Clyde Marine Region Topic Sheet Series

An Overview of the Region

Clyde Marine Planning Partnership

Background

The Clyde Marine Planning Partnership (CMPP) has developed this set of Topic Sheets to help communicate the findings of the Clyde Marine Region Assessment which is available on our website www.clydemarineplan.scot. The Assessment is used to inform and prioritise the development of policies for the Clyde Marine Plan. If you would like to be kept up-to-date about the development of the marine plan please visit the website and sign up to receive our e-newsletter.

What is the Clyde Marine Region?

The Marine (Scotland) Act allowed for the creation of 11 Scottish Marine Regions and associated marine planning partnerships. Clyde and Shetland Isles are the first regions to set up partnerships to protect and enhance the marine environment and deliver sustainable development via a regional marine plan.

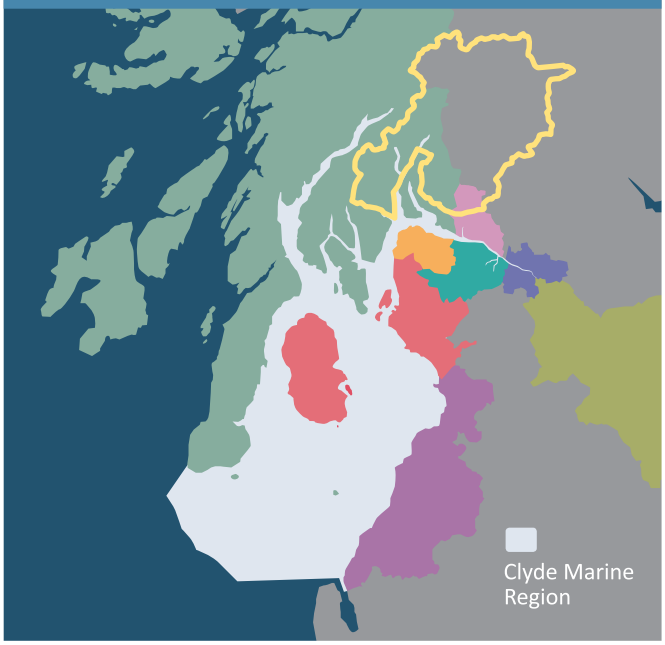
Physical characteristics

The Firth of Clyde has a coastline of more than 1,200km and includes eight sea lochs, five estuaries and numerous islands, including Arran, Bute and the Cumbraes. The landscapes and seascapes of the Clyde Marine Region (CMR) range from the wide sandy beaches of Ayrshire, the mudflats and saltmarsh of the industrialised estuary near Glasgow, to the deep lochs of Argyll. The diverse nature of the area largely results from its geology and the effects of glaciation during the last ice age.

The Highland Boundary Fault runs SW/NE through the Clyde and can be seen ashore in many places including at Helensburgh, across Bute and at Lochranza on Arran. It divides the region; the southern part has low hills and wide views whilst the northern part is more indented and mountainous. These characteristics continue below the water.

The CMR is unique to the Scottish coast. The mainland to the east and the long Mull of Kintyre peninsula to the west, coupled with the Clyde Sea Sill, a shallow ridge across the mouth of the CMR, provides an element of containment for the waters. The region therefore has a relatively low tidal range, a weak northwards movement of water and gentle currents.

Clyde Marine Region
Local Authority boundaries



Local Authorities

- Argyll and Bute
- Glasgow City
- Inverclyde
- North Ayrshire
- Renfrewshire
- South Ayrshire
- South Lanarkshire
- West Dunbartonshire

Loch Lomond and the Trossachs National Park

Natural environment

Scotland's seas are among the most biologically productive in the world. The CMR plays its part and supports rich and varied marine and coastal wildlife. Beneath the waves a variety of shallow marine plants and animals exist such as maerl, seagrass and flame shell beds. These can provide shelter, feeding and breeding grounds for other plants and animals. The deeper muddy seabed contains burrowing creatures such as prawns (*Nephrops norvegicus*), which is the current mainstay of the Clyde fishing industry.



TROON BEACH

IMAGES © PETER SANDGROUND



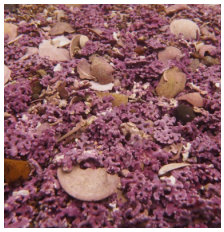
RIVER CLYDE



LOCH LONG



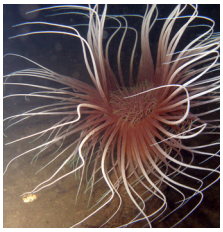
WINTER ON ARRAN



MAERL BED
© BEN JAMES, SNH



FLAME SHELL
© BEN JAMES, SNH



FIREWORK ANEMONE
© HOWARD WOOD, COAST

In summer months, when nutrients are plentiful, there are sightings of minke whales, basking sharks and dolphins. Harbour porpoises use the Firth all year round. There are many protected areas in the region for a range of geological and natural features. The latest Nature Conservation Marine Protected Areas in the upper Lochs, south of Arran and across the Clyde Sill, contain flame shell, horse mussel, maerl and seagrass beds, as well as muds and gravels containing various burrowing species, including the spectacular fireworks anemone. The Inner Clyde Special Protection Area is for migratory birds, which feed on the eelgrass, mussel beds and on the many invertebrates, such as worms and snails, living within the mudflats and saltmarsh.

Human settlement

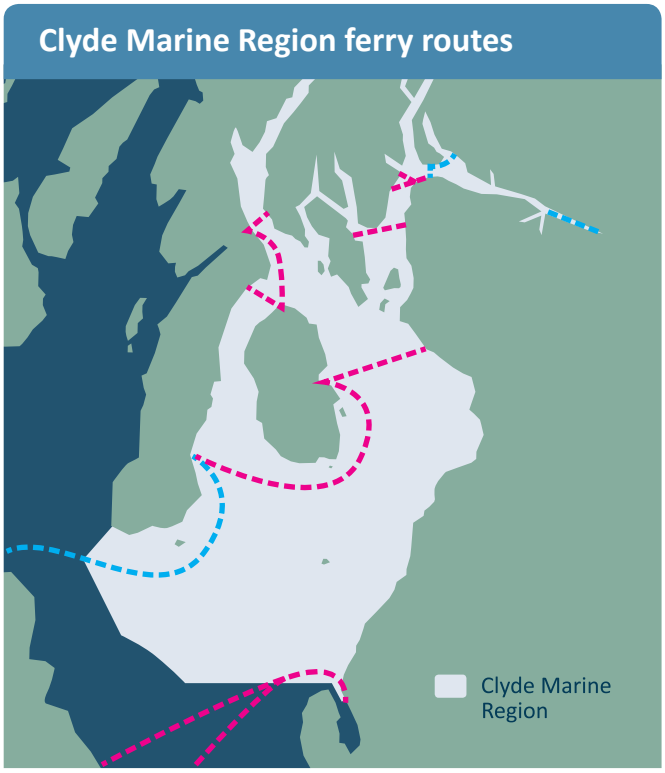
There are a wide range of archaeological sites around the CMR from Neolithic standing stones to more recent castles and contemporary industrial heritage. Long stretches of the coast now have housing and other development, especially the Inner Firth and along the Ayrshire coast, and of course the heavily developed Clyde estuary. The area is home to approximately 200,000 people, 20% of whom are retired. The settled areas have long stretches of hard sea defences, which are topped with railings along pavements and promenades. Many of these are the key viewing points for visitors to the coast.

Human impact

Industry has undoubtedly had an impact on the condition of the CMR since the Industrial Revolution. Dredging of the Clyde's naturally shallow waters allowed the movement of ships up into Glasgow city centre and this facilitated the industrial boom and development of the shipbuilding industry. Pollutant input has reduced markedly in recent years; however, there is a legacy of heavy metal, oil and sewage contamination, while changes to the depth and shape of the river remain.

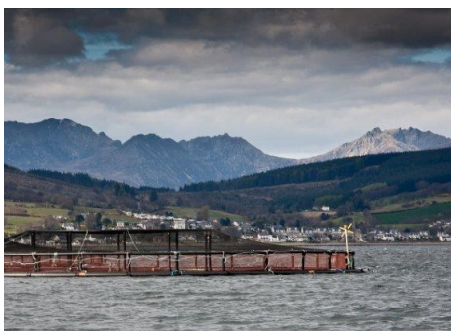
Fishing has been taking place in the Clyde for centuries. Over time, substantial fisheries for herring, cod, haddock and whiting have come and gone, due to low populations and fish sizes; there are now no licences (quota) to catch these species in the Clyde. Trawling for prawns and dredging for scallops dominates, causing changes to the seabed. Creels are also used to catch prawns.

More recent pressures on the environment that need to be managed are from newer industries such as aquaculture, and from increasing recreation and tourism.



Activity on the water

Activity on the water varies across the CMR. The busiest areas are the junctions of major shipping lanes in the Inner Firth servicing Greenock and Hunterston. These junctions have almost constant activity, with sailing boats tacking through the channels, ferries crossing regularly, container ships working their way slowly through the main sea lanes and motor boats and jet skis moving fast across the water.



LAMLASH BAY
© THE SCOTTISH SALMON COMPANY



TARBERT HARBOUR
© CLAIRE PESCOD



GREENOCK
© PETER SANDGROUND

Keep up to date with the latest news from the Clyde Marine Planning Partnership by signing up for our newsletter at www.clydemarineplan.scot and following us on twitter @clydemarineplan. This topic sheet was published February 2018.
If you would like to comment on this topic sheet or anything else please email info@clydemarineplan.scot or call 0131 314 6782.
Clyde Marine Planning Partnership, Caspian House, 2 Mariner Ct, 8 South Ave, Clydebank Business Park, Clydebank G81 2NR