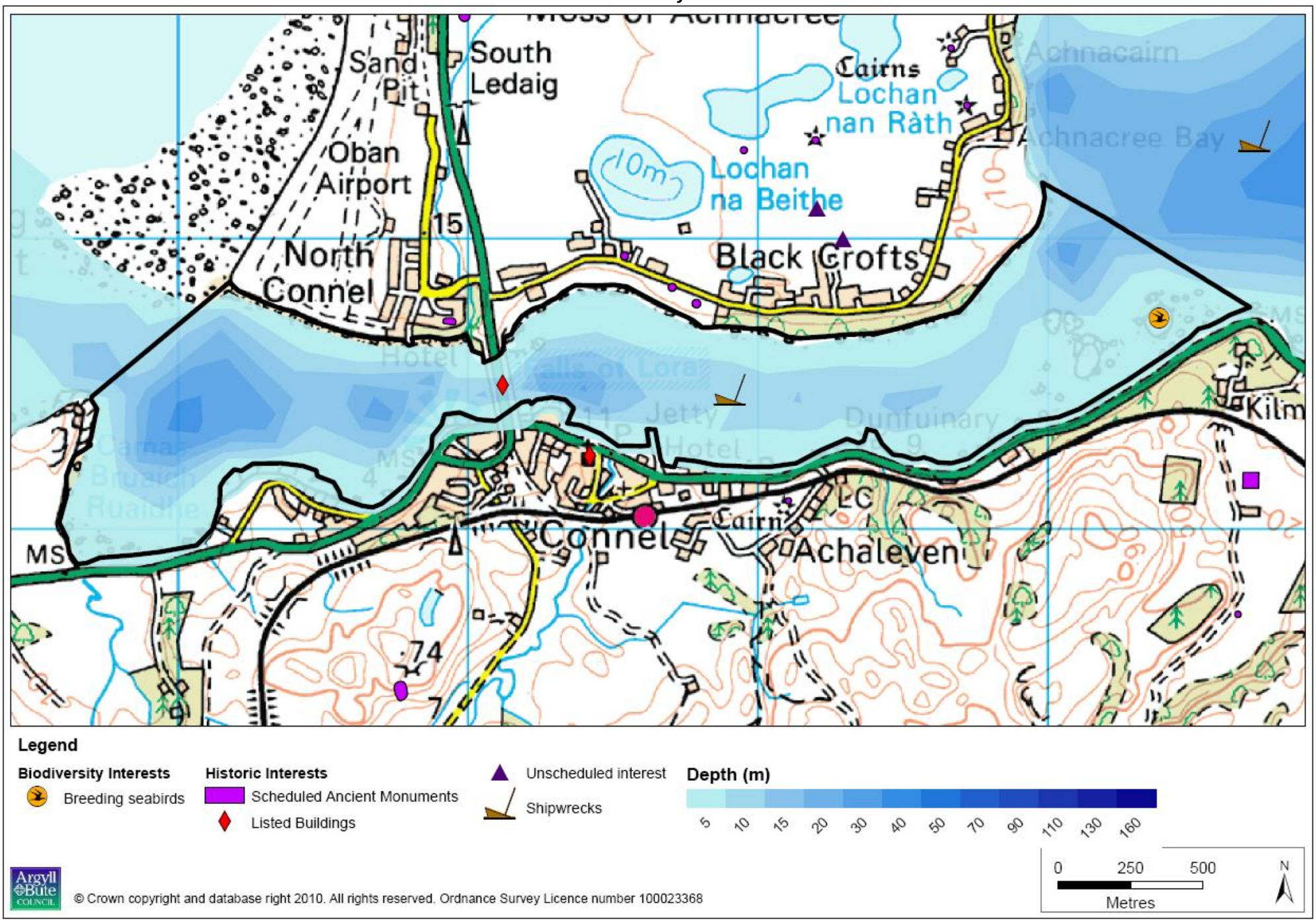
POLICY ZONE B MAP – Biodiversity Interests & Historic Features



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OPPORTUNITIES AND CONSTRAINTS FOR FUTURE USE AND DEVELOPMENT

Opportunities[2]

Future Use	
Access/Coastal Infrastructure	Extending the car park at the Falls of Lora (Connel) and repairing the slipway would improve recreational access to the water and allow visiting yachts people to come ashore by dingy to enjoy the viewpoint and the Oyster Inn. Space to extend the car park is very limited however and improvements to the slipway would be maximised if car park expansion allowed vehicular access to the slipway.
Use of tidal energy	There may be potential for small scale tidal energy development that would not adversely affect the environment and social and economic activity.

Development	
Marina Development	Potential for marina development as identified by the Area for Action and Potential Development Area in the Argyll and Bute Development Plan.
Dedicated access point for kayaking	Kayaking and canoeing user groups have identified a need for a dedicated access point for kayakers using the Falls of Lora, on the north side of the Connel narrows, below the bridge. Such an access point could include a parking area adjacent to the main road, safe path to the shore, toilet and changing facilities and a viewing area. This access point could also be used by others wishing to access the shore, including anglers and divers.

Constraints

Future Use	
Tidal currents	Tidal speeds of up to 8 knots occur (ebb spring tide) at the Falls of Lora with speeds of 5-6 knots continuing through to Kilmaronaig Narrows which make the area unsuitable for most recreational activities other than diving and kayaking.
	Larger vessels required to wait for slack water to enter or exit Loch Etive via the Falls of Lora.
Shipping/boating	Connel bridge restricts access to Loch Etive for commercial and recreational vessels with a clearance of 16 m at high water.
Access	Access to the shore on the north side of Connel Narrows (west side of Connel Bridge) for sea kayakers is poor.
Condition of Coastal Infrastructure	The slipway at Connel in not useable due to its poor structural condition and lack of space to reverse a boat trailer on to it. The car park at Connel is small and parking at the slip below the Lochnell Hotel is limited.
Areas sensitive to disturbance	Kilmaronaig Islands are an important site for breeding seabirds and otters. Common seals are also regularly seen feeding in this area. These interests could be disturbed by high speed motorised water-sports and other water craft, and people landing on the islands.

[2] Opportunities identified are indicative, subject to obtaining the required consents, and do not preclude development applications and activities elsewhere.

Development	
Landscape	Narrow stretch of limited water surface could become quickly dominated by structures. Setting of the Falls of Lora, a dramatic and variable water features, occupies an extensive stretch of this strait. Views along the straits in both directions focus on the Falls of Lora, the Connel Bridge and their setting: development on the water may detract from this.
	The water in this policy zone is overlooked by housing and elevated views from the bridge.
Navigation	To avoid navigational issues, marine development would need to be located away from recognised anchorages and moorings at Camas Bruaich Ruaidhe, Connel and North Connel, and from the narrow channel used for boat passage under the bridge, towards the south shore.
Hydrography	Much of the policy zone is too shallow and tidal flows too strong for aquaculture development.
	Most of the area of tidal resource is too shallow for commercial scale tidal turbines. The seabed is not uniform and tidal flow experiences significant turbulence which is not favourable for tidal energy development.
Ecology	Restriction of water flow from tidal energy development at the Falls of Lora has the potential to affect tide swept marine communities, migration of wild salmonids and the ecology of the loch, as a result of restriction of water flow, and seawater influence with consequent changes in salinity.
Recreational Use	The Falls of Lora, either side of Connel Bridge is heavily used by sea kayaks and marine development in this area could adversely affect recreational use of this area.
Water Quality	A number of private sewage outfalls from the settlements of Connel and North Connel, and occasional discharges from Scottish Water emergency overflows may cumulatively affect water quality within this policy zone. Any effluent however is likely to be well dispersed.

POLICY GUIDANCE[3]

Where the following policy guidance indicates a presumption in favour of development, this will be subject to any development proposal being consistent with the general policies detailed in Section 4 of this plan.

	Justification/comments
1. General presumption in favour of marina development at Camas Bruaich Ruaidhe, subject to no significant adverse effects.	This bay is adequately sheltered, has a suitable depth of water and is large enough to accommodate a large marina (pontoon berths) and anchorage area without adversely affecting safe navigation and other interests. This bay is already identified as a strategic location for marina/leisure development in the Argyll and Bute Development Plan.
2. General presumption against aquaculture development in this policy zone.	Potential for the landscape to accommodate aquaculture development in this policy zone was not identified, due to the high sensitivities associated with the setting of the Falls of Lora, views to and from the Connel Bridge and extensive overlooking of the narrows by settlement.

[3] Policies do not preclude the submission of development applications in areas where presumption against development has been identified.

	Water depth, strong currents, potential to affect navigation and conflict with moorings and recreational activity make this area unsuitable for aquaculture development.
3. General presumption against commercial scale tidal energy development in this policy zone.	While the Council is generally supportive of marine renewable energy it is considered that the potential constraints and impacts of commercial scale tidal development in this policy zone are likely to outweigh the benefits. See section 6.7.5 for more details.
4. Small scale tidal energy development that would not adversely affect the environment and social and economic activity is supported.	A detailed resource assessment for small scale tidal energy development would identify any opportunities available to local communities to benefit from marine renewable energy in Loch Etive.
5. Access to Kilmaronaig Islands by marine vessel or foot is discouraged between April and July.	Recreational activity has the potential to disturb important seabird colonies and other wildlife, particularly during the seabird breeding season. Marine users should follow the SMWWC (see Appendix X).
6. General support for improvements to access for coastal recreational activities.	The need for improved access and facilities has been identified by recreational user groups.
7. Safe navigational access to recognised moorings and designated anchorages should be maintained.	If sited inappropriately, marine development could affect safe navigation and use of existing moorings and anchorages.
8. Maintain safe channel of navigation through Connel and Kilmaronaig narrows.	Marine development in this narrow part of Loch Etive could restrict navigational access.

ADDITIONAL GUIDANCE ON DEVELOPMENT OPPORTUNITIES

TABLE PZB - Guidance on location, scale and other considerations

Development Type	Location	Suggested Maximum Scale	Comments
Marina Development	Camas Bruaich Ruaidhe	One third of the total bay area	Development should be within the confines of the bay and not encroach on the main channel, affecting safe navigation. Pontoon development should be configured to allow safe navigation in and out of the bay at all states of the tide. Consideration should be given to incorporating a safe route of navigation around any pontoon structures for sea kayakers trying to avoid the strong currents in the main channel while heading towards Connel Bridge. Any onshore development associated with the marina should avoid the natural foreshore on the west of the bay. Consideration should be given to the design of any proposed marina structures to ensure they facilitate monitoring and eradication of high-risk marine invasive non-native species (INNS) and to the need for self-contained cleaning facilities, which would allow vessels to be lifted, and cleaned without the risk of INNS entering the sea.

Dedicated access point for kayaking	East of Connel Bridge (North Connel)	n/a	The short section of old road at the north end of the bridge could be utilised as a parking area. Any toilet changing facilities should ideally be located within the car parking area. Any path and/or viewing area should be sensitive to the amenity of local residents and design should fit with local character. This area of land is designated as 'Countryside around Settlements' in the Argyll and Bute Development Plan and Local Plan Policy LP CST 1 would be a key consideration (see Appendix I).

CONSULTATION FOR DEVELOPMENT OPPORTUNITIES

Prospective developers (during pre-application scoping) and Council planning officers (during assessment of applications) are encouraged to consult with the following individuals and organisations in addition to the normal statutory consultees. A list of statutory consultees for different development consents and licences is listed in Appendix VII. Contact details for statutory and non-statutory consultees are provided in Appendix VIII.

Consultees	Marina	Access point
Ardchattan Community Council		✓
Connel Community Council	✓	
Connel Bridge Moorings Association	✓	✓
Dalriada Diving	✓	✓
Dunstaffnage Estate	✓	
Dunstaffnage Marina	✓	
John and Ronnie Campbell (Marine Pilots)	✓	
Lochnell Estate	✓	✓
Royal Yachting Association	✓	✓
Scottish Canoe Association	✓	✓
Scottish Federation of Sea Anglers		✓
Scottish Sea Angling Conservation Network		✓
Scottish Sub-Aqua Club	✓	✓
West Connel Mooring Owners Association	✓	✓