

# **Lunan Valley Area Dunkeld- Blairgowrie Lochs Special Area of Conservation**

**Advice to planning applicants in  
relation to phosphorus and foul  
drainage in the catchment**



**Scottish Natural Heritage**  
All of nature for all of Scotland



**SEPA**  
Scottish Environment  
Protection Agency

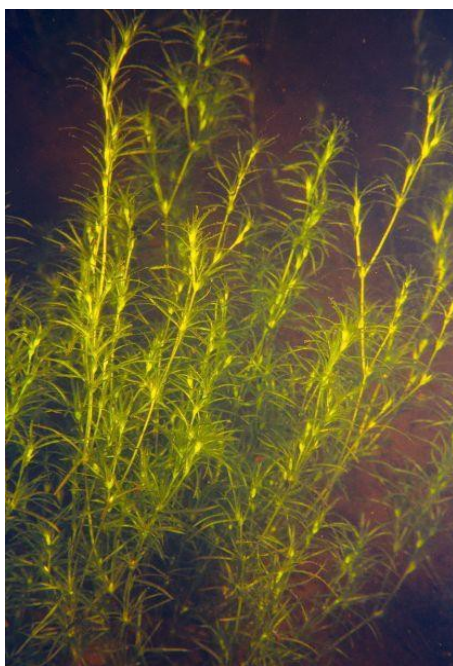


**PERTH &  
KINROSS  
COUNCIL**

# Advice to applicants when considering new projects which are within the catchment of, or could affect Dunkeld-Blairgowrie Lochs Special Area of Conservation (SAC)

## Contents

1. Introduction
2. Why are the Dunkeld-Blairgowrie Lochs so important?
3. The nutrient problem at the Dunkeld-Blairgowrie Lochs
4. Planning authorities obligations
5. Will your proposed project affect the Dunkeld-Blairgowrie Lochs SAC
6. Submitting a planning application for new development
7. Phosphorus mitigation calculations – worked example
8. Additional point for phosphorus mitigation proposals
9. Why 125%
10. SEPA authorisation
11. Once planning permission is granted
12. Further information required
13. Further details



## 1. Introduction

This guidance aims to assist anyone submitting planning applications which are within the catchment of, or could affect the water quality of the Dunkeld– Blairgowrie Lochs Special Area of Conservation (SAC).

- Loch of Craiglush
- Loch of the Lowes
- Loch of Butterstone
- Loch of Clunie
- Marlee Loch

**It provides advice on the types of appropriate information and safeguards to be provided in support of your planning application so that it can be properly and timeously assessed by Perth & Kinross Council, in consultation with SNH and SEPA, and includes:**

- An explanation of planning authorities' obligations when evaluating planning applications;
- Advice on the nature of developments that may affect the Dunkeld-Blairgowrie Lochs;
- Examples of information which you need to submit with your planning application and application for a foul water discharge licence under The Water Environment (Controlled Activities)(Scotland) Regulations 2011 (CAR) – there is a flow chart on page 5 taking you through the key questions and answers/ solutions.

This guidance relates specifically to water quality of the Dunkeld-Blairgowrie Lochs SAC and phosphorus entering the loch's catchment. There may be other qualifying features of the SAC which could be affected by development proposals e.g. disturbance to otters or habitat change.

## 2. Why are the Dunkeld-Blairgowrie Lochs so important?

The Dunkeld-Blairgowrie Lochs consists of a chain of five kettle hole lochs that are of international importance for their aquatic habitats and species, including slender naiad. The site has the highest wildlife accolade as it is designated as an SAC and is part of the Natura 2000 network – a series of internationally important wildlife sites throughout the European Union.

### 3. The nutrient Problem at the Dunkeld – Blairgowrie Lochs

Nutrients, such as phosphorus, entering the catchment from manmade sources has started to cause problems with water quality.

Elevated nutrient levels in warmer months can lead to cyanobacteria or blue-green algae blooms.



These bacteria can be toxic to people, pets, livestock and wildlife. An algal bloom can therefore result in a loss of amenity as the public have to avoid the lochs until the bloom has passed and may also result in fish and potentially livestock deaths. As the bloom subsides and the algae breaks down there is an associated depletion in the oxygen level in the loch which will have a further damaging effect on the loch ecosystem.

Much work has been undertaken over the last decade to reduce the input of phosphorus into the lochs. Recent monitoring has shown this is leading to an improvement in the ecological quality of the lochs. However, this improvement is still vulnerable to set backs so there is a continuing need to reduce phosphorus inputs to the loch.

**The aim is therefore to ensure that there is no increase of phosphorus in the Dunkeld- Blairgowrie Lochs catchment arising from waste water associated with new developments. If there is an increase in phosphorus discharging to the lochs, there could be a detrimental effect on water quality, and a knock-on effect for ecology.**

### 4. Planning authorities' obligations

The European legislation under which sites are selected as SACs is the Habitats Directive, which sets out obligations on Member States to take appropriate steps to avoid "*the deterioration of natural habitats and the habitats of species as well as disturbance of the species for which the areas have been designated, in so far as such disturbance could be significant.*" These obligations relate to "Competent Authorities" such as Planning Authorities.

**Planning Authorities can only agree to development proposals after having ascertained that they will not adversely affect the integrity of the site. If the proposal would affect the site and there are no alternative solutions, it can only be allowed to proceed if there are imperative reasons of overriding public interest.**

Perth and Kinross Council apply Policy EP6: Lunan Valley Catchment Area\* as laid out in the Local Development Plan to assist them in their consideration of a development proposal.

\* Dunkeld-Blairgowrie Lochs SAC catchment and the Lunan Valley Catchment Area are coincident.



**MAP – Dunkeld-Blairgowrie Lochs catchment boundary**



### 5. Will your proposed project affect the Dunkeld-Blairgowrie Lochs SAC?

If your proposed development lies in the catchment as shown by the blue line on the map, you need to consider whether it has the potential to affect the lochs.

(NB. The map is a guide – if your development is near the border you may wish to seek confirmation as to whether it is in the catchment.)



## 6. Submitting a planning application for new development

For new developments (including extensions to properties where the potential capacity to house people is being increased), or conversions.

Does the new development have any phosphorus discharge?  
(e.g. foul water drainage, sewage, septic tank or sink discharges)

No

Submit  
normal  
planning  
application

Yes

Will the drainage be diverted outwith the  
catchment area?

Yes

No additional requirements  
necessary for phosphorus loading.

No

### Phosphorus Mitigation Proposals

You will need to ensure the drainage from the development has no additional phosphorus loading on the ground / surface waters in the Dunkeld – Blairgowrie Lochs catchment (Policy EP6) and apply to SEPA for a licence to discharge. See section 7 for a worked example of phosphorus mitigation

#### Acceptable forms of phosphorus mitigation:

Upgrade the septic tank of an existing property within the catchment area to an active system that reduces phosphorus (secondary/tertiary treatment plant) - this may be with a third party.

#### Unacceptable forms of phosphorus mitigation:

Change in agricultural practice;  
Change in land use;  
Using "capacity" from a previous application.

In addition to your Full planning application or AMM (approval of matters specified in conditions)\*you will need to provide details of:

- the proposed development;
- an existing property to be upgraded – Which has not already been identified as mitigation for another planning application and;
- phosphorus mitigation calculations – include numbers of potential bedrooms of all properties, and methods of drainage (primary/secondary/tertiary treatment plant).<sup>1</sup> Treatment plant should conform to BS EN 12566:3 and have demonstrated its phosphorus reduction capabilities. You will need to demonstrate that the total phosphorus loading from the existing property can be reduced by at least 125% of the phosphorus loading likely to be generated by the new development (PolicyEP6) – see worked example overleaf.

Any treatment plant should conform to BS EN 12566:3 and have demonstrated its phosphorus reduction capabilities in accordance with this standard. To obtain certification to EN12566:3 plants must undergo rigorous independent testing which results in a documented mean discharge standard. The mean standard in the EN12566:3 certificate is a clear and unambiguous assessment of the performance of the plants, and is used in CAR licences for unsampled licenced sewage discharges (i.e. discharges of less than 200 PE). EN12566:3 is normally used to assess performance against BOD and ammonia, but can also be used to assess performance against total phosphorus.

\*N.B The above information is not required for 'In Principle' planning applications.

- Discharge from all the properties will require to be licensed by SEPA who will set discharge limits through licensing. The licensing process has a 4 month determination period from the date of application. (see below).
- The discharge limits set by SEPA must be complied with at all times
- Foul water treatment plants need to be frequently maintained to work properly and discharge within the licensed limits. Appropriate maintenance will be a requirement of the SEPA water use licence.
- Sites which will not connect to the Scottish Water Network which have 50>p.e. should contact SEPA at the earliest opportunity as additional investigatory work will be required prior to a discharge licence application being submitted.
- In cases of great complexity or uncertainty the Precautionary Principle will be adopted.

The assumption being that where there are real threats of damage to the environment, lack of scientific information should not be used as a justification for postponing measures to prevent such damage occurring.

#### Footnote

<sup>1</sup>1. The latest version of the document " British Water Code of Practice - Flows and Loads" has details of loadings from a variety of sources (available from publications section of the British Water website <http://www.britishwater.co.uk/Publications/codes-of-practise.aspx>).

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## 7. Phosphorus mitigation calculations - worked example

Calculations based on British Water Code of Practice "Flows & Loads - Sizing Criteria, Treatment Capacity for Small Wastewater Treatment Systems"- <http://www.britishwater.co.uk/Publications/codes-of-practise.aspx> (P.E = Person equivalent)

Background	
Average amount of water per person per day	= 150 litres
Primary treatment (septic tank - standard discharge – as a mean)	= 10 mg P/litre
Daily discharge of phosphorus (per person) from primary treatment	= 1,500 mg P
Secondary treatment (package treatment plant – as a mean)	= 5 mg P/litre
Daily discharge of phosphorus (per person) from secondary treatment	= 750 mg P
Proposed Development *	
3-bedroom house	= 5 P.E.
Secondary treatment to be installed	= 5mgP/litre
Daily discharge of phosphorus = 750 mg P x 5 P.E.	<b>= 3,750 mg P / day</b>
Phosphorus Mitigation	
Mitigation requires a reduction of 125% of the amount of phosphorus to be discharged from the new development = 125% x 3,750mg P / day	<b>= 4,688 mg P / day</b>
Mitigation is proposed by upgrading a septic tank for a named existing 5-bedroom property to a secondary treatment plant.	
5-bedroom house	=7 P.E.
Existing discharge = 1,050 litres x 10 mg P/litre	=10,500 mg P / day
Discharge after upgrade to 5mg/l P = 750 mg P x 7 P.E.	=5,250 mg P / day
Mitigation offered is 10,500 – 5,250	<b>=5,250mg P / day</b>
in excess of the requirements	

\* Please note that evidence of regular maintenance contracts must be provided as part of a Water Use Licence from SEPA. Mitigation calculations should be based on mean values and not on percentile figures

## 8. Additional points for phosphorus mitigation proposals

Existing properties should not be removed from a larger foul drainage treatment system to provide mitigation for a new development. The applicant should seek to upgrade the larger system in its entirety, regardless of how much in excess of 125% mitigation value this provides. Also, it is recommended that applicants seek to use a single treatment system for a proposed multi-property development, rather than separate systems for individual properties.

Any novel proposals where mitigation is not from a single existing property, should be discussed with SEPA at the earliest stage possible, in order to ensure the proposal is acceptable.

For the purposes of mitigation, ascribed values will be used for calculations, where a septic tank is assumed to discharge 10mg/l of phosphorus, and an existing secondary treatment system 5mg/l. New treatment system discharge standards will be based on the system being installed. Alternatives to the ascribed values may be considered where there is adequate historical data which meets approved quality standards. In these cases contact should be made with SEPA at the earliest opportunity. Please note that we do not accept any discharge quality standard below 2mg/l at present.

Mitigation of an existing system can only be linked to a development at full planning stage. While SEPA can be consulted on mitigation proposals at outline planning stage, comments provided will only be given as a guide and must be reviewed and resubmitted with any full planning application.

## 9. Why 125%?

Bearing in mind the Precautionary Principle and the fact that the measurement of potential phosphorus output is not an exact science, then mitigation measures must seek to exclude from the catchment area in excess of the phosphorus likely to be generated by the proposed development in order to be sure that there is no net increase.



## 10. SEPA authorisation

SEPA regulates discharges to water and land under The Water Environment (Controlled Activities) (Scotland) Regulations 2011(CAR). Please note that additional authorisation for development activities adjacent to, and in the vicinity of watercourses may be required under the Controlled Activities Regulations. All CAR Registration level private sewage discharges in the Dunkeld-Blairgowrie Lochs SAC will be escalated to simple licence level, to allow adequate assessment of the discharge. A higher level of licence protection may also be required for activities that may impact Dunkeld-Blairgowrie Lochs SAC, such as engineering works in inland waters, water abstraction, impoundment or discharge to land and water. Any such authorisation will also need to first consider the effects on the Dunkeld-Blairgowrie Lochs SAC.

Details on all these activities are available via the following links:

[http://www.sepa.org.uk/water/water\\_publications.aspx](http://www.sepa.org.uk/water/water_publications.aspx)

Information on CAR licence requirements:

[http://www.sepa.org.uk/customer\\_information/water.aspx](http://www.sepa.org.uk/customer_information/water.aspx)

Activities should also ensure compliance with SEPA's Pollution Prevention Guidelines, available at: [http://www.sepa.org.uk/about\\_us/publications/guidance/ppgs.aspx](http://www.sepa.org.uk/about_us/publications/guidance/ppgs.aspx)



## 11. Once planning permission is granted

Before the development can commence you must:

- obtain a CAR licence(s) under the Water Environment (Controlled Activities)(Scotland) Regulations 2011 for the foul water discharge associated with the development.
- submit copies of these to the Planning Authority and
- have a receipt for the above documentation from the Planning Authority.

If the phosphorus mitigation measures are to be delivered at a location separate from the development site then before the development can commence:

- The phosphorus mitigation measures must be installed using a treatment system which delivers the discharge quality standards specified in the mitigation calculations – and approved by Building Standards (if a building warrant has been required) or for watercourse discharges SEPA who are responsible for inspection of the outfall from treatment plants.

Before the completion certificate will be accepted and the new development can be occupied:

- The new drainage infrastructure installation at development site must be approved by Building Standards as part of building warrant process or for watercourse discharges SEPA who are responsible for inspection of the outfall from treatment plants.)

## 12. Further information required

Although this guidance is specifically for the water quality of Dunkeld – Blairgowrie Lochs SAC, there may be other natural heritage interests such as protected species affected by development proposals which also need to be considered. Further information is available in the Scottish Planning Policy: <http://www.gov.scot/Publications/2014/06/5823>.

Further information may need to be provided on **other habitats and species** in the immediate vicinity in support of your application (e.g. water voles, bats, and otters). Perth & Kinross Council or SNH can advise on further surveys required.

There may also be a requirement for **additional information** depending on the nature of the development.

## 13. Further details

More information on Dunkeld – Blairgowrie Lochs SAC including its conservation objectives can be found on the SNH website via [www.snh.org.uk/snh/](http://www.snh.org.uk/snh/):

SNH, SEPA and Perth and Kinross Council are working closely to protect the interests of the Dunkeld – Blairgowrie Lochs SAC and Ramsar site by reducing phosphorus loading on the lochs. Perth & Kinross Council are happy to assist you where required in submitting your application, including pre-application discussion.

In addition to any planning consents that may be required, any development which includes an element of drainage will require building warrant approval. This process includes a requirement to submit detailed plans and specifications for the entire drainage system to show compliance with the Building (Scotland) Regulations 2004.



## 14. Contacts

### Perth and Kinross Council

Website: [www.pkc.gov.uk](http://www.pkc.gov.uk)

Email: [DevelopmentManagement@pkc.gov.uk](mailto:DevelopmentManagement@pkc.gov.uk) for planning enquiries

Email: [BuildingStandards@pkc.gov.uk](mailto:BuildingStandards@pkc.gov.uk) for building warrant enquiries

### Scottish Natural Heritage

Website: [www.snh.gov.uk](http://www.snh.gov.uk)

Email: [Tayside\\_Grampian@snh.gov.uk](mailto:Tayside_Grampian@snh.gov.uk)

### Scottish Environment Protection Agency

Tel: 0800 807060

Website: [www.sepa.org.uk](http://www.sepa.org.uk)

Email: [planning.se@sepa.org.uk](mailto:planning.se@sepa.org.uk)

### Scottish Water

Call Centre tel: 0845 600 8855

