PERTH & KINROSS COUNCIL

SEA Scoping Report

Housing in the Countryside Policy Review 2008

Contents of Scoping Report

Section 1: Introduction

Key Facts

1.1	**Name of Responsible Authority**	Perth & Kinross Council
1.2	**Title of Plan, Programme or Strategy**	Housing in the Countryside Policy Review 2008
1.3	**Contact Name**	Brenda Murray
1.4	**Job Title**	Local Development Plans Team Leader
1.5	**Address**	The Environment Service, Pullar House, 35 Kinnoull Street, Perth, PH1 5GD
1.6	**Telephone Number**	01738 475343
1.7	**Email**	[redacted]

1.8 **In the view of Perth & Kinross Council** (please tick the appropriate box)**:**

✓ The PPS falls under the scope of Section 5[3] of the Act and **requires an SEA** under the Environmental Assessment (Scotland) Act 2005 **OR**

The PPS falls under the scope of Section 5[4] of the Act and **requires an SEA** under the Environmental Assessment (Scotland) Act 2005 **OR**

The PPS does **not require an SEA** under the Environmental Assessment (Scotland) Act. However, we wish to carry out an SEA on a voluntary basis. We accept that, as the SEA is voluntary, the Consultation Authorities cannot guarantee a response containing their views within the statutory five week timescale.

Signature
(Electronic signature is acceptable) [redacted]

Date 19 September 2008

Requirement for SEA

Perth & Kinross Council has prepared this Scoping Report for the Housing in the Countryside Policy Review 2008 in accordance with Section 15 of the Environmental Assessment (Scotland) Act 2005. This report sets out the coverage, level of detail and assessment methodology that will be used in the Environmental Report, as well including the proposed timetable and consultation period for completion of the Report. The contents may be amended based on consultation with Historic Scotland, Scottish Natural Heritage and the Scottish Environment Protection Agency.

This document sets out the background information that will be used in the preparation of the Environmental Report, which includes:

1 The level of detail (spatial, temporal and technical)

2 An outline of the assessment approach

3 Proposed objectives

4 Proposed alternatives

5 A proposed timetable for completion of the Environmental Report and draft policy

Background to the Housing in the Countryside Policy Review 2008

The Housing in the Countryside policy which appears in the current Local Plans was approved in September 1999 although minor amendments have since been made to it following discussion of the policy at the Kinross Area Local Plan Public Inquiry in June 2003. Whilst it is an area wide policy there are exceptions to its application. Alternative policy approaches have been adopted in "Western Highland Perthshire" and Glenshee to tackle issues of rural depopulation, in the Lunan Valley and the Loch Leven Basin in response to environmental concerns.

A review of the 1999 policy was undertaken in 2005 in response to a growing awareness of the concerns about the policy and a desire of the then Administration to move to a more relaxed policy. Following Council approval of the policy in December 2005 it has operated as supplementary planning guidance and been treated as a material consideration when determining planning applications. There is now concern that the revised policy is too relaxed allowing for inappropriate development particularly in relation to the scale of steading redevelopments and hence the undertaking of this current review.

Plan Purpose and Objectives

The **purpose** of this policy review is to revise the criteria against which development proposals for housing in the countryside are to be assessed. The main objective of the policy review is to provide opportunities for people to live in the countryside, in a sustainable way whilst protecting the landscape and cultural heritage of Perth and Kinross.

The Housing in the Countryside policy will form non-statutory planning guidance to be incorporated into the local development plan(s) covering Perth and Kinross as and when they are reviewed. The policy will supersede the 2005 policy and will include criteria relating to:

- where housing should be located
- siting and design matters
- building groups
- renovation or replacement of housing
- conversion or replacement of non-domestic buildings

Relationship to other Plans Programmes and Strategies

The Housing in the Countryside policy may be influenced by other existing plans, programmes or strategies (PPSs). The relationship of the Housing in the Countryside policy to other relevant PPSs therefore requires to be explored. This

allows the Council as the Responsible Authority to assess the potential impact of other PPSs on the Housing in the Countryside policy, establish links between the Housing in the Countryside policy and other PPSs, identify key priorities in higher level PPSs which need to be taken into account, and identify any inconsistencies or conflicts with the Housing in the Countryside policy which may arise.

The following PPSs have been reviewed:

International
Council Directive 79/409/EEC on the conservation of wild birds
Council Directive 92/43/EEC on the conservation of natural habitats and of wild flora and fauna
Natura 2000
Convention on Wetlands 1971
Directive 2000/60/EC – EU Water Framework Directive
European Landscape Convention 2000

National
The Planning etc. (Scotland) Act, 2006
The Town & Country Planning Act (Scotland), 1997
The Town & Country Planning (Listed Buildings & Conservation Areas) (Scotland) Act 1997
Ancient Monuments & Archaeological Areas Act 1997
Nature Conservation (Scotland) Act 2004
Firm Foundations: The Future of Housing in Scotland
Housing Need and Demand Assessment Guidance March 2008
Scotland's Transport Future 2004
National Waste Strategy 1999
Air Quality Strategy for England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland 2007
Scottish Forestry Strategy 2006
Passed to the Future: Historic Scotland's Policy for the Sustainable Management of the Historic Environment
Changing Our Ways: Scotland's Climate Change Programme
Choosing Our Future, Scotland's Sustainable Development Strategy December 2005
National Planning Framework, 2004 & Monitoring Report 2006
SPP1 The Planning System (Nov 2002)
SPP2: Economic Development
SPP3: Planning for Housing
SPP3: Planning for Housing Consultative Draft January 2008
SPP4: Planning for Minerals (2006)
NPPG5: Archaeology and Planning (1994)
SPP6: Renewable Energy (2007)
SPP7: Planning and Flooding (2004)
SPP10: Planning for Waste Management (2007)
SPP11: Open Space and Physical Activity 2007
NPPG14: Natural Heritage (2002)
SPP14 Natural Heritage SEA Scoping Report June 2007
SPP15: Planning for Rural Development (February 2005)
SPP17: Planning for Transport (1999)
NPPG18: Planning and Historic Environment (1999)
SPP23: Planning and the Historic Environment Consultative Draft February 2008
SPP21 Green Belts
PAN33 Development of Contaminated Land
PAN 38 Housing Land
PAN 51 Planning, Environmental Protection and Regulation
PAN 72 Housing in the Countryside

Regional

Land use Consultants (1999) SNH Review No.122: Tayside Landscape Character Assessment
Tayside Biodiversity Action Plan (2002)
TACTRAN Draft Regional Transport Strategy (2007)

Local

PKC Corporate Plan Securing the Future 2007-2010
PKC Working Together for Perth & Kinross – The Community Plan 2006-2020
Joint Environmental Strategy & Action Plan 2004-2008
PKC Economic Development Strategy & Joint Action Plan 2006-2010
PKC (2003) Towards a Sustainable Future – Perth & Kinross Structure Plan
Kinross Area Local Plan 2004
Highland Area Local Plan 2000
Eastern Area Local Plan 1998
Strathearn Area Local Plan 2001
Perth Area Local Plan (including Housing Land Alteration) 2000
Loch Leven Catchment Management Plan
Air Quality Management Area (No.1) Order, 2006
Perth & Kinross Local Housing Strategy 2004-09
Perth and Kinross Council Local Housing Needs Assessment (Aug 2003)
DTZ Pieda Consulting

The full review can be found in Appendix 1. This review has been concentrated at the Scottish national level and below. Some international level PPSs have been reviewed but it has largely been assumed that relevant international, European and UK environmental legislation have been incorporated into Scottish national policy and guidance.

Whilst many PPSs will influence the outcome of the Housing in the Countryside policy review the main linkages to note are those between it, the **Local Plans**, **Structure Plan** and **Scottish Planning Policy (SPP).**

Local Plans

As stated above the policy is to form non-statutory supplementary planning guidance to be read alongside the Local Plans. It therefore requires to be consistent with the other policies contained within the Local Plans eg drainage and AGLV policies.

Perth and Kinross Structure Plan 2003

The Perth and Kinross Structure Plan (PKSP) sets out the Strategic Land use Planning Vision for Perth and Kinross and seeks to :

- provide sustainable communities;
- create a sustainable economy; and
- sustain the environment and resources

The Housing in the countryside policy will require to accord with this vision and many of the strategic planning objectives set out in the PKSP. Those which are applicable to the Housing in the Countryside policy review are as follows

PKSP Objectives
• To accommodate population and household growth
• To produce a more efficient settlement pattern by ensuring that the location of new development contributes to reducing the need to travel and supporting developments / locations which support alternative modes of travel thus dealing with general traffic growth and traffic growth caused by development
• To address the needs of and for rural economic development
• To locate new development where it will contribute to reducing the need to travel

• To provide housing in the most energy efficient locations and manner while raising the quality of design in new development
• Need to secure optimal use of renewable and non-renewable resources
• To create healthier and safer living environments
• To protect habitats and species of international, national and local importance
• To protect landscape character of national and local importance
• To ensure the maintenance and enhancement of the cultural heritage
• Protect and enhance built heritage
• Ensure the use or rehabilitation of previously developed land and making the best use of previously used buildings and materials

At the national level the main policy of relevance to the Housing in the Countryside Policy is SPP15: Planning for Rural Development and it's associated Planning Advice Note PAN72 Housing in the Countryside. (Also SPP2,3,17,and NPPG 14 to be covered in Appendix 1).

SPP15: Planning for Rural Development

The key focus for SPP15 is on the provision of sustainable rural development. (It advises that rural areas have an important role in helping to meet the demand for new households although most new development is likely to be located in or adjacent to existing urban areas.) It sets out the approach, key messages and objectives that should underpin planning policies and decisions affecting rural areas. The overarching aim is to have a prosperous rural economy, with a stable or increasing population that is more balanced in terms of age structure and where rural communities have reasonable access to good quality services. The planning system can assist this by adopting a more welcoming stance to development in rural Scotland.

SPP15 sets out planning's role:

- to enable and help create opportunities for development in sustainable locations wherever appropriate e.g. where infrastructure capacity and good access exist, or can be provided at reasonable cost, or to meet justifiable social and economic objectives.
- rural diversification should be embraced to help businesses, land managers and farmers expand or start new enterprises in appropriate circumstances and at an appropriate scale
- new development must be carefully planned if the character and quality of the countryside is not to be undermined

In relation to housing SPP15 advances policy in respect of small scale rural housing developments including clusters and groups in close proximity to settlements, replacement housing, plots on which to build individually designed houses, and holiday homes. The overall message is that there is considerable scope for allowing more housing developments of this nature and that this should be expressed in development plans, either as part of general settlement policy or as a separate sub-set on rural housing policy.

SPP15 promotes the re-use of small sites (e.g. sawmills and brickworks) which cease to be required for their original purpose where conversion to residential use would bring about a net environmental benefit subject to the following criteria:

- proximity to services e.g. schools, shops (ideally within walking distance or cycling distance);
- ease of access (from an existing road and footpath and to a rail station or bus route);
- drainage and sewerage capacity (e.g. from combined septic tanks or potential link to public systems);
- fit in the landscape and design (design standards should comply with published advice, use sustainable materials where appropriate and be energy efficient)

SPP15 advises that :

- criteria should be set out in local plans to advise of the circumstances in which new housing not identified in local plans and outside settlements is likely to be acceptable, and that parameters should be established as to the number of houses that might be allowed in any given area
- opportunities to replace run down housing and steadings with designs using new materials should be embraced

and that planning authorities should not unreasonably constrain such modernisation and steading conversion within the original footprint or height limit unless there are compelling design or conservation reasons for doing so

- there is an unmet demand for plots on which unique, individually designed houses can be built in rural locations. Consideration should be given by planning authorities to formulating supportive policies in their local plans where such developments may be justifiable for economic reasons
- in recognition of the significant economic role which holiday, weekend and second homes can play in some rural areas, planning authorities should allocate land in their development plans to help meet the demand
- development plans should be realistic about the availability, or likely availability, of alternatives to access by car, as not all rural development locations are able to be served by public transport
- the protection of the built, historic and natural environment, including the need to further the interests of biodiversity are important considerations and environmental quality is high out with protected areas as well as within them. Some parts of these valued environments can accommodate certain types of development, where it can be demonstrated that there will be no adverse environmental impact.
- national planning policy and advice emphasises the importance of fit and design of new development in the landscape. This is often the key to making development acceptable and requires more emphasis in development plans. Development plans must recognise potential but they must also address constraints

The Housing in the countryside Policy must address the aims of SPP15 and translate this into a Perth and Kinross context. It is considered that the current adopted policy does not provide for the full extent of opportunities promoted by SPP15 and that the revised policy of 2005 whilst trying to achieve this will lead to inappropriate development in the countryside as has been evidenced by the planning consents granted since approval of the policy in December 2005.

Such applications include consents for:

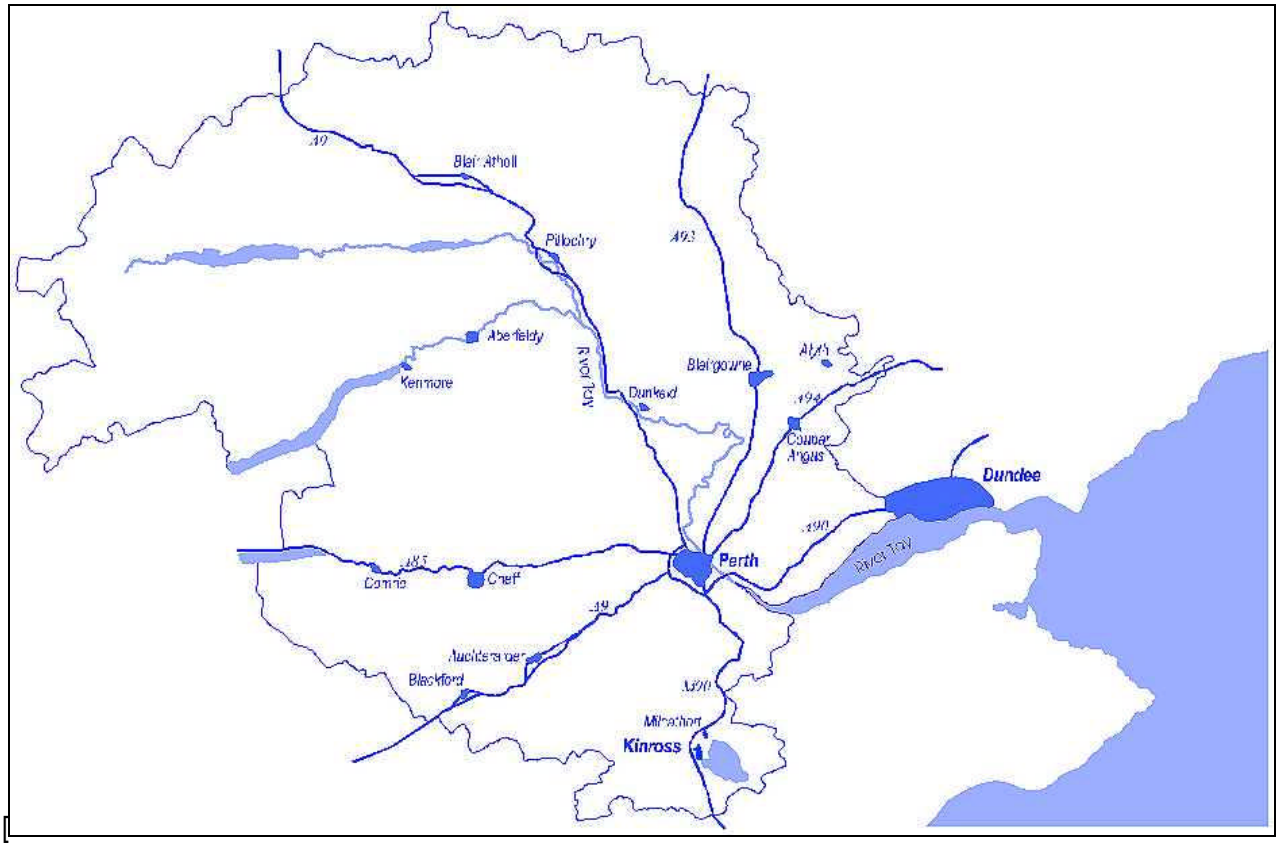
- Larger numbers of units on steading and brownfield sites with consents being granted for developments of over 20 units. Concern about this centres around:
    - the potential of these proposals to create significant sized housing estates often in unsuitable locations, presenting difficulties in providing affordable housing, raising issues of sustainability and increasing pressure on rural services e.g. schools.
    - Developers being too keen to demolish steadings and replace with new build houses rather than seeking to convert. This raises issues of loss of traditional buildings and replacement with uncharacteristic new build. This again may be unsustainable.
    - Developers are expecting to be able to use brownfield land at the rear of steadings for new build rather than considering its value to provide larger garden ground or amenity landscaping
    - Policy should only apply to 'redundant' farm buildings, not to existing modern ones; if they are to be replaced, and
    - What happens to existing farm operations?
    - Loss of economic development land as start up enterprises cannot compete with housing land value.
    - Impact on biodiversity e.g. removal of derelict farm buildings which provide a habitat for bats.

- Infill sites – Concern has been raised over the appropriateness of using a figure to determine what is a suitable gap site.
- Replacement houses – there is a need to ensure that piles of stones should not be a justification for a new house overriding issues of appropriate siting and design.

It is therefore considered essential that the Housing in the Countryside Policy is reviewed to produce a policy which not only recognises the opportunities for new housing in the countryside but also addresses the constraints.

Map of Area Covered by the Plan

The map below indicates the area to which the Housing in the Countryside policy relates.



Section 2: Establishing the Baseline & Scope of the Report

Environmental Baseline

Macaulay Research Consultancy Services produced a State of the Environment Report (SoE) for the Perth & Kinross Council area in October 2007. This gives an accurate and up-to-date account of the current environmental state of the Perth and Kinross area. The majority of the information below is extracted from the SoE report with updates where available. The full list of sources can be found in the SoE report.

Summary

Overall the state of the environment in Perth and Kinross is good. Landscape, biodiversity and the aquatic environment are generally in good and improving condition. The main areas of concern are emissions to the atmosphere, carbon dioxide in relation to climate change, and particulates and nitrogen dioxide in relation to air quality. However air quality in most areas of Perth and Kinross is generally good. The main factor behind these emissions is transport, and indications are that traffic volumes are increasing.

Another key pressure is development activity. Review of recent planning applications identified an increase in demand for development with the potential to impact the cultural heritage and prime agricultural land of Perth and Kinross (SoE Executive summary).

Biodiversity (SoE p.46-54)

The diverse wildlife and habitats of Perth and Kinross are highly valued locally, nationally and internationally and are resources that need to be protected. Natural and semi-natural habitats are subject to pressure due to the rising demand for residential and commercial development. Factors include the increasing number of households in Perth and Kinross and commercial development pressures to support tourism and maintain job supplies. Presently the Council does not have sufficient information to comment on the net change in natural and semi-natural habitats each year.

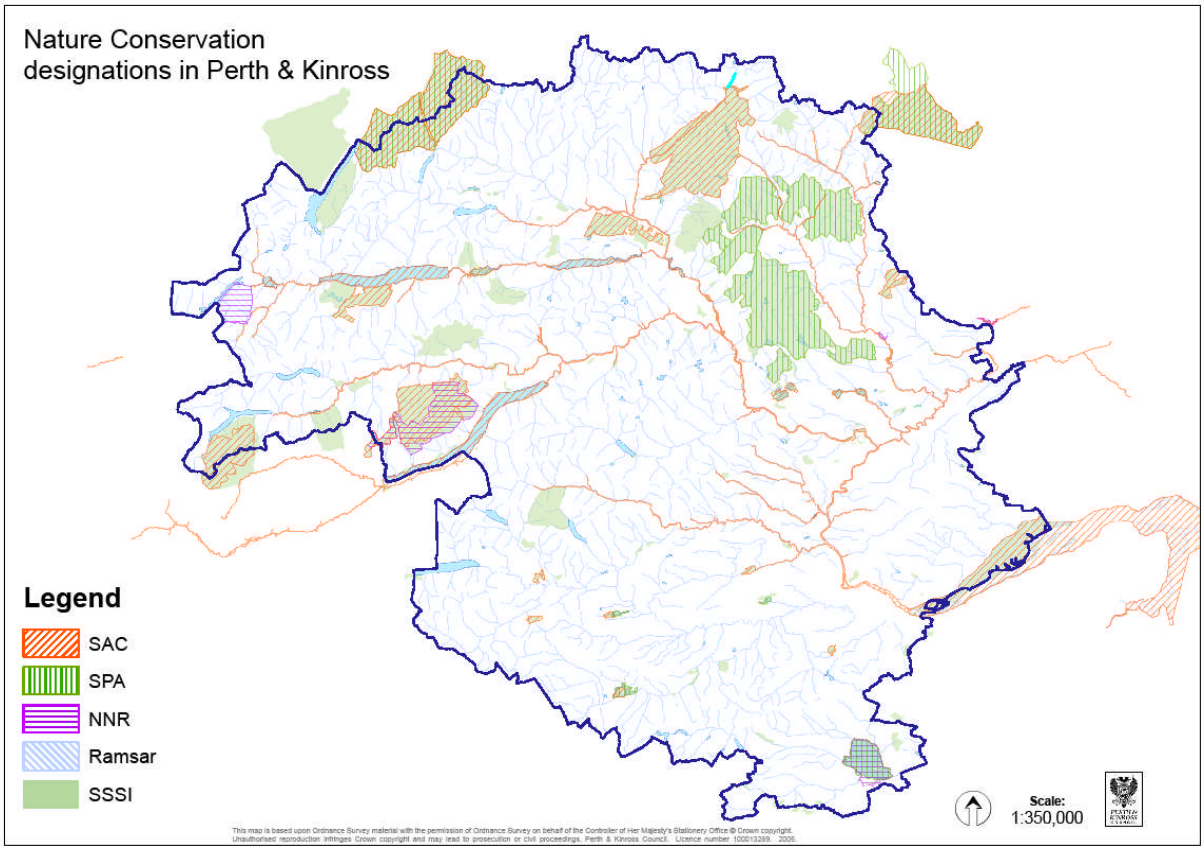
Approximately 27.5% of Perth and Kinross is designated under national or international legislation to protect the habitats and species present.

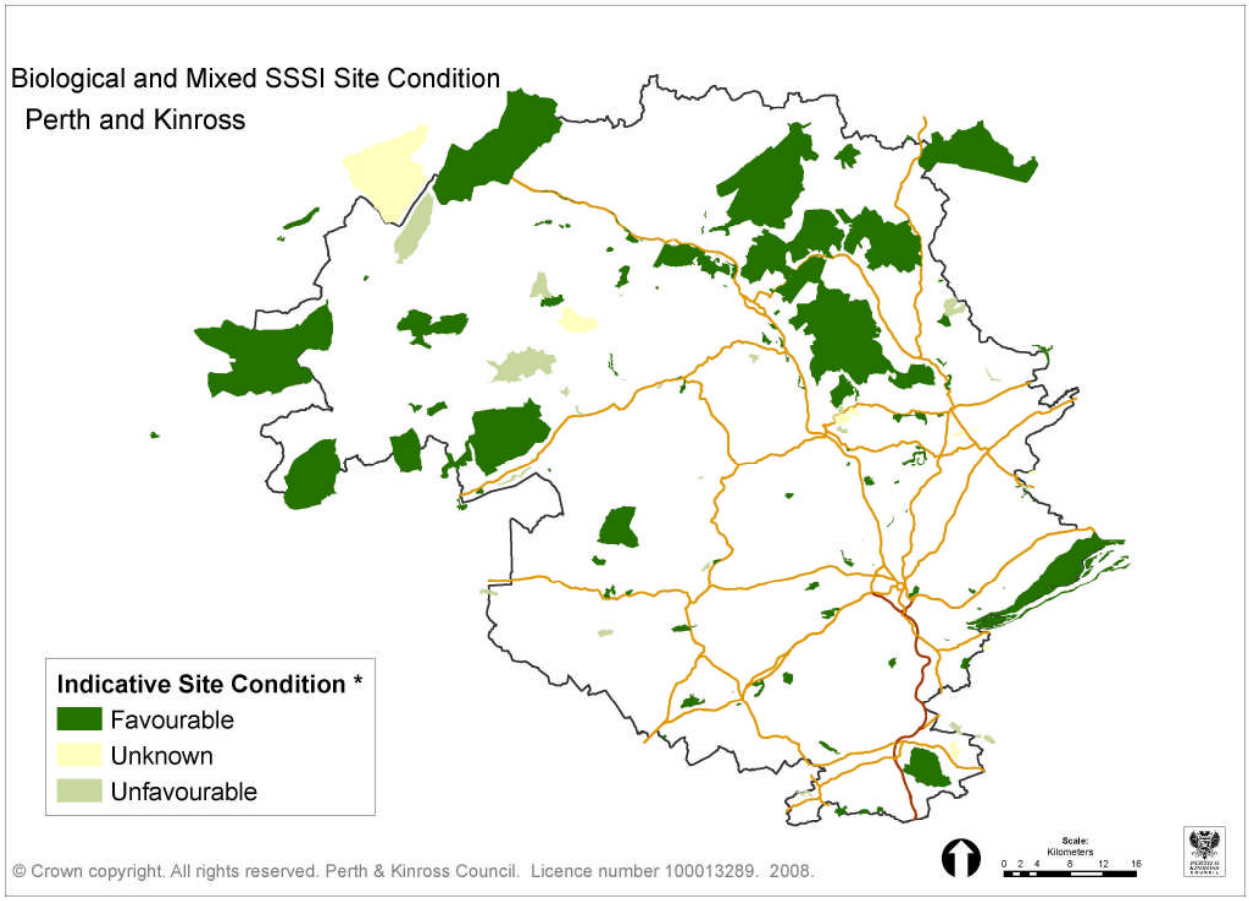
Conservation designations in Perth & Kinross	Area (ha)	% of PKC	Areas
National Nature Reserve	7280	1.3	5
Ramsar	6555	1.2	4
Special Areas of Conservation	37,758	7	23
Special Protection Area	30,099	5.6	7
SSSI	67,142	12.4	125

Biological and Mixed SSSI Site Monitoring Condition by Type (2007)

Site Monitoring Status	Type	No. of Sites	Percent
Favourable	Biological	135	56
	Mixed	9	4
	Total	**144**	**60**
Unfavourable			
	Biological	91	38
	Mixed	4	2
	Total	**95**	**39**
NA	Biological	3	1

Source: SNH Site Monitoring Reports, SNHi (2008), www.snh.org.uk/snhi/





* Site condition assessments monitor the effectiveness of the designation in maintaining the quality of the significant feature (s) of the site. Sites are commonly designated for multiple features. The above map provides an indication of the current status of the site based on the majority site condition status.

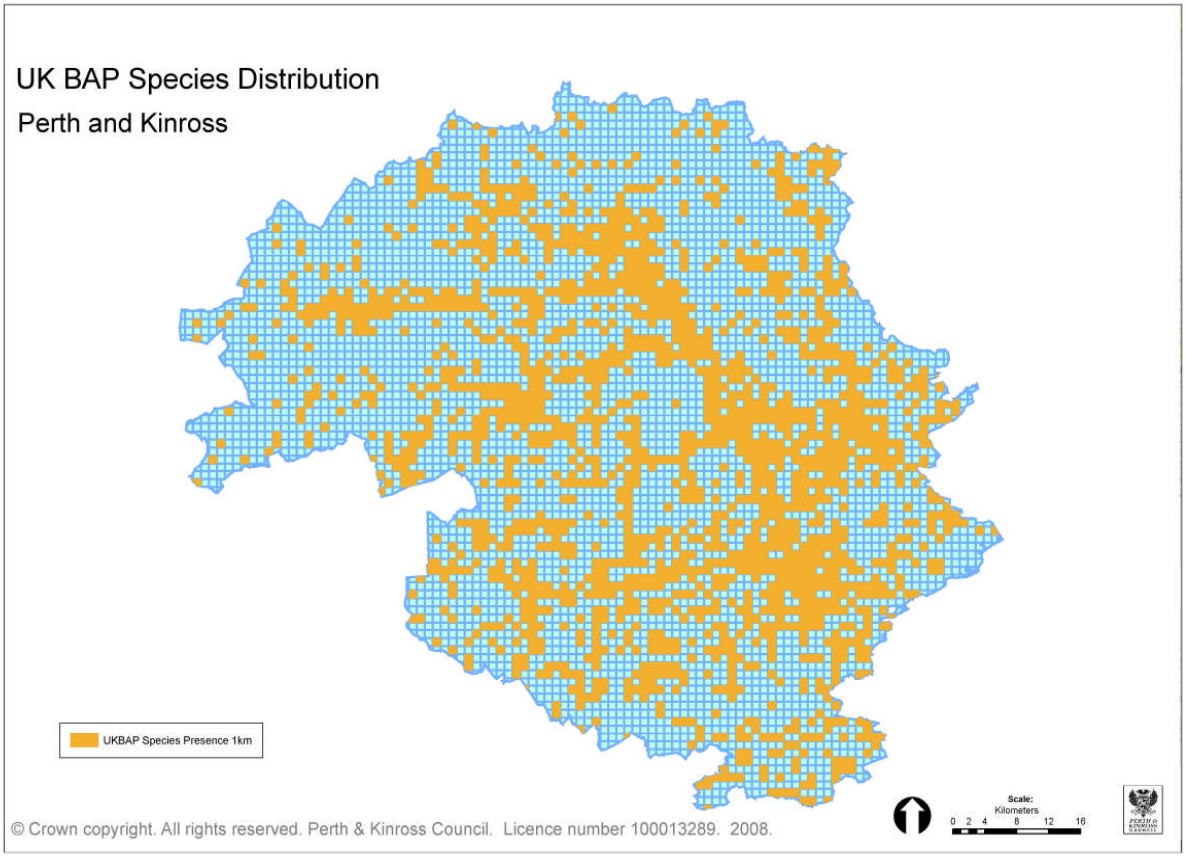
The Tayside LBAP has identified a number of priority habitats and species. Baseline information regarding the location and extent of priority species and habitats is currently under development and in the future will be used to inform conservation and monitoring efforts. Further information will also be available from the Tayside LBAP on the proportion of priority species showing net population or range recovery and the proportion of priority habitats showing recovery in condition and / or extent.

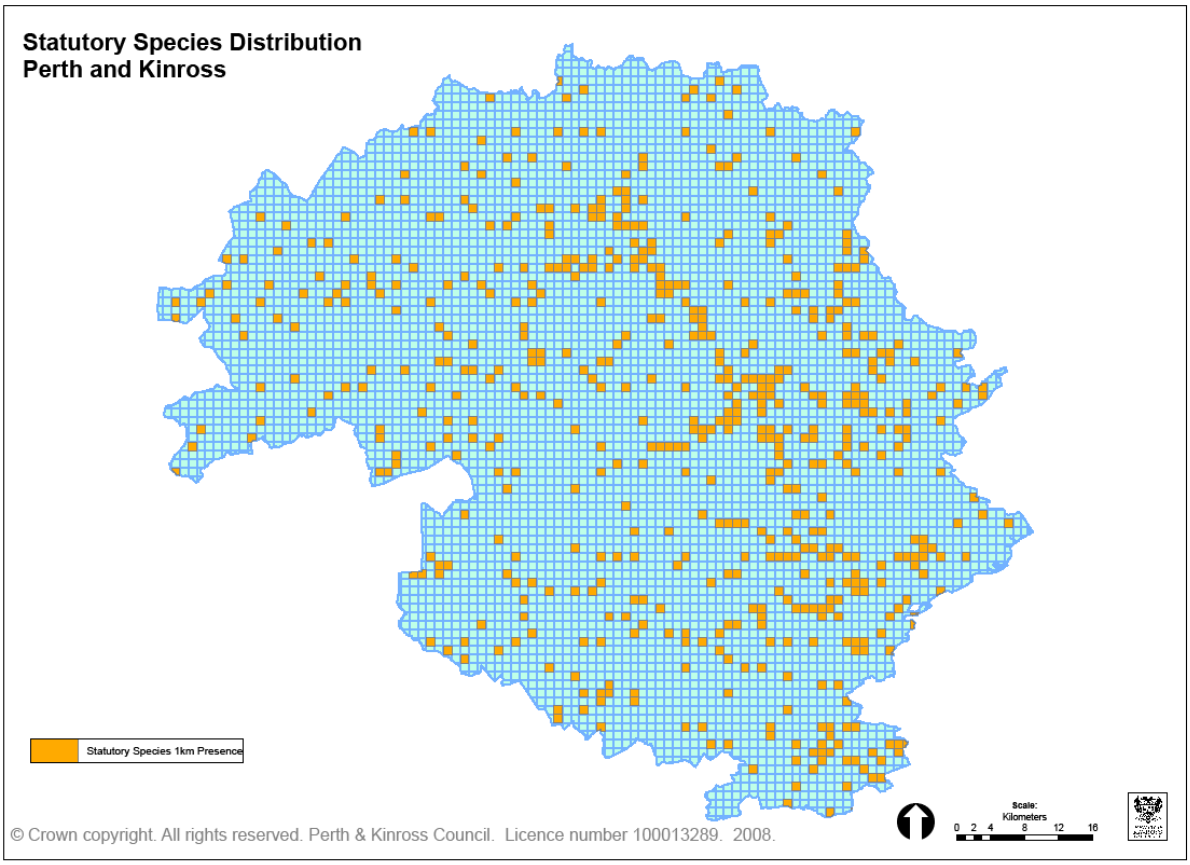
The Breeding Bird Survey aims to keep track of changes in the breeding populations of widespread bird species in the UK. Terrestrial breeding birds are recorded principally by volunteers through the Breeding Bird Survey (BBS) organised by the British Trust for Ornithology (BTO), with support from the Joint Nature Conservation Committee (JNCC) and the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (RSPB). Past coverage for the Perth and Kinross Local Authority area (28 one kilometer squares) has been insufficient to allow monitoring of these trends at a local level. A minimum number of 20 occupied squares of the 'scarcest' species in the index are required to calculate composite trends for the region.

Consequently, Perth & Kinross Council commissioned a survey project to obtain sufficient survey coverage to determine local trends in breeding bird populations. Information gained will be available in March 2009 and will indicate environmental trends in the changing biodiversity of species and habitats and be used to assess the effectiveness of our efforts to deal with environmental pressures on land use and protect and enhance our natural environment.

The Wetland Bird Survey has undertaken surveys for a number of years for different nationally and internationally important bird populations at Loch Leven. At present there are no clear trends in population numbers.

Data relating to changes in natural and semi-natural habitats will also support reporting on the state of biodiversity in Perth and Kinross.





Recent efforts to collate data for Perth and Kinross priority species has resulted in a species database of approximately 30, 000 records to date.

Statutory Species [1]132 UKBAP species have been recorded in approximately 32 percent of one km squares in Perth and Kinross. 7 Tayside LBAP species have been recorded in approximately 20 percent of one km squares.

Similarly, approximately 1050 notable and or statutory species have been recorded in approximately 10 percent of one km squares in Perth and Kinross (see map). Of these approximately 20 are considered statutory protected species.

Communities (SoE p.79-82)
The Scottish National Household Survey indicates residents in Perth and Kinross are relatively more satisfied with where they live than residents are on average in Scotland.

Open space data is currently being updated by the Council however using the data available from the Forestry Commission on open space and woodland in Perth and Kinross a high proportion of households are within a 200m straight-line distance of an area of open space (82%) and within 4km of a 20ha woodland (97%). A much smaller percentage is within 500m of 2ha of woodland (58%).

A Greenspace survey was completed in April 2008 for the settlements of Pitlochry, Perth and Scone, Kinross and Milnathort, Creiff, Coupar Angus, Blairgowrie, Aucherarder, Alyth and Aberfeldy.

[1] **Statutory Species**. Species on the SoCC list protected under the following legislation are deemed statutory i.e. legally protected. Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981: Species on Schedules 1, Part 1, Schedule 5 9-1a, 9-1b, 9-2, and 8 of the Act and its subsequent amendments. EC Birds' Directive: The species on Annex 1 filtered against a list of UK relevant species. EC Habitats and Species Directive: The species on Annex 1, 2p, 2np and 4 . Badger Act 1992

Health

A significant data gap in relation to communities is the availability of health data including mental health data.

18.5% of the population in Perth & Kinross is aged 65+. This is +17% higher than the Scottish average (source: Perth & Kinross, a community health & wellbeing profile, Scottish Public Health Observatory 2004)

Coronary heart disease continues to be the main cause of death in Perth and Kinross with the incidence being higher amongst men, the elderly and those living in deprived areas, with much higher rates among elderly people. Projections for the next ten years show an increase in the incidence of cancer by 30%, but a reduction in mortality (source: GROS 2005 Annual Death File)

Healthy life expectancy is defined as the number of years people can expect to live in good health. The discrepancy between healthy and total life expectancy, therefore, indicates the length of time people can expect to spend in poor health.

Life Expectancy (LE) and Health Life Expectancy (HLE) estimates for P & K Council Area, 1999-2000

	At Birth			At age 65		
	LE	HLE (limiting long-term illness	HLE (Self Assessed Health)	LE	HLE (limiting long-term illness	HLE (Self Assessed Health)
Perth & Kinross (females)	80.8	62.5	69.1	18.6	11.1	16.0
Perth & Kinross (males)	75.3	58.5	68.6	15.6	9.1	13.2

Source: ScotPHO online

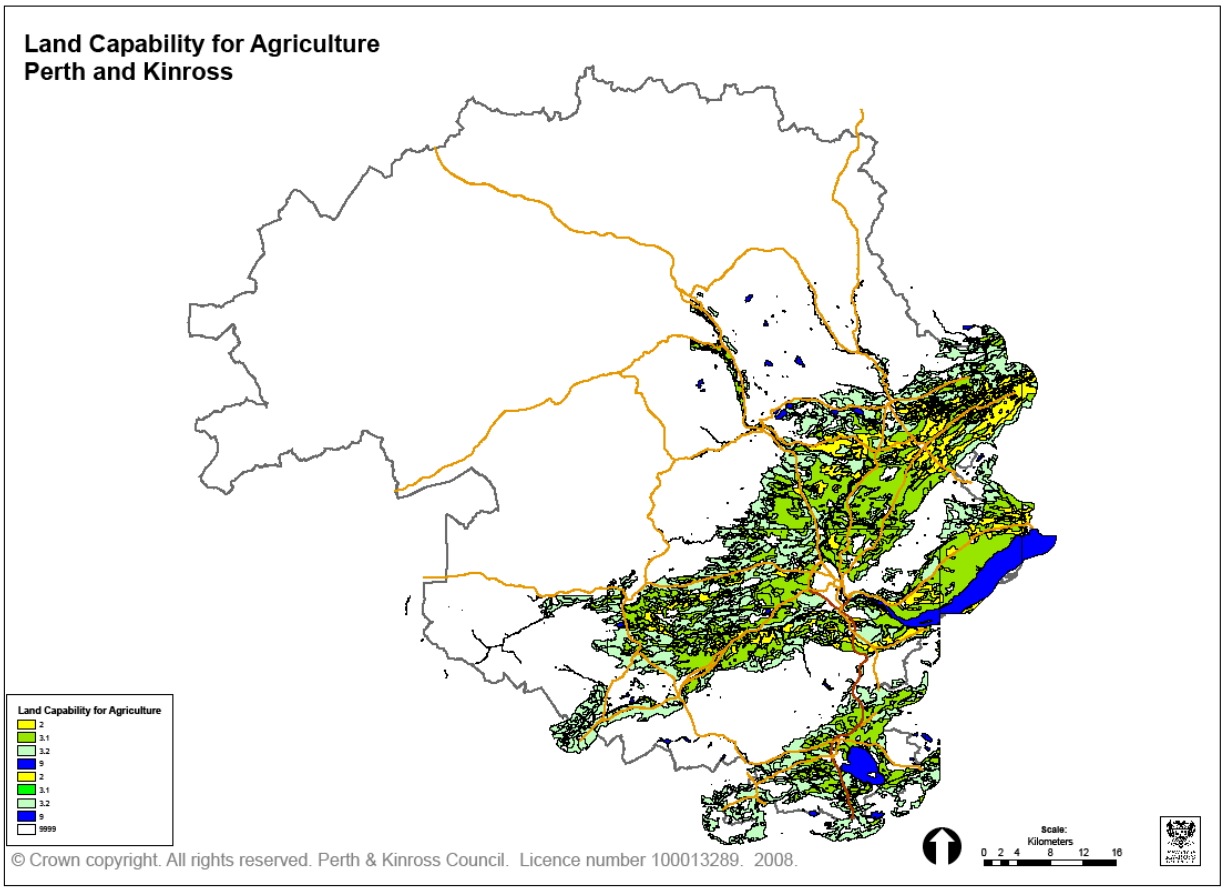
Geology and Soils (SoE p.34-45)
Currently the Council has insufficient information available to identify the area of new development on greenfield land compared to brownfield land considering the amount of brownfield land available for development. However from the information available on planning applications for development of prime agricultural land there appears to be increased demand to develop high quality agricultural soil.

The geology of Perth and Kinross is composed of a wide range of rock types. Varying rock types make a significant contribution to the area's economic well-being both in the mineral deposits they contain and in the wide range of scenery they provide. The close relationship between geology and topography is evident in the Sidlaw, Ochil and Lomond hills which are largely composed of harder igneous rock. The most evident surface expression of a geolocial features is the line of the Highland Boundary Fault which traverses Perth and Kinross from the Forest of Artney to Bridge of Cally and separates the older highland rocks from the younger and generally softer rocks which underlie much of the lowland area.

The map overleaf delineates a number of interpretive classifications incorporating soils, topographic and environmental data to determine Land Capability for Agriculture (Source: Macaulay Institute)

Within Perth and Kinross there are 31 Sites of Special Scientific Interest covering an area of 658ha that are designated solely for geology. Information is not currently available from SNH on their quality. There are no designated Regionally Important Geology Sites yet but Kinnoull Hill (Perth) and Knock (Crieff) are under consideration.

There are 17 sites designated for their geological features of these 16 are in favourable condition.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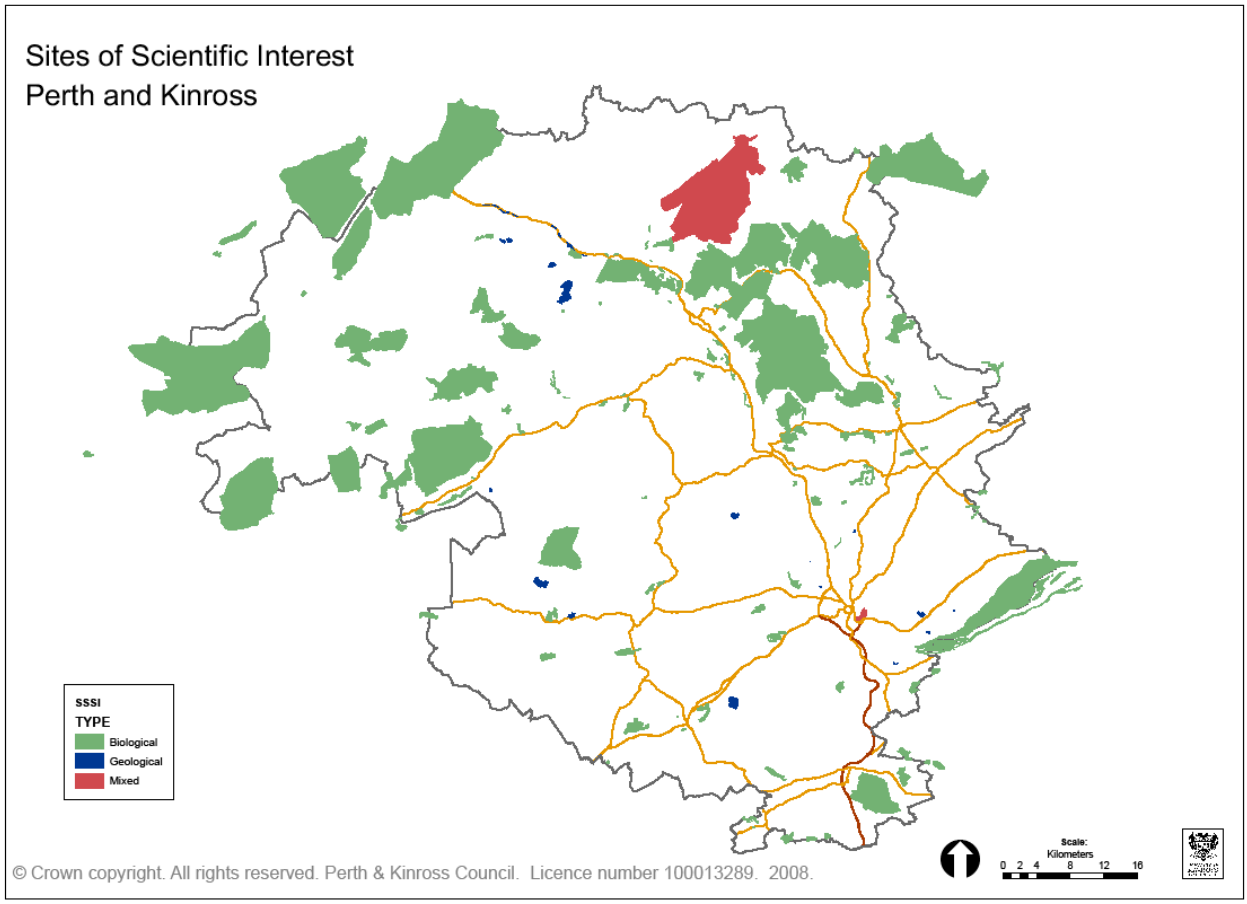
Sites of Scientific Interest
Perth and Kinross
SSSI
TYPE
Biological
Geological
Mixed
Scale:
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The distribution of soils in Perth and Kinross is closely aligned with topography and geology. Therefore there is a clear distinction between the upland areas north of the Highland Boundary Fault and the lowland areas south of the fault. The northern areas are primarily high in organic matter, poorly draining peats or peaty soils whereas the southern areas are dominated by brown earths rich in nutrients and organic matter. Currently there is no systematic data collection relating to the quality of soil. With the introduction of the EU Soils Thematic Study and development of the Scottish Soils Strategy this information should become available in future although it may not be at the local authority level.

Industrial processes such as town gas production, waste disposal and former garages caused the majority of the observed historical contamination of land in Perth and Kinross. However the area has remained relatively unaffected by the onset of the industrial revolution and does not suffer from the concentration of sites that have been affected by unregulated polluting activities in other areas of Scotland. Perth and Kinross has small scale problems over a large geographic area. Approximately 9000 sites may be contaminated based on their previous land use and other historical information but these sites require detailed inspection before any judgement can be made about their condition under the statutory definition of contaminated land. In October 2001 the Council published a Contaminated Land Strategy and has been inspecting the area for the purposes of identifying sites which are contaminated land.

There are 870ha of identified raised lowland and blanket bog in Perth and Kinross in 22 sites. Six of these are designated SSSIs but information is not currently available as to the condition of these. As part of the lowland raised bog inventory SNH surveyed a number of the sites in Perth and Kinross and in general terms insufficient or localised damage to these areas was recorded.

Limited data is available at present to comment in detail on the current condition of soils in Perth and Kinross. Publication of the developing soils monitoring scheme will hopefully fill this gap in the future.

Inland Waters (SoE p.64-76)

Waterways and lochs support a wide variety of wildlife and recreational activities and are a key aspect of the landscape in Perth and Kinross. A high level driver putting pressure on the inland water environment, primarily through alteration of rainfall and snow cover patterns, is climate change. There has been no clear upward or downward trend in rainfall in Perth and Kinross over the last 30 years but figures calculated at the national level show a significant increase in winter and annual rainfall throughout Scotland as a whole.

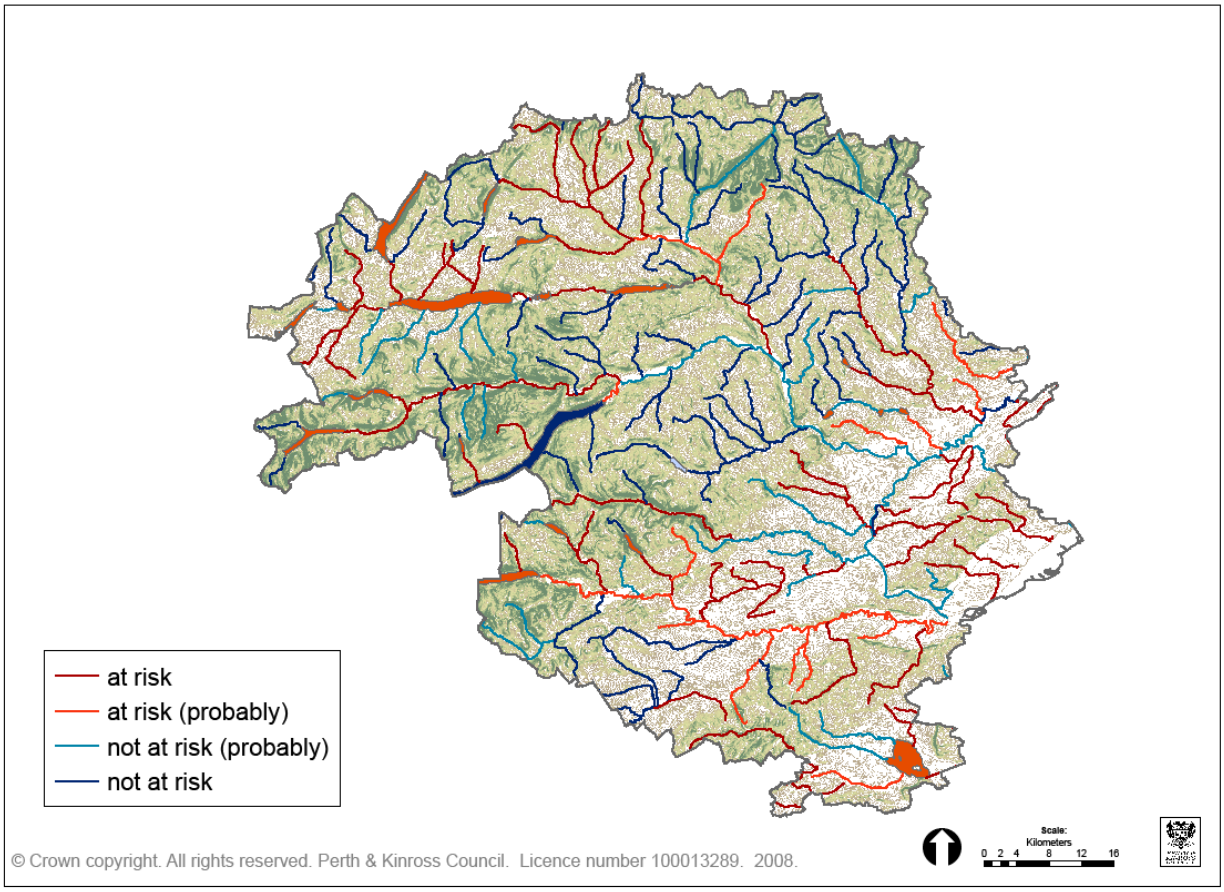
Local pressures on inland waters include:

- Point source pollution from industry, agriculture, sewage treatment works, sewer overflows and fish farms
- Diffuse source pollution from agriculture, street, yards, forestry and septic tanks
- Abstraction and flow regulation including major hydropower and water supply schemes, the building of dams and weirs and the drilling of boreholes to extract groundwater
- Morphological pressures including engineering works to channels e.g. flood defences, and inappropriate bank management e.g. cultivation to edge of rivers
- Alien species

The proportion of surface and ground water bodies identified by SEPA as being subject to these different pressures are identified below (note – assessments based on discrete 10km sections of a river with a catchment of 10km^2).

	Risk category			
	1a (significant risk)	**1b (probably at significant risk)**	**2a (probably not at significant risk)**	**2b (not at significant risk)**
	Number of waterbodies			
Rivers	28 (17%)	44 (26%)	30 (18%)	67 (40%)
Lochs	19 (76%)	3 (12%)	0 (0%)	3 (12%)
Groundwater	6 (60%)	1 (10%)	2 (20%)	1 (10%)
Total	53 (26%)	48 (24%)	32 (16%)	71 (35%)

Source: P&K State of the Environment Report (Note – figures may not sum due to rounding)



In 2007 the Tay Area Advisory Group identified the significant issues affecting water bodies in the Tay catchment which covers a significant proportion of the Perth and Kinross area. These are identified in the table below.

Issue impacts greater than 15% of river lengths	Issue impacts greater than 20% of water body area		
Rivers	**Lakes**	**Transitional**	**Coastal**
Diffuse source – farming of animals, growing of crops & mixed farming	Abstraction & flow regulation – production & distribution of electricity	Diffuse sources – sea & coastal water transport	Diffuse source – agriculture & forestry
Point source – sewage disposal activities	Morphology – production & distribution of electricity	Morphology – sea & coastal water transport	Morphology – commercial fishing
Abstraction & flow regulation – production & distribution of electricity	Diffuse source – electricity, gas & water supply	Point source – sewage disposal activities	Point source – sewage disposal activities
Morphology – farming of animals, growing of crops & mixed farming	Morphology – recreation, cultural & sporting activities	Morphology – land reclaimation	
Morphology - activity morphology – production & distribution of electricity		Morphology - activity	
Abstraction & flow regulation – farming of animals, growing of crops & mixed farming			

Source: P&K State of the Environment Report

The Forth Area Advisory Group have also identified the proposed significant issues identified in the Forth AAG area and these are shown in the table below (issues in **bold** are those also identified as significant in the overall Scotland River

Basin District, those in *italics* are only identified at Area Advisory group level)

Issue impacts >15% of length	Issue impacts >20% of area		
15%	20%		
River	**Loch**	**Transitional**	**Coastal**
Point source - sewage disposal activities	**Abstraction and Flow Regulation** - collection, purification and distribution of water	**Point source** - sewage disposal activities	**Point source** - sewage disposal activities
Abstraction & Flow Regulation - Collection, purification and distribution of water	**Diffuse source** - forestry, logging and related service activities	**Morphology** - engineering activities	**Point source** - manufacturing
Diffuse source - farming of animals, mixed farming & growing of crops	**Diffuse source** - farming of animals, mixed farming & growing of crops	**Morphology** - land reclamation	**Diffuse source** - sea and coastal water transport
Morphology – engineering activities	**Point source** - fishing and operation of fish hatcheries and fish farms	**Diffuse source** - manufacturing	*Diffuse source - manufacturing,*
Morphology - agriculture and forestry	*Abstraction and Flow regulation - engineering activities*	**Diffuse source** - sea and coastal water transport	*Point source - sea and coastal water transport*
Point source - mining and quarrying	*Point source - sewage disposal activities*	*Abstraction & Flow regulation – Other**	*, Morphology - sea and coastal water transport*
Diffuse source – mining and quarrying	*Point source - manufacturing*	*Point source - electricity gas and water supply*	*Diffuse source - refuse disposal activities,*
Morphology - urban development	*Morphology - engineering activities*	*Alien species - sea and coastal water transport*	*Morphology - land reclamation*
Diffuse source – urban development			*Morphology - engineering activities*

Source: Forth Area Advisory Group Report 'Significant Water Management Issues Report – Briefing for Forth Valley Advisory Group' Sept 2006

Of concern to the Tay District Salmon Fisheries Board is the low flow in the River Garry for some periods of the year upstream of its confluence with Errochty Water. This is caused by the abstraction of water for hydro-power generation. The low flow in the river has implications for migratory fish and other wildlife. Invasive species such as signal crayfish also represent a major threat to the natural ecology of water bodies in Perth and Kinross.

Currently there is insufficient information available to provide details on the water use by sector in Perth and Kinross and how it has changed.

River quality for the majority of the area is of excellent or good standard with only a few stretches in the east of fair to poor quality. In general this lower river quality is associated with discharges. Although there has been some decline in the percentage of river length classed as fair to seriously polluted the majority of observed change is the percentage of river length classified as excellent or good. For overall quality the trend is for an increase in the total percentage classed as excellent and a decrease in the percentage classed as good. At present there is no clear trend for changes in biological and chemical quality.

The Water Framework Directive requires SEPA to identify those water bodies at risk of failing to achieve good status as defined by the Directive. Of the total 204 rivers, lochs and groundwater bodies in Perth and Kinross half are identified as being either at or probably at significant risk.

SEPA's state of the environment report published in 2006 identified an approximate 30% increase in annual flows of the River Tay between 1972 and 2005. No significant trends were identified in spring flows, however a 64% increase between 1961 and 2005 winter flows was detected. These changes are believed to relate to the impact of climate change on rainfall patterns.

The floodplain in Perth and Kinross remains relatively undeveloped and the majority of water courses affect only agricultural or hill land. Key areas of floodplain identified using the current SEPA 1 in 200 year flood outline and the 2005 biennial flood report produced by the Council include Perth, Bridge of Earn, Coupar Angus, Blairgowrie, Little Dunkeld, Pitlochry, Killiecrankie, Blair Atholl, Weem Village, Milnathort, Birnam, Alyth, Almondbank and Tummel Bridge. The majority of flooding incidences involving flooding of non-agricultural land relate to public roads, parks and gardens. Reported road flooding incidents are normally caused by blocked gullies, run off from fields etc and not by blocked or overtopped watercourses.

Air Quality (SoE p.11-13)

The primary cause of poor air quality in Perth and Kinross is emissions from road traffic, particularly where relatively narrow streets bounded by tall buildings form 'street canyons' which restrict air movement and can cause air pollution to increase at times. There are no significant industrial or domestic sources of air pollutants in Perth and Kinross.

Some pollution is transported into the area by winds from elsewhere. There are also natural or semi-natural sources such as wind-blown dust and sea salt particles. The Council's 2005 Air Quality Report identifies the average background concentrations of nitrogen dioxide and particles. The impact of local urban sources is superimposed on the regional background. Such local sources, together with poor dispersion are generally responsible for winter episodes of hourly mean concentrations of particulate matter above guideline values. However many of the sources of particulate matter are outside the control of individual local authorities.

Perth and Kinross Council has not been required to carry out detailed assessments for carbon monoxide, benzene, 1,3-Butadiene, lead or sulphur dioxide. The two pollutants identified as requiring detailed assessment due to a significant risk of exceedance of guideline values are nitrogen dioxide and particulate matter.

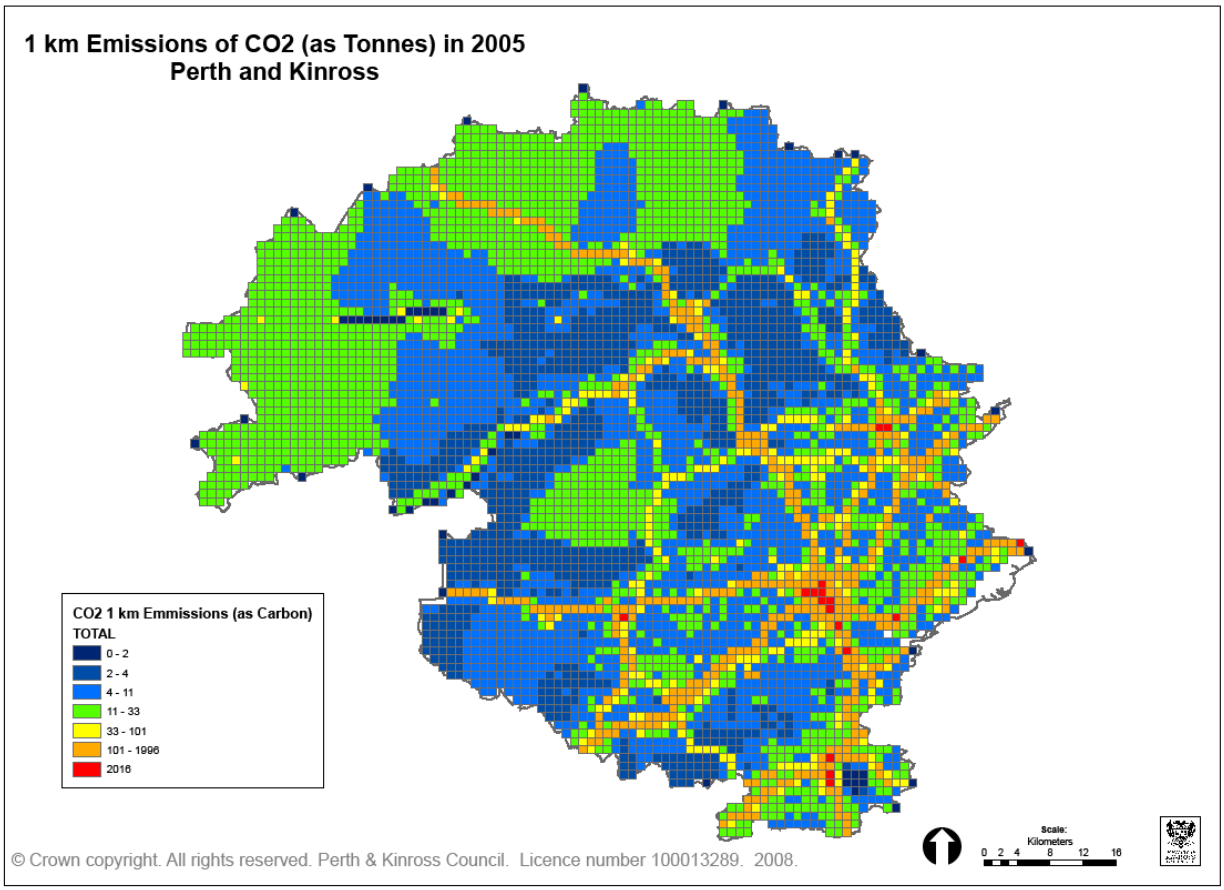
Recent findings based on samples taken at a number of locations in Perth indicate that local air quality is very good. Perth and Kinross Council meets all of the Government's targets except at a few traffic hotspots in Perth where the levels of nitrogen dioxide and for particulates in 2010 are unlikely to be met based on the annual average. Atholl Street is the main area of Perth for which the objectives for nitrogen dioxide and particulate matter are unlikely to be met. Limited data availability means it is not possible to comment on trends at Atholl Street at present. Results for the High Street in Perth are relatively stable, although continued higher results for particulate matter may indicate a negative trend.

Air quality monitoring in Perth and Kinross is carried out to a satisfactory level in line with government guidance. Although air quality is only measured in two locations the criteria used to select these locations should mean they represent the worst case scenario.

Climate Change (SoE p.4-9)

Perth and Kinross soils are relatively rich in organic matter (and hence carbon) particularly in the upland area. There is some evidence in Scotland of increased losses of organic matter from peaty soils. Large deceases in organic carbon concentrations in soils in England and Wales have been reported and linked to climate change. This trend also occurring in Scotland, would have serious implications for Scottish soils. Data on changes in soil carbon levels is not currently available. However, with the introduction of the EU Soils Thematic Strategy and the development of a Scottish Soils Strategy, methods to collect this data are currently being examined.

Estimated emissions data are available for carbon dioxide at the local authority level.



Within Perth and Kinross the majority of total carbon released (45%) is attributed to road transport, with industry and domestic sources providing 30% and 25% respectively. Within Scotland as a whole industry is the greatest source of carbon emissions (46%). A relatively larger proportion of carbon emitted in Perth and Kinross is taken up by land use, land use change and forestry than at the Scottish level. On a per capita basis domestic emissions of carbon are greater than on average in Scotland.

Due to the variation in the methodology used to estimate annual carbon emissions it is not possible to comment on trends at the local authority level. The following figures were published by the then Scottish Executive in 2006:

- Emissions of greenhouse gases fell by 10% between 1990 and 2003
- Carbon dioxide emissions over the same period fell by 8%
- Scotland's soils and trees removed 20% more carbon dioxide from the atmosphere in 2003 than in 1990
- Including this carbon sink Scotland's greenhouse gas emissions were 14% lower than in 1990

The 2003, 2004 and 2005 temperatures for Scotland were the highest since the record began in 1914. By the end of the century temperatures in Scotland are predicted to increase by up to 3.5^{O}C during the summer months and around 2.5 ^{O}C during the winter.

Rainfall data from key gauges in Perth and Kinross show there has been no clear upward or downward trend in total or seasonal rainfall in the last 30 years. However figures calculated at the national level show that there was a significant increase in winter and annual rainfall throughout Scotland.

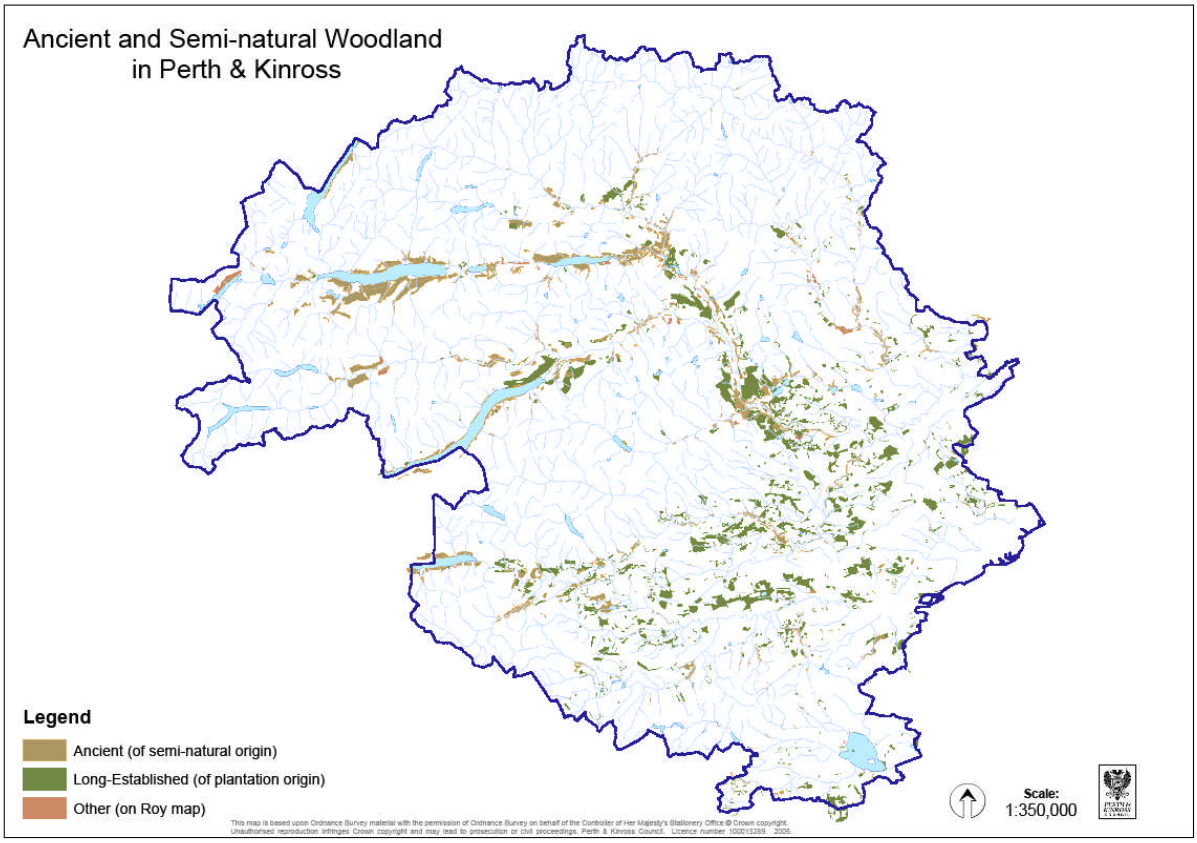
Historic Environment (SoE p.55-62)

Perth and Kinross contains 751 Scheduled Ancient Monuments and 3135 listed buildings. 31 of these are included in the Buildings at Risk register of which 16 are considered to be at high risk. No information is available on the current status of the SAMs.

There are 25 fields of conflict (battlefields) within Perth and Kinross but no information is available on their present condition. In 2007 there were 41 historic gardens and designed landscapes covering 9413ha in Perth and Kinross. 30

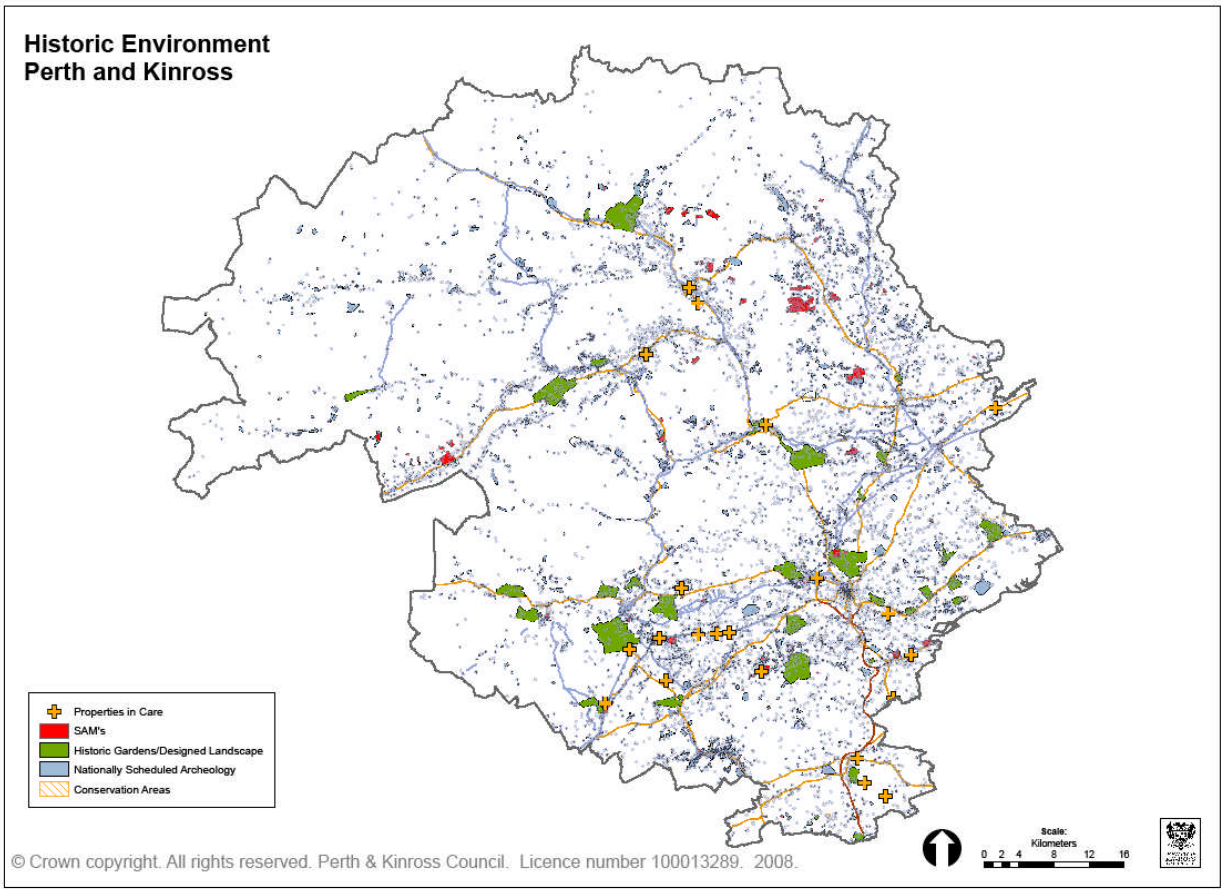
of these sites are believed to have management agreements in place.

The Forestry Commission identified approximately 40,500ha of ancient and semi-natural woodland in Perth and Kinross using surveys undertaken in 2000. Presently no information is available on the condition of these woodlands although a small percentage are designated as SSSIs and once information is available on the condition of SSSIs it can be used as an indicator for the condition of the woodland. At present the Forestry Commission are undertaking the native woodland survey for Scotland which should include information on the condition of such woodland. The total area of ancient woodland in Perth and Kinross in the 1990s was 31,390 of which 9% were designated as SSSIs. The total area of semi-natural woodland was 9117 of which 27% was designated as SSSIs.



The number of planning applications which have been identified as having the potential to impact the historic environment of Perth and Kinross has generally been increasing from 124 in 2002 to 545 in 2006.

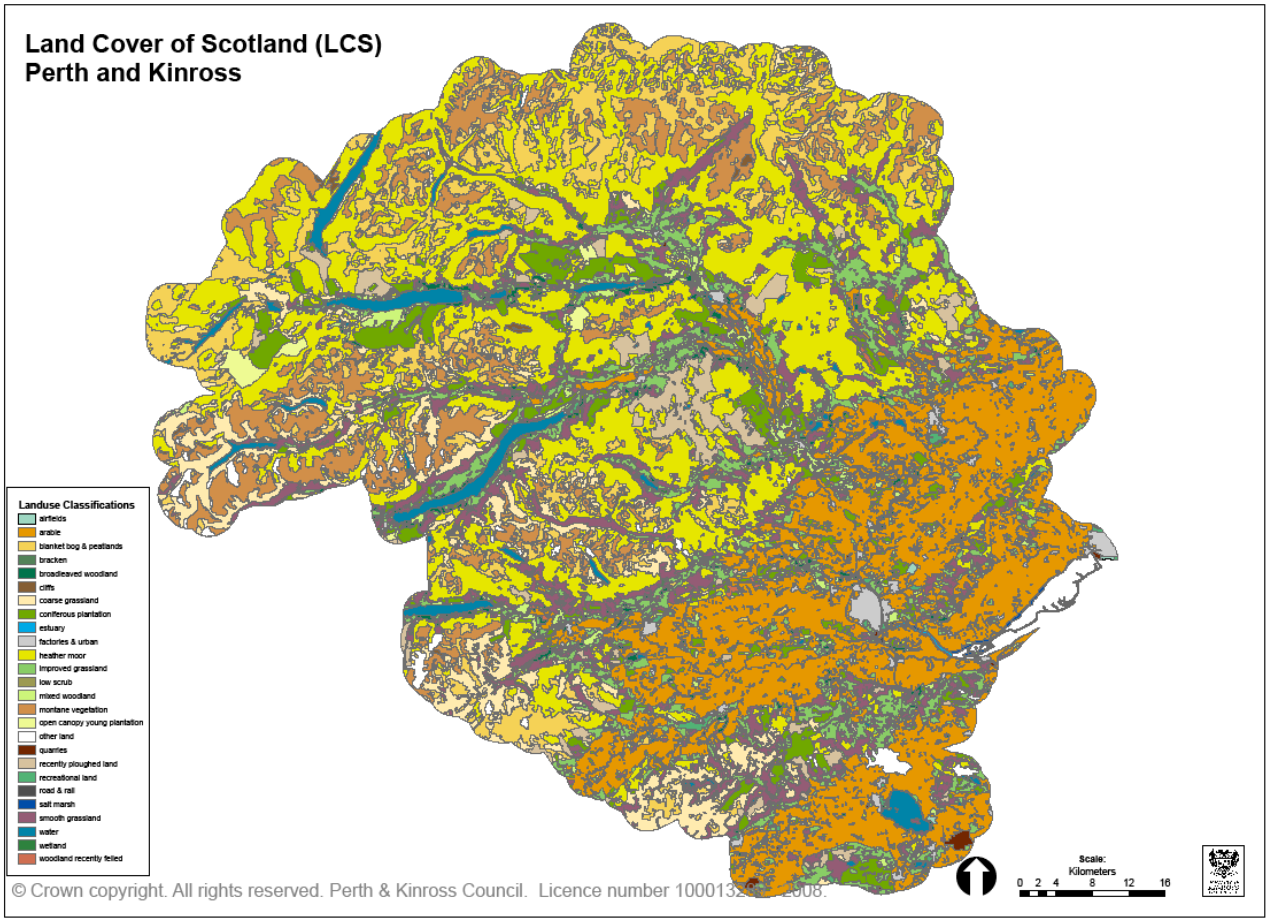
A significant gap in the information available on the historic environment is details on the actual state of the areas designated. There is also the acceptance that what constitutes the historic environment is always evolving and a proportion of what exists is at present unknown. A key resource in future will be the Scottish Historic Environment Audit.



Landscape (SoE p.16-33)
Currently there is insufficient information available to comment on the existing situation and trends in development pressure within Perth and Kinross. Once data is available future versions of the State of the Environment report will comment on the area of planning applications on greenfield land, in the designated greenbelt surrounding Perth and Kinross and the area of greenfield development undertaken in comparison to brownfield development considering the availability of suitable brownfield land.

The landscape within Perth and Kinross is divided into two main units: highlands and lowlands, reflecting geology, topography, vegetation and land use. A historic land use assessment has been undertaken for approximately 20% of the Council area. There are no firm plans to extend this coverage in the immediate future. The area covered by the assessment is in the majority classified as moorland and rough grazing, field and farming, and woodland and forestry.

Land cover as assessed by the Geoinformation Group follows geology, soils, topography and hydrology. There is a clear distinction between scrub, heath and moorland in the upland area in the north west and agriculture in the lowland areas of the south east and river valleys. The main land cover categories are agriculture (33%), forestry / woodland (16%), scrub / heath / moor (45%), water bodies and bog (3%) and urban industrial / commercial (2%). Predominantly residential areas account for less than 1% of the total Perth and Kinross area.



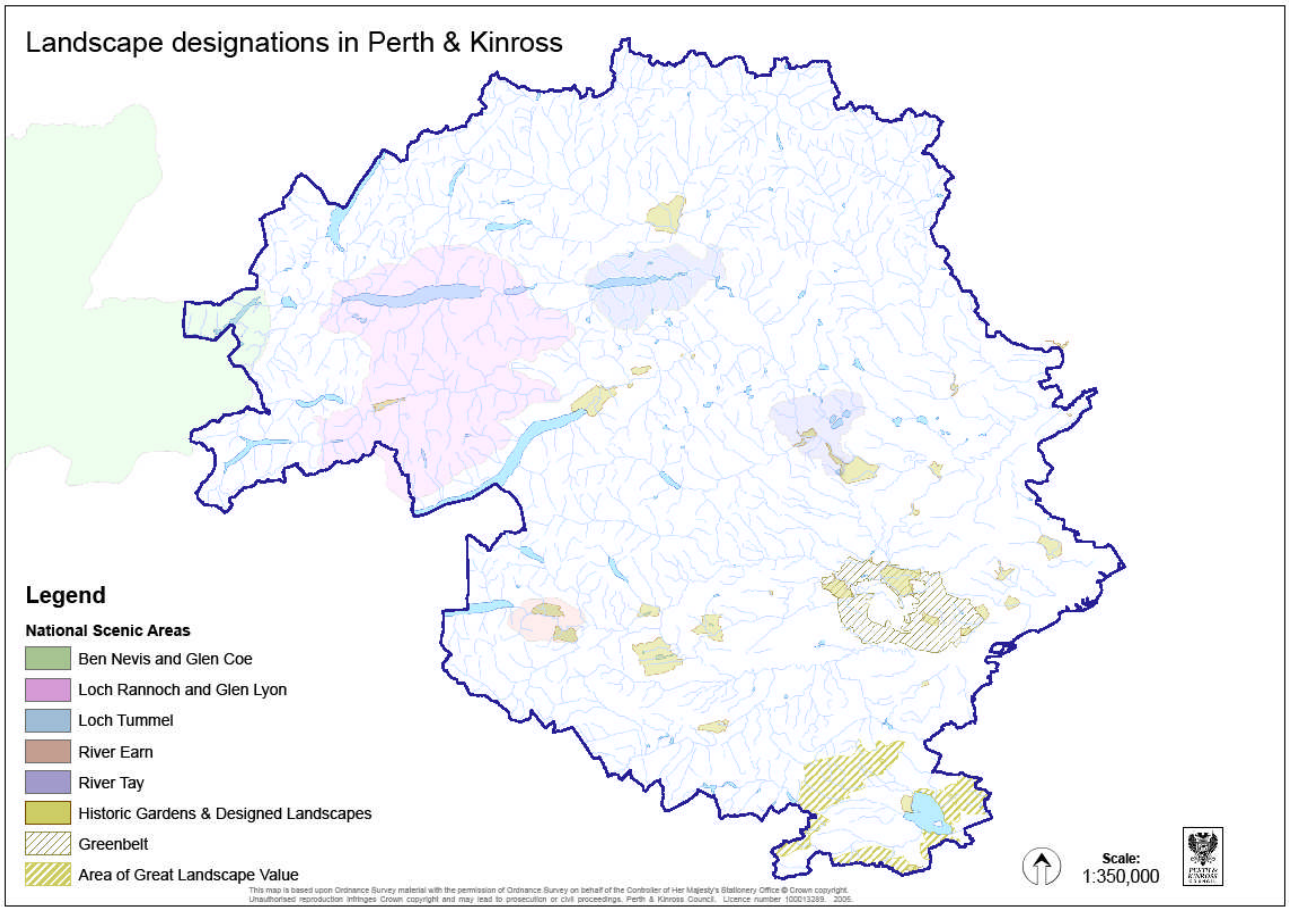
More recent data based on the agricultural census of the areas of agricultural land in Perth and Kinross is available from the Scottish Government. In the last six years there appears to have been a slight increase in the total area used for agriculture, with an increase in grassland and a decrease in arable and tilled land. Insufficient data is available to comment on whether these observed trends are statistically significant.

Using the current method recommended by SNH wild land is defined as land located at set distances from public and private roads. A relatively large proportion of Perth and Kinross is 2000 metres from public roads (32%). However this drops to 13% when all roads are taken into account. The proportion of Perth and Kinross categorised as wild decreases significantly when the distance is increased to 5000 metres (1.3%). Currently there is insufficient information available to comment on trends in the area of wild land.

Perth and Kinross possesses some of the finest parks, gardens and open spaces in the country. Some were created as parks in their own right, several were donated, others were former bleaching greens associated with the linen industry, and a few may have been livestock market areas. The Council is currently producing an Open Space Strategy and as such only preliminary data is available on the amount of open space in Perth and Kinross. Preliminary data suggests a total of 828ha of urban open space in Perth and Kinross. Insufficient data is available to comment on trends at present.

A relatively small area of the land stock in Perth and Kinross is derelict or vacant. In the last five years it would appear there has been an overall decrease in the total area of land designated as derelict or vacant, with a decrease in the area of derelict land and an increase in the area of vacant land.

The only national landscape designation in Scotland is National Scenic Area. These areas are considered to be of national importance due to their outstanding scenic interest which must be conserved as part of the country's natural heritage. Currently 13% of Perth and Kinross is designated as part of five National Scenic Areas at Ben Nevis and Glen Coe, Loch Tummel, Loch Rannoch and Glen Lyon, River Tay, and River Earn.



Reporting on landscape in Perth and Kinross is limited by the age of data available and the lack of data on the actual condition of the different aspects of landscape.

Transport (SoE p.83-89)
Insufficient public transport, increase in car ownership and the desire for independence and convenience by residents and visitors in Perth and Kinross mean that the majority of this pressure is directed at road networks and manifested as an increase in traffic volume. The greatest volumes of traffic are observed within Perth and on the roads south of Perth leading to Edinburgh and Stirling. According to the Regional Transport Strategy traffic on the road network in Tayside and central Scotland has been increasing by an average of 1.6% per annum over the last 10 years. Local trend data is not currently available.

There is currently no data available to provide an indication of the average distance travelled by different transport modes. Information from the Scottish Household Survey shows that 62% of Perth and Kinross residents travel to work or school by car or van compared with 56% across Scotland as a whole. Furthermore although more residents in Perth and Kinross walk to work or school than in Scotland as a whole (18% and 14% respectively) a smaller percentage use the bus (10.5% compared with 14% in Scotland).

The core path network within Perth and Kinross is presently in the planning stage and as such insufficient information is available to report on the length and use of the core path network.

Better data is needed on the mode of transport used by residents in Perth and Kinross in order to fully clarify the relationship between transport and the state of the environment.

Waste (SoE p.90-98)
The amount of waste arising in Perth and Kinross is gradually increasing due to increases in population, households, levels of packaging and changes in consumerism and standard of living. There are over 50 recycling points in Perth and

Kinross the majority of which accept glass, cans and paper. In 2006/07 the destination of 96098 tonnes of waste material was within Perth and Kinross with 11325 tonnes being transported outwith the area.

A significant data gap exists for non-municipal waste including industrial and special waste.

Energy (SoE p.99-102)
There is widespread consensus on the need to move towards sustainability in energy supply. In Perth and Kinross the renewable energy technologies which offer the greatest potential at least in the short-term are large scale hydro schemes, wind energy, small scale hydro and the use of forest residues for biomass boilers. The amount of energy that can be generated by these renewable sources is limited by the availability of the resource and other environmental and social constraints such as visual impacts, landscape degradation and threats to birds and habitats.

Energy consumption by transport is the primary use of energy in Perth and Kinross whereas industry and commercial use are the primary users in Scotland as a whole. Consumption per capita in Perth and Kinross is on average 11.5% higher than in Scotland.

Effect of the Housing in the Countryside Policy on the baseline
Although the Housing in the Countryside Policy will result in the development of new housing across the landward area of Perth and Kinross there is the potential to reduce the negative effects of the policy on the baseline discussed above by:

- promoting development that supports the rural economy and local services,
- promoting rural regeneration,
- embodying the principles of sustainable development, and
- enhancing the rural environment

Appendix 2 identifies the baseline sources used in the State of the Environment report.

Scoping of Environmental Topics and Environmental Problems

Spatial Scope
The spatial scope for the SEA is defined as the Council area.

Temporal Scope
The timeframe of this SEA is the period to 2013 when it is likely that the policy in a revised form will be adopted as part of the Local Development Plan review.

Technical Scope
The range of environmental topics addressed in the SEA is referred to as the technical scope. The SEA 2004 Regulations and 2005 Act, in Schedule 2 require the likely significant effects of the Housing in the Countryside policy to be assessed in relation to the following:

- biodiversity, fauna and flora
- population
- human health
- soil
- water
- air
- climatic factors
- material assets
- cultural heritage including archaeological and architectural heritage
- landscape

The Regulations also require that:
- The inter-relationships between the above factors are assessed
- The secondary, cumulative, synergistic, short, medium and long term, permanent and temporary, positive and negative effects of the above topics are considered where appropriate.

Question: - Do the Consultation Authorities agree with the proposed scope for the SEA?

Environmental Problems
From an evaluation of the baseline data, the environmental problems and issues listed in the table below were identified as being relevant to the Housing in the countryside Policy. The implications of the potential problems and issues listed will require to be addressed by the Housing in the countryside policy review when setting the criteria for allowing new housing in the countryside.

SEA Topic	Scoped In	Problems & Issues and Relevance for Housing in the Countryside Policy
Biodiversity, flora & fauna	Yes	Need to protect and enhance habitats and avoid irreversible losses to nationally designated sites, protected species and habitats and non-protected biodiversity. • Impact on biodiversity, including habitat networks and wildlife corridors as well as designated sites, from redevelopment of farm buildings and creation of new development e.g. loss of habitat for bats. • Consideration will need to be given to indirect effects such as disturbance, sedimentation and nutrient enrichment in watercourses / waterbodies such as the River Tay SAC and Dunkeld-Blairgowrie Lochs SAC. • Threat from alien species

SEA Topic	Scoped In	Problems & Issues and Relevance for Housing in the Countryside Policy
Population & human health	Yes	Need to provide environmental conditions which promote health and wellbeing • Meet desire for people to live in the countryside • Provide affordable housing • Encourage forms of development that facilitates healthy lifestyles, and avoids exacerbation of harmful factors • Promote the sustainable management of waste • Ease of access to employment, education and essential services, particularly healthcare and retail. The increasing centralisation of services in the largest settlements is an issue particularly for those groups in society who are without access to a car. These groups include: young people, elderly people, and the remaining members of single car owning households when the car is being used.
Soil	Yes	Minimise soil contamination and maintain a high level of soil quality. • Maintain or improve soil quality – parcels of rural brownfield land may be available for re-development but these may have contamination issues. Positive effects of the Housing in the Countryside policy may result from promoting the development of brownfield / derelict land through remediation of contaminated land. • Runoff from roads comprising rubber particles and oil. • Protect best quality agricultural land from development.
Water	Yes	Need to improve and protect watercourses and water bodies • Prevent eutrophication of lochs and a deterioration in their condition • Prevent potential pollution issues from increased use of private drainage solutions. • Ensure a high level of water quality is maintained • Avoid exacerbating the spread of non-native and invasive species along watercourses • Ensure development does not increase risk of flooding
Air quality & noise	Yes	Need to minimise air pollution and maintain a high level of air quality • Achieve cleaner air for everyone • Avoid exacerbating pollution of air • Reduce the need to travel • Maintain, enhance and promote accessibility by sustainable transport modes • High dependency on the private car in rural areas
Climate Change	Yes	Need to reduce greenhouse gas emissions • Guide development to minimise or avoid risks associated with the risks of climate change eg flood risk, and to maximise the benefits eg, increased solar gain • Encourage forms of development that enable reduced or zero greenhouse gas emissions • Ensure sustainable production and use of energy • Enable energy efficiency, contribute to the ability of households and communities to utilise and generate renewable energy
Cultural heritage	Yes	Need to consider the impact of increased pressure for inappropriate development on sites and buildings of historical importance • Re-use / conserve buildings • Conserve historic buildings and other elements of built cultural heritage • Respect the pattern and form, and the landscape and historic setting of small settlements and building groups • Protect archaeological sites and the historic environment • Protect and enhance the built environment • Visual intrusion from roads and traffic including signage and traffic calming measures • Concern about the suburbanisation of rural and sensitive environments

SEA Topic	Scoped In	Problems & Issues and Relevance for Housing in the Countryside Policy
Landscape	Yes	Increased pressure for development resulting in the incremental loss of landscape, both in terms of designated sites and wider landscapes. Resultant effects on health and quality of life. • Protect and enhance the local character of the landscape • Conserve and enhance the quality and local diversity of landscapes • Protect and enhance public accessibility to open space and the wider landscape • Concern about the suburbanisation of rural and sensitive environments • Inappropriately sited and designed development can impact negatively on the landscape and on historic development patterns. Consideration will need to be given to the ability of the rural development pattern to accommodate new development without adverse impacts and to local distinctiveness in setting the criteria for allowing new housing in the countryside.
Material assets	Yes	The proper management of infrastructure and conservation of resources is central to the Council's aim of achieving sustainable development and protecting the environment. • Create and / or retain quality open space for community use • Make economic use of land and buildings • Maximise re-use of land / buildings • Encourage high design quality, sustainable and resilient forms of development • Ensure adequate protection and sustainable use of infrastructure, property, material assets and land

Section 3: SEA Objectives and Indicators

SEA Objectives

The SEA Directive does not specifically require the identification of objectives but they are accepted as being a good way of considering the environmental implications of the Housing in the Countryside Policy and in comparing the effects of different alternatives. In this sense the SEA objectives serve a different purpose to the Housing in the Countryside Policy objectives.

The table below sets out the SEA objectives which have been identified as relevant to the Housing in the Countryside Policy.

Ref.	SEA Objective	SEA Topics Category
1	Maintain, protect and where necessary enhance habitats and species of international, national and regional conservation value, in particular the populations of European Protected Species including protection of their resting places.	**Biodiversity, Flora and Fauna**
2	Accommodate the desire for people to live in the countryside and direct development to appropriate areas	**Population and Human Health**
3	Maintain, protect and where necessary enhance the fundamental qualities and productive capacities of soils	**Soil**
4	Safeguard water resources and water quality, ensure no deterioration of the ecological status of waterbodies and where possible enhance the ecological value of watercourses and bodies	**Water**
5	Direct development to locations which reduces the need to travel and reduces journey length	**Air Quality and Noise**
6	Reduce the area's vulnerability to the effects of climate change, especially flooding, through the direction of new development to appropriate areas	**Climate Change**
7	Maintain, protect, and where appropriate enhance and restore historic buildings, archaeological sites and other culturally important features	**Cultural Heritage**
8	Maintain and where necessary enhance, landscape character, especially those locations designated as having particular worth	**Landscape**
9	Protect and enhance countryside and rural character and respect existing pattern, form and setting of small settlements and building groups	
10	Minimise the use of resources including fuel and chemicals, and minimise the creation of waste by following the waste hierarchy: Reduce – Reuse – Recycle - Recover	**Material Assets**
11	Maximise the sustainable use / re-use of material assets (land and buildings)	

SEA Indicators

SEA Objectives	SEA Topic	Indicators
Maintain, protect and where necessary enhance habitats and species of international, national and regional conservation value, in particular the populations of European Protected Species including protection of their resting places	Biodiversity, flora & fauna	No. and total area of sites by conservation designation Percentage area of land designated as Biological or Mixed SSSI in favourable condition Net change in natural and semi-natural habitats Proportion of Tayside Local (LBAP) priority species and showing net population or range recovery Proportion of Tayside BAP priority habitats showing recovery in extent and/or condition Timing of blooming and migration Condition of designated sites
Accommodate the desire for people to live in the countryside and direct growth to appropriate areas	Population & Human Health	Life expectancy at birth Mortality rate from coronary heart disease under the age of 75 (per 100,000 population)
Maintain, protect and where necessary enhance the fundamental qualities and productive capacities of soils	Soil	Extent and condition of geological SSSIs and regionally Important Geological & Geomorphological Sites Hectares of potentially contaminated land State of soil Hectares of land with capability for agriculture Percentage of development on brownfield sites requiring remediation Percentage of development on good or prime agricultural land

SEA Objectives	SEA Topic	Indicators
Safeguard water resources and water quality, ensure no deterioration of the ecological status of waterbodies and where possible enhance the ecological value of watercourses and bodies	Water	Percentage of river length assessed as good quality / good chemical quality Number of surface water bodies achieving good status Quantity and quality of groundwater The proportion of new development incorporating Sustainable urban Drainage Systems
Direct development to locations which reduces the need to travel and reduces journey length and ensure compliance with Air Quality objectives	Air Quality & Noise	No. days air quality exceeds legislative limits Mean annual levels of key air pollutants Tonnes of carbon dioxide emitted by travel behaviour of residents Overall traffic volume and average distance travelled by mode
Reduce the area's vulnerability to the effects of climate change, especially flooding, through the direction of new development to appropriate areas	Climatic Factors	Total carbon emissions per annum One in two hundred year flood outline Amount of development in areas of flood risk and requiring flood defences Number of flooding events Water quantity, annual peak flow at key gauging stations The proportion of new development adopting energy conservation / efficiency measures and using energy from renewable sources Change in greenhouse gas emission levels resulting from forms of development that maximise energy efficiency and conservation and the use of renewable energy
Maintain, protect, and where appropriate enhance and restore historic buildings, archaeological sites and other culturally important features	Cultural Heritage	No. of listed building entries, percentage each category, and no. on Buildings At Risk register No. scheduled ancient monuments and no. at risk No. of sites of gardens and designed landscapes No. ancient and semi-natural woodland No. battlefields

SEA Objectives	SEA Topic	Indicators
Maintain and where necessary enhance, landscape character, especially those locations designated as having particular worth	Landscape	Land use Landscape character assessment Historic land use assessment No. and area of nationally designated landscape areas Wild land Changes to existing settlement patterns
Protect and enhance countryside and rural character and respect existing pattern, form and setting of small settlements and building groups		
Minimise the use of resources including fuel and chemicals, and minimise the creation of waste by following the waste hierarchy: Reduce – Reuse – Recycle - Recover	Material Assets	Tonnage of Municipal Solid Waste or MSW (expressed as percentage of total tonnage) collected and treated by recycling, composting, energy from waste, land filling Total energy consumption by sector
Maximise the sustainable use / re-use of material assets (land and buildings)		Total area of land stock that is derelict and vacant Amount of new development undertaken on greenfield compared to brownfield land considering amount of brownfield land available

Section 4: Alternatives and Assessment Methodology

Consideration of Alternatives

Alternatives

Alternatives to the Housing in the Countryside policy are under consideration as an integral part of the SEA. Alternatives are outlined here to set the context for and consideration of a framework for the assessment of environmental effects of the alternatives.

We propose to compare alternative Housing in the Countryside policy emphases through a series of policy scenarios.

Policy scenarios

The Housing in the Countryside policy is currently in preparation and alternative objectives and policies have not yet been defined. At this stage, therefore, we propose that the SEA will consider a limited number of 'policy scenarios' to reflect different policy emphases within the Housing in the Countryside policy. It is anticipated that the scenarios will provide a valuable tool for the development of the Housing in the Countryside policy objectives, as well as providing a commentary on the alternatives that will be explored during revision of the policy.

Potential policy scenarios could include:

Scenario 1: Status Quo Carrying forward the existing Housing in the Countryside Policy revised in 2005.

Scenario 2: Protecting Natural and cultural heritage. Under this scenario there could be an emphasis on:

- Enhancement of existing landscaping to maximise landscape and biodiversity value;
- Preserving and maintaining rural character and settlement pattern
- Conversion only of traditional buildings which contribute to the character and quality of the countryside
- Limiting the amount of new build permitted in association with conversion of existing traditional rural buildings
- Preventing the suburbanisation of the countryside
- Enhancement of soil quality
- Management of historic sites and landscapes
- Enhancement of the water environment
- Conservation of important habitats
- Improvements in access, interpretation and awareness

Scenario 3: Fostering Community and local economic development. Under this scenario there could be an emphasis on:

- Redeveloping redundant non-domestic buildings for business/tourist related development.
- Development of brownfield sites for business/tourist related development
- Increased community involvement in the use and management of land
- Increased local employment in rural business sectors
- The incorporation of measures to facilitate home working within new development

Scenario 4: Sustainability. Under this scenario there could be an emphasis on:

- Conversion of traditional redundant buildings
- Re-use of existing on site natural building materials
- Restricting the size of steading redevelopments
- Creation of affordable housing
- Promoting development in locations where access to public transport is good
- Promoting development in locations where local services are easily accessible
- Promoting development in locations where access to health care facilities is reasonable
- Promoting development in locations with access to school transport facilities
- Incorporation of energy efficient building technologies

The above scenarios are not necessarily mutually exclusive. Each scenario will be assessed against the SEA objectives to highlight the differing patterns of environmental impacts and benefits.

Assessment Criteria

The criteria which will be used in carrying out the environmental assessment are set out in the table below.

SEA Topic	Objectives	Proposed Criteria – will the Housing in the Countryside Policy Alternative:
Biodiversity, flora & fauna	Maintain, protect and where necessary enhance habitats and species of international, national and regional conservation value, in particular the populations of European Protected Species including protection of their resting places	Ensure that the development of housing in the countryside can be accommodated without adverse impact on important habitats or species? Ensure that the development of housing in the countryside can be accommodated with no adverse effects on the integrity of Natura sites?
Population & Human Health	Accommodate the desire for people to live in the countryside and direct growth to appropriate areas	Ensure that people's desire to live in the countryside is met in appropriate locations?
Soil	Maintain, protect and where necessary enhance the fundamental qualities and productive capacities of soils	Ensure that the development of housing in the countryside can be accommodated without impacting on the productive capacities of the best quality soils?
Water	Safeguard water resources and water quality, ensure no deterioration of the ecological status of waterbodies and where possible enhance the ecological value of watercourses and bodies	Ensure that the development of housing in the countryside can be accommodated without resulting in a deterioration of the ecological status of water bodies?
Air Quality & Noise	Direct development to locations which reduces the need to travel and reduces journey length and ensure compliance with Air Quality objectives	Ensure that the development of housing in the countryside is directed to locations which reduces the need to travel?
Climatic Factors	Reduce the area's vulnerability to the effects of climate change, especially flooding, through the direction of new development to appropriate areas	Ensure that the development of housing in the countryside is directed to land which is not at risk from the effects of climate change, especially flooding?
Cultural Heritage	Maintain, protect, and where appropriate enhance and restore historic buildings, archaeological sites and other culturally important features	Ensure that the development of housing in the countryside will not lead to the loss of or have a detrimental impact on historically and culturally important areas taking into account impacts on both the site and setting of these areas?
Landscape	Maintain and where necessary enhance, landscape character, especially those locations designated as having particular worth	Ensure that the development of housing in the countryside takes place whilst protecting the integrity of all important landscapes whether designated or not?
	Protect and enhance countryside and rural character and respect existing pattern, form and setting of small settlements and building groups	Ensure that the development of housing in the countryside takes place without detrimental impact on the setting and form of existing small settlements and building groups?

SEA Topic	Objectives	Proposed Criteria – will the Housing in the Countryside Policy Alternative:
Material Assets	Minimise the use of resources including fuel and chemicals, and minimise the creation of waste by following the waste hierarchy: Reduce – Reuse – Recycle - Recover	Result in a pattern of development which minimises the use of resources?
	Maximise the sustainable use / re-use of material assets (land and buildings)	Result in a settlement pattern which maximises the sustainable use of assets?

Assessment Methodology

One of the key functions of the Scoping Report is to set out the methodology that will be used to evaluate the proposed alternatives and environmental topics. The methodology used sets out clear and objective methods for decision making in the plan. In making decisions, Perth & Kinross Council will use all expertise available (both internally and externally) in order to make the best judgements possible. The table below shows the assessment methodology which it is proposed to use.

Proposed Assessment Methodology

Alternative – Natural and Cultural Heritage policy scenario			
SEA Objective	**Assessment Criteria**	**Impact**	**Comments and Proposed Changes to the Housing in the Countryside Policy**
Maintain, protect and where necessary enhance habitats and species of international, national and regional conservation value, in particular the populations of European Protected Species including protection of their resting places		–	
Accommodate the desire for people to live in the countryside and direct growth to appropriate areas		++	
etc…..			

Key to Table:

Major Positive Impact ++	Minor Positive Impact +	Unknown Impact 0	Minor Negative Impact –	Major Negative Impact – –

The comments column will include justification / explanation for the predicted impact or identified effect and will identify the links between the identified impact / effect and any proposed changes to the housing in the countryside policy. Specific reference will be made in the assessment to protected species and Natura sites. When documenting the assessment any assumptions made during the assessment and any difficulties / limitations encountered will be set out.

Thresholds for Assessing Impact

In determining the level of impact each of the alternatives will have on the SEA objectives some means of measuring the severity of the impact needs to be established. One example of a structured method for determining the level of impact involves establishing a series of thresholds which can be used in making the assessment. The table below sets out examples of the kind of thresholds which it is proposed will be used in determining the acceptability of the environmental impacts of each of the alternatives for the Housing in the Countryside policy.

Acceptability of Impact	Examples of threshold criteria for potential impacts
Major Positive (Normally acceptable)	Emissions demonstrably less than the carrying capacity of the receiving environment
	Protection and enhancement of populations and habitats of non-threatened species through development opportunities
	Enhancement of the landscape
	Protection or enhancement of protected buildings or site through development opportunities
Minor Positive (May be acceptable with mitigation)	Avoidance of spread of biological disease, pests, feral animals or weeds
	Modification of landscape without downgrading special aesthetic values
	Modification or development of protected building or site without devaluing it's historical or archaeological significance
Minor Negative (Normally Unacceptable)	Large scale loss of productive capacity of renewable resources
	Loss of populations of commercial biological species
	Conflict with policies or land-use plans
	Some loss of threatened habitat – or could be major negative depending on extent of loss / value of habitat
	Only small loss of populations and habitats of non-threatened species
	Detrimental impact on the setting of a protected building or site, or loss of a small part of protected site
Major Negative (Unacceptable)	Extinction of biological species, loss of genetic diversity, rare or endangered species, critical habitat
	Increases level of risk to public health
	Exceeds legal or regulatory standard e.g. water quality standard
	Complete loss of protected building or site or impact so detrimental as to devalue the historical or archaeological significance of the building or site

Mitigation of Impacts

Schedule 3 of the Act requires that measures are identified to prevent, reduce and as fully as possible offset any significant adverse effects on the environment of implementing the Plan. Mitigation measures are a crucial part of SEA in that they offer an opportunity to not only address potential adverse effects of a plan, but also to make a plan even more positive than it may already be. The mitigation of impacts will be considered in the Environmental Report following the mitigation hierarchy of: avoid – reduce – remedy or compensate for negative effects – enhance where appropriate for positive effects.

The Environmental Report will include a table of all the mitigation measures identifying the measures required, when they will be required and who will be required to implement them.

The Environmental Report will identify any changes made to the Housing in the Countryside policy as a result of the environmental assessment.

Assessment of Cumulative Impact

The assessment of cumulative effects is an essential element of the SEA process. Cumulative effects need to be considered because the combined impact of many different plans and policies can have significant environmental effects. Such effects are more appropriately assessed at the strategic level because of the geographical scales at which cumulative effects can occur. However even at the strategic level it will not always be possible to fully measure cumulative effects due to the interdependent and transboundary nature of some impacts. The undertaking of a cumulative impact assessment will also help in the assessment of the plan alternatives.

The following series of questions will be considered to determine whether cumulative effects need to be addressed:

- Are the potential effects from the Housing in the Countryside policy together with the impacts from other plans likely to be significant?
- Are the potential effects from the Housing in the Countryside policy likely to be cumulative?
- Are there valued environmental resources in the wider plan area which are likely to be affected by the implementation of the policy?
- What is the sensitivity or capacity of these valued environmental resources?
- How long and how frequent are the potential impacts?

Appropriate Assessment

Regulation 48 of the *Habitats Regulations 1994*[1] requires competent authorities before giving consent for a plan or project which is likely to have a significant effect on a European site, either alone or in combination with other plans or projects to make an appropriate assessment of the implications for the site in view of that site's conservation objectives. The need for appropriate assessment also extends to plans or projects which are outwith the boundary of the designated site in order to assess whether there will be any implications for the species which are protected within the site.

European sites (or Natura 2000 sites) are those designated as Special Areas of Conservation or Special Protection Areas of which there are several in Perth and Kinross. An Appropriate Assessment of the Housing in the countryside Policy will therefore be required. This will be appended to the Environmental Report but will be a stand alone element as it will be undertaken using the information provided by the Report. Consultation on the Appropriate Assessment will be undertaken alongside the consultation on the Environmental Report.

Section 5: Proposed Consultation & Timescales

The key stages in the timetable and proposed consultation are as follows:

Key Stage	Dates
Submission of scoping report to Consultation Authorities	19 September 2008
Consultation on scoping report • Published on Council website • Letters to interest groups	19 Sept – 24 Oct (5 weeks)
Preparation of Draft Housing in the Countryside Policy & Environmental Report	By 28 Nov 2008
Draft Housing in the Countryside Policy and Environmental Report to Committee	January 2009
Submission of Draft Housing in the Countryside Policy & Environmental Report to Consultation Authorities	January 2009
Consultation on Draft Housing in the Countryside Policy & Environmental Report • Published on Council website • Targeted meetings with interest groups	Jan – Feb 2009
Proposed Housing in the Countryside Policy & Environmental Report to Committee for approval	March 2009