



Fishing on the loch

The group meets four times a year and aims to:

- identify and monitor pressures on the loch;
- set achievable objectives for improvement of water quality;
- undertake a series of catchment-wide measures, similar to the project carried out for the *Loch Leven Catchment Management Plan*; and
- inform and educate the public about environmental issues in and around the loch.

#### Nutrient pressures

- Road runoff
- Farming runoff
- Storm sewer overflows
- Birds
- Fish stocking
- Loch sediments
- Septic tanks

#### Other pressures

- Invasive species
- Reduction of biodiversity
- Flooding
- Urban development

### Specific group objectives

Under the European Union Water Framework Directive, SEPA is responsible for classifying the condition of water bodies and where necessary bringing them up to good ecological status. However, Linlithgow Loch is too small to be included in SEPA's first round of classifications.

In 2008, SNH and SEPA jointly agreed interim targets to address ecological and public health issues associated with blue-green algae. Ecological monitoring was established based on targets set in the Loch Leven project and is to be reviewed in 2015.

In 2010, SRUC and CEH initiated a project to investigate the causes of increased algae biomass by identifying sources of phosphorus and nitrogen in the loch and to propose suitable remedial actions. Funding has been provided by WLC, HS, CEH and SNH.

### Other objectives

- consider using planning gain for catchment-wide improvements (WLC);
- investigate sources of funding for further actions;
- educate loch users and residents about the issues and the effects their actions may have, such as boat disturbance, bird feeding and misuse of road drainage; e.g. 'Yellow Fish' campaign for schools being conducted by HS;
- encourage landowners through NFU Scotland to undertake farm management plans, drawing on land use surveys carried out by SRUC in 2010;
- consider infrastructure improvements to address ongoing sewer and surface water drainage issues (Scottish Water, 2009-14); and
- retrofit sustainable drainage systems in the catchment.

### For more information contact

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Historic Scotland Ranger: 0131 652 8150



# Linlithgow Loch and its wildlife



westlothian.gov.uk





A cormorant catches a trout from the loch

### Heritage value of Linlithgow Loch

As the larger of only two remaining natural lowland lochs in the Lothians, Linlithgow Loch is a nationally important site for nature conservation. During the heyday of Linlithgow Palace, the loch was a vital source of food for royalty and their guests. Today it is a very popular leisure facility for both locals and visitors.

The loch was formed from a block of ice left behind by retreating glaciers at the end of the last Ice Age.

The nutrient rich water and range of aquatic and marginal plants mean it is now classified as 'eutrophic'. The more recent increase in nutrient levels in the loch is caused by surrounding land uses. As a shallow loch in a small catchment, it is at risk of excessive nutrient enrichment from both agricultural and urban sources and responds quickly to temperature changes. This situation will worsen with climate change. Over time this could mean more algal blooms occur leading to further loss of plant species, as well as poor visual appearance.

The Loch's amenity values include:

- as a setting for the historic Linlithgow Palace and Peel;
- as a venue for recreational water-sports;
- as a core path;
- as a stocked fishery;
- as a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI);
- as a home to a large population of resident and visiting birds.

Linlithgow Loch is regionally important for the birds it supports. Large flocks of mallard, coot, tufted duck and pochard can be seen in wintertime. The loch also supports breeding populations of great crested grebe and mute swan, both relatively uncommon in West Lothian. Again, increasing nutrient levels may result in decreased bird numbers as algal blooms cause their plant and invertebrate foods to decline.

### Linlithgow Loch Catchment Management Group (LLCMG)

Linlithgow Loch is managed by Historic Scotland on behalf of Scottish Ministers.

This group was set up in 2005. Stakeholders include:

- Scottish Environment Protection Agency (SEPA)
- Scottish Natural Heritage (SNH);
- Historic Scotland (HS);
- West Lothian Council (WLC);
- Scottish Water;
- National Farmers' Union Scotland (NFU Scotland);
- Forth Area Federation of Anglers;
- River Avon Management Committee;
- Scotland's Rural College (SRUC);
- Natural Environment Research Council: Centre of Ecology and Hydrology (CEH);
- Transport Scotland

A copy of the Catchment Management Plan is available at on the [council's website](#).

