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CÒMHDHAIL ALBA

Environmental Impact Assessment Record of Determination

A9 Drumochter to Crubenmore and Dalraddy to Slochd

Contents

Project Details

Description

BEAR Scotland has been commissioned by Transport Scotland to carry out road signage works on a stretch of the A9 carriageway between Dalraddy Holiday Park and Drumochter within the Highland Council and the Perth and Kinross Council areas.

This RoD includes assessment for two separate schemes being carried out on two consecutive sections of the northbound A9 carriageway; A9 Drumochter and Crubenmore and A9 Dalraddy to Slochd.

The works for both schemes are similar in nature and will involve the replacing and redesigning of current signs, ensuring their position is correct, over a total length of 45km, comprising multiple individual scheme lengths of up to 2m. The works total area does not exceed 1ha.

The works are currently programmed to be completed within the 2024/2025 financial year, commencing in June 2024. It is expected that the works will be completed over 40 nights (combined) by utilising a night-time working pattern (19:00 – 05:00). Changes in the programme may result in the need for day works.

Traffic management (TM) will consist of verge working where possible; where TM is required, it is anticipated to consist of lane closures facilitated by two-way temporary traffic lights where required.

Location

Both schemes are located on the A9 carriageway within the Highland Council and Perth and Kinross Council areas (Figure 1 and Figure 2). The schemes have the following National Grid References (NGRs):

- A9 Drumochter and Crubenmore (Scheme 1)

Nr	NGR	Nr	NGR	Nr	NGR
1	NN 67772 90969	25	NN 64075 84331	49	NN 62788 79049
2	NN 67759 90968	26	NN 63980 83532	50	NN 62820 79102
3	NN 67751 90103	27	NN 63969 83531	51	NN 62808 79106

Nr	NGR	Nr	NGR	Nr	NGR
4	NN 67737 90099	28	NN 63966 83222	52	NN 62574 78439
5	NN 66985 88662	29	NN 63978 83221	53	NN 62589 78434
6	NN 67559 89486	30	NN 63992 82800	54	NN 62593 77489
7	NN 66985 88662	31	NN 63978 82622	55	NN 62580 77486
8	NN 66977 88669	32	NN 63992 82623	56	NN 63156 76009
9	NN 66431 88200	33	NN 63977 82715	57	NN 63146 76005
10	NN 66422 88208	34	NN 63961 82226	58	NN 63362 75246
11	NN 65968 87686	35	NN 63974 82226	59	NN 63348 75243
12	NN 65980 87680	36	NN 63945 82110	60	NN 63665 74546
13	NN 65927 87624	37	NN 63948 82047	61	NN 63650 74543
14	NN 65646 87042	38	NN 63680 81276	62	NN 63682 74488
15	NN 65660 87038	39	NN 63691 81270	63	NN 64192 73692
16	NN 65117 86314	40	NN 63266 80468	64	NN 64307 73574
17	NN 65106 86322	41	NN 63254 80472	65	NN 64518 73361
18	NN 64714 85819	42	NN 63104 79899	66	NN 64198 73685
19	NN 64597 85675	43	NN 63065 79757	67	NN 64189 73692
20	NN 64588 85681	44	NN 63048 79759	68	NN 64307 73574
21	NN 64287 85110	45	NN 63041 79721	69	NN 66978 88671
22	NN 64297 85105	46	NN 62876 79220	70	NN 67546 89493
23	NN 64251 85017	47	NN 62865 79224		
24	NN 64063 84333	48	NN 62837 79136		

- A9 Dalraddy to Slochd (Scheme 2)

Nr	NGR	Nr	NGR	Nr	NGR
1	NH 85639 09509	17	NH 89470 14267	32	NH 90929 20202
2	NH 85685 09550	18	NH 89466 14223	33	NH 90785 20682
3	NH 86303 09887	19	NH 89702 14767	34	NH 89367 22867
4	NH 86807 10151	20	NH 90077 15663	35	NH 89381 22831

Nr	NGR	Nr	NGR	Nr	NGR
5	NH 87706 10308	21	NH 90149 15884	36	NH 89071 23232
6	NH 87806 10345	22	NH 90232 16433	37	NH 88433 23895
7	NH 88494 10660	23	NH 90551 17025	38	NH 88282 23944
8	NH 88493 10689	24	NH 90611 17109	39	NH 88265 23971
9	NH 89050 11120	25	NH 91041 18444	40	NH 87461 24063
10	NH 89075 11195	26	NH 91046 18585	41	NH 87443 24088
11	NH 89176 11728	27	NH 91038 19447	42	NH 86938 23990
12	NH 89089 12694	28	NH 90947 20086	43	NH 86938 23990
13	NH 89079 12760	29	NH 90919 20145	44	NH 86174 23867
14	NH 85330 23877	30	NH 84541 24214	45	NH 84121 24913
15	NH 85298 23866	31	NH 84212 24761	46	NH 83796 25353
16	NH 83758 25410				

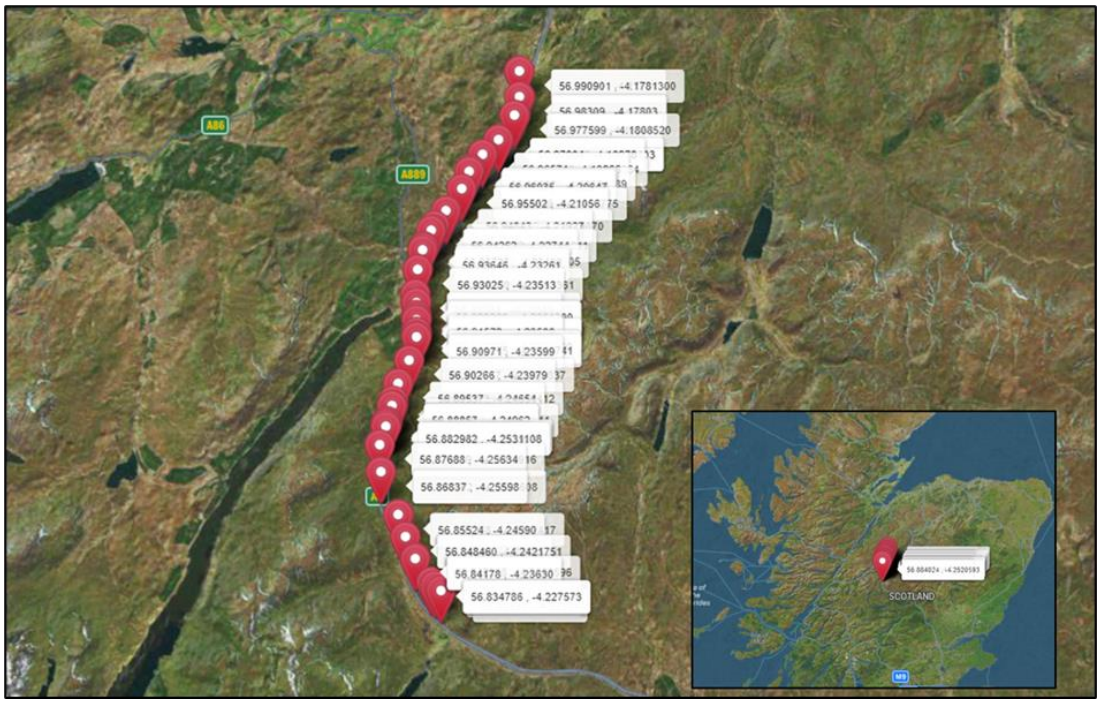

Figure 1. Location and scheme extent of the proposed signage works between A9 Drumochter and Crubenmore.

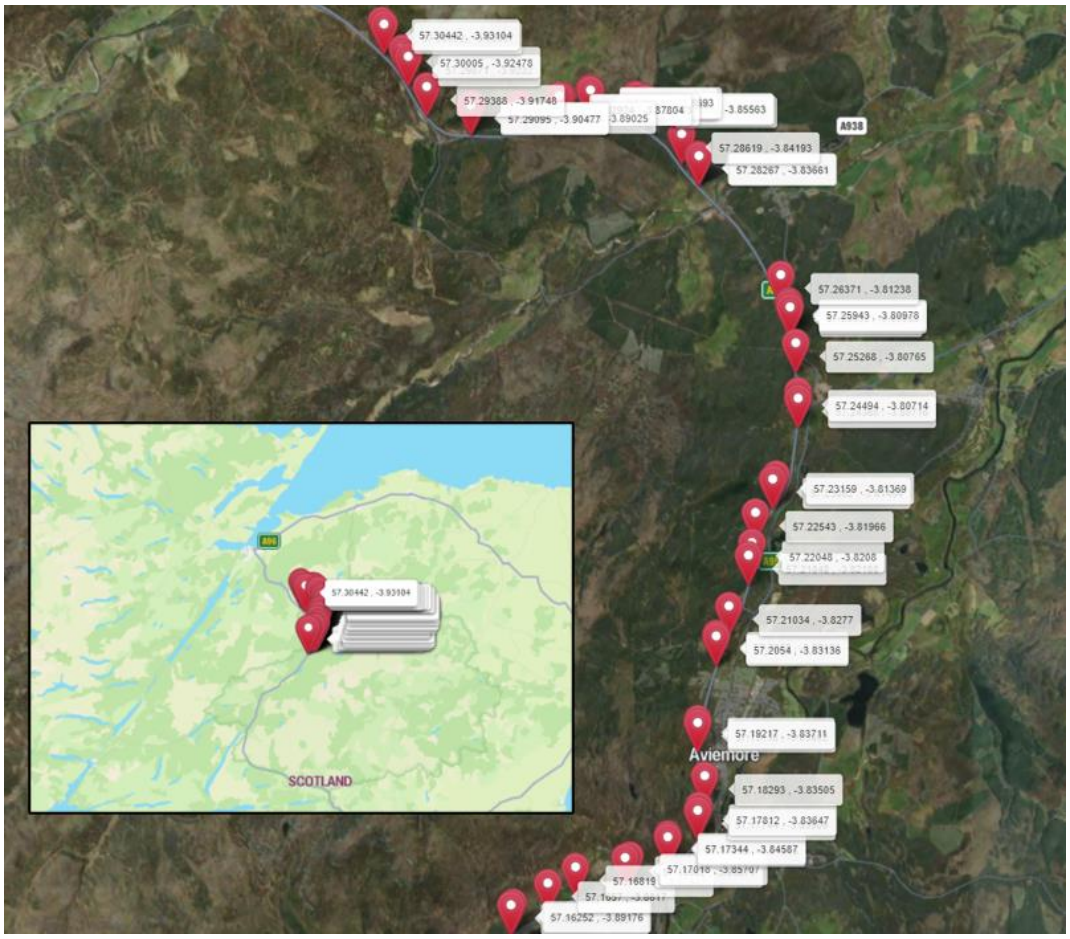

Figure 2. Location and scheme extent of the proposed signage works between A9 Dalraddy to Slochd.

Description of local environment

Air quality

The schemes are not located within an Air Quality Management Area (AQMA) (Scotland's Environment - SE).

One facility which records air pollutant releases is listed on the Scottish Pollutant Release Inventory (SPRI) (Scotland's Environment) within 10km of the scheme extents. 'Highland Council, Granish L/F, Aviemore, Inverness' is located 350m east of the scheme and is listed for emissions of methane.

Baseline air quality is likely to be primarily influenced by traffic along the A9 carriageway, with secondary sources likely to include nearby urban activities associated with settlements located along the A9. It is expected that air quality within the area is also influenced by livestock within the nearby fields of pastoral land.

Two manual traffic count points (ID: 50748 and ID: 10808) on the A9 carriageway within the scheme extents provides average annual daily flow (AADF) data for A9 traffic. In 2022, AADF at ID: 50748 point was recorded 9,938 vehicles, including 1,844 (18%) heavy goods vehicles (HGVs) (Road Traffic Statistics). In 2022, AADF at ID: 10808 point was recorded 7,828 vehicles, including 1,344 (17%) heavy goods vehicles (HGVs) (Road Traffic Statistics).

Cultural heritage

A search of PastMap mapping tool (PastMap) identified the following cultural heritage features within 300m of the scheme:

- Aviemore, Dalfaber Road, Pine Bank (Former Craigellachie House) Category C Listed Building LB48029 lies 240m east of the scheme (sign location NH 89176 11728)
- 'Dalwhinnie, Wade Bridge Over River Truim' LB7665 category B Listed Building lies 90m west of the scheme (sign location NN 63981 82769)
- Scheduled Monument 'Avielochan, Tor Beag, Fort' lies 120m west of the scheme (sign location NH 90611 17109)
- Garden & Designed Landscape 'Doune of Rothiemurchus' lies 200m east of the scheme (sign location NH 88494 10660)
- Multiple Canmore features and Historic Environment Records lie within 300m of the scheme, with some recorded within the proposed works areas.

There are no World Heritage Sites, Conservation Areas, Garden and Designed Landscapes or Inventory Battlefields within 300m of the scheme.

Landscape and visual effects

The scheme extents lie within Cairngorms National Park (CNP). The Special General Qualities of CNP are the following:

- Magnificent mountains towering over moorland, forest and strath
- Vastness of space, scale and height
- Strong juxtaposition of contrasting landscapes
- A landscape of layers, from inhabited strath to remote, uninhabited upland
- 'The harmony of complicated curves'
- Landscapes both cultural and natural

The scheme is located within a semi-rural location on the A9, with land use surrounding the scheme dominated by woodland, fields of rough grassland and

urban development associated with small villages and settlements located along the scheme extents.

The Landscape Character Type (LCT) (NatureScot) within the scheme extent is recorded as Upland Glen - Cairngorms (LCT No. 126), Upland Strath (LCT No. 127), Forested Upland Fringe (LCT No. 128), Rolling Uplands – Cairngorms (LCT No. 125), and Rolling Uplands - Inverness (LCT No. 221).

Biodiversity

River Spey Special Area of Conservation (SAC) (SiteLink; NatureScot Site Code: 8365) lies 50m from the scheme extents at their nearest point.

Drumochter Hills Special Protection Area (SPA) (SiteLink; NatureScot Site Code: 8491) borders the A9 carriageway at the scheme extents.

Drumochter Hills SAC (SiteLink; NatureScot Site Code: 8243) overlaps with the Drumochter SPA and borders the A9 carriageway at the scheme extents.

Insh Marshes SAC (SiteLink; NatureScot Site Code: 8274) lies 50m from the scheme extents at their nearest point.

Kinveachy Forest SAC (SiteLink; NatureScot Site Code: 8283) lies 630m west of the scheme.

Kinveachy Forest SPA (SiteLink; NatureScot Site Code: 8519) lies 630m west of the scheme.

Cairngorms SAC (SiteLink; NatureScot Code: 8217) lies 1km east of the scheme.

Cairngorms SPA (SiteLink; NatureScot Code: 8475) lies 1km east of the scheme.

Loch Vaa SPA (SiteLink; NatureScot Code: 8541) lies 220m east of the scheme.

Due to close proximity of the scheme to the above noted European sites, a Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA) has been undertaken. Refer to the assessment section for Biodiversity below for details.

The following locally and/or nationally designated sites with biodiversity are located within 300m of the scheme (SiteLink):

- Drumochter Hills Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) (SiteLink), River Spey SSSI (SiteLink) and Loch Etteridge SSSI (SiteLink) lie within 300m of the scheme extents;
- Loch Etteridge SSSI is designated for quaternary of Scotland (SiteLink) and lies 100m from the scheme at its nearest point.
- Alvie Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) (SiteLink). The SSSI lies 100m southeast of the scheme.
- Craigellachie SSSI (SiteLink). The SSSI lies 20m west of the scheme.

Numerous records of bird species are returned within 2km of the works by using NBN search (within the last 10 years). Under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended) (WCA), all wild birds and their nests are protected.

A search of NBN Atlas identify the following records of invasive non-native species (INNS) of plant as listed on Schedule 9 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended) (WCA), injurious weeds, as listed under the Weeds Act 1959, and invasive native perennials within 2km (within the last 10 years):

- Creeping Thistle *(Cirsium arvense)*
- Common ragwort *(Jacobaea vulgaris)*
- Rhododendron *(Rhododendron ponticum)*

Transport Scotland's Asset Management Performance System (AMPS) returned two records of common ragwort within 300m of the scheme.

Habitat in the surrounding area is mainly provided by a number of waterbodies and woodland which lie in proximity to the scheme. Rough grassland and fields of pastoral land are somewhat set-back from the A9 carriageway. Some of the woodland is noted by the Ancient Woodland Inventory (AWI) as being ancient (of semi-natural origin), long-established (of plantation origin) and/or other (on Roy map) (Scotland's Environment).

An area covered by Tree Preservation Order (TPO) Aviemore Mountain Resort (TPO Nr HRC42) lies 10m east of the A9 within the scheme extents (Highland Council). No other TPOs are located within 300m of the scheme (Highland Council and Perth and Kinross Council).

Considering the traffic density at the scheme extent, it is considered unlikely that any terrestrial mammal species of conservation importance are associated with permanent habitat or resting places within the area of likely construction disturbance. There is potential for mammal activity within woodland in proximity, however it is unlikely that any permanent shelter features will be situated in close proximity to the A9. Furthermore, the scheme is of a minor, transient, and highly localised nature which will not increase disturbance levels within this section of the carriageway during the works. Therefore, a field survey has been ruled out, and a desktop study has been deemed sufficient for this assessment.

Geology and soils

Two signs (NH 83796 25353 and NH 83758 25410) lie within The Slochd Geological Conservation Review Site (GCRS) (SiteLink).

Allt Dubhaig GCRS lies adjacent to the A9 within the scheme extents (Sitelink). Allt Dubhaig is overlapped by Drumochter Hills SSSI, which is also designated for fluvial geomorphology of Scotland.

Loch Etteridge GCRS lies 100m from the scheme at its nearest point. Loch Etteridge GCRS is also overlapped by Loch Etteridge SSSI, which is designated for quaternary of Scotland (Sitelink).

The scheme extents passes over a wide number of bedrock types which mainly are dominated by Gaick Psammite Formation (psammite) and Pityoulish formation (psammite), which are metamorphic bedrocks (BGS).

Superficial deposit is recorded as mainly being Hummocky (moundy) Glacial Deposits (diamicton, gravel, sand and silt), Till, Devensian (Diamicton) and glaciofluvial ice contact deposits, Devensian (gravel, sand and silt) which are sedimentary superficial deposits (BGS).

The major soil group found within the scheme are peaty podzols, alluvial soils and mineral podzols (Scotland's Soils).

Soils at the scheme extent are recorded as being 'Class 1', 'Class 2', 'Class 3', 'Class 5' and Class 0' as displayed on Scotland's Peat Map. Peatland soils are only not present at 'Class 0' (SE Map).

Material assets and waste

The proposed works involve installation of new signs (including new posts) and replacement of existing road sign faces within the road verge of the A9 carriageway. Materials used will consist of signposts, sign faces and concrete.

Wastes are anticipated to be old road signs, which will be recycled, and excavated earth, which will be side-casted within the A9 verge.

Neither of the scheme values exceed £350,000 and as such Site Waste Management Plans (SWMP) are not required.

Noise and vibration

For sensitive receptors, refer to the 'Population and Human Health' section below.

The works do not fall within a Candidate Noise Management Area (CNMA) as defined by the Transportation Noise Action Plan (Road Maps) (TNAP).

The night-time modelled noise level (Lnight) within the scheme northern extents ranges between 60 and 65 decibels (Scotland's Noise Scotland's Environment).

There is no data regarding the noise levels at the scheme southern extents, however it is anticipated that the noise will be similar to those at northern extents. Baseline noise levels are likely to be primarily influenced by traffic travelling along the A9 carriageway. Secondary sources are likely derived from urban and agricultural activities within the area.

Population and human health

The scheme extent consists of short sections along 45km long stretch of A9 carriageway verges. The scheme extent lies within a rural area with no residential properties located directly adjacent to the A9 road corridor. A number of settlements, such as Dalwhinnie, Aviemore, Kincraig, Ellan, Granish land Dalnaspidal lie within proximity to the scheme with a small number of residential properties and farmsteads being within 300m buffer. Numerous access points to local roads lie within the scheme extents; the nearest of these 'Scandinavian Village Ltd' lies 50m east of the scheme are screened by 25m dense tree belt.

Numerous access points to local roads and commercial facilities lie within the scheme extents.

A number of core paths (Scotland's Environment) lie within 300m of the scheme with the nearest of these (UBS28) following the A9 northbound carriageway with short sections lying adjacent to the carriageway. A number of starting points to walking routes as listed on WalkHighlands (WalkHighlands) lie within the scheme extents. Numerous laybys lie along the A9 within the scheme extents. Numerous other walking routes are located within the 300m, however none of those has connectivity to the scheme.

National Cycle Network Route 7 travels parallel to the A9 within 300m of the scheme along the extents (Sustrans). Numerous laybys lie along the A9 within the scheme extents. There are no other pedestrian facilities located along the A9 within the scheme extents.

There are no bus stops within the scheme extents.

The A9 Trunk Road, within the North West NMC, connects Perth with Thurso. It commences immediately north of Inveralmond Roundabout in Perth leading generally northwards for a distance of 357 kilometres to its junction with an unclassified road leading to Holborn Head lighthouse at Scrabster. The A9 is a mixture of single carriageway, '2+1' carriageway and stretches of two-lane dual carriageway.

Road drainage and the water environment

The scheme extent lies within 300m of the following waterbodies, which have been classified by the Scottish Environment Protection Agency (SEPA) under the Water Framework Directive 2000/60/EC (WFD) (SEPA):

- Allt na Fearna - u/s Loch Alvie classified by SEPA in 2022 as being of 'moderate' condition and lies 140m south of the scheme.
- River Spey - R. Feshie to R. Nethy classified by SEPA in 2022 as being of 'poor' condition and lies 190m east of the scheme.
- River Dulnain - Feith Mhor classified by SEPA in 2022 as being of 'moderate' condition and lies 55m northwest of the scheme.
- River Dulnain - Allt Ruighe Magaig classified by SEPA in 2022 as being of 'good' condition and lies 40m southeast of the scheme.
- River Dulnain - Allt an Aonaich classified by SEPA in 2022 as being of 'good' condition and lies 200m west of the scheme.
- Allt Coire Dhomhain (ID: 6610), classified as poor in 2022. Allt Coire Dhomhain at its nearest point lies 170m west from the scheme.
- River Truim from source to Allt Cuaich confluence (ID: 23638), classified as moderate in 2022. The River Truim from source to Allt Cuaich confluence is spanned by the A9 within 50m of the scheme.
- Allt Cuaich (ID: 23639), classified as bad in 2022 is spanned by the A9 within 70m of the scheme.
- River Truim - lower catchment (ID: 23146), classified as moderate in 2022. The River Truim - lower catchment at its nearest point lies 70m west from the scheme.

A number of unclassified watercourses, tributaries and drainage channels lie within 300m of the scheme.

The scheme falls within the 'Strathnairn, Speyside and Cairngorms 'Upper Spey Sand and Grave' and 'Rannoch' groundwater bodies, which were classified by SEPA in 2022 as having 'Good' overall condition (SEPA).

Numerous areas of the A9 carriageway within scheme extents are recorded as being at low (0.1% chance of flooding each year) to high (10% chance) risk of surface water flooding (SEPA Flood Maps).

Climate

The Climate Change (Scotland) Act 2009 sets out the target and vision set by the Scottish Government for tackling and responding to climate change (The Climate Change (Scotland) Act 2009). The Act included a target of reducing CO_2 emissions

by 80% before 2050 (from the baseline year 1990). The Climate Change (Emissions Reduction Targets) (Scotland) Act 2019 amended the Climate Change (Scotland) Act 2009 to bring the target of reaching net-zero emissions in Scotland forward to 2045 (Climate Change (Emissions Reduction Targets) (Scotland) Act 2019).

The Scottish Government has since published its indicative Nationally Determined Contribution (iNDC) to set out how it will reach net-zero emissions by 2045, working to reduce emissions of all major greenhouse gases by at least 75% by 2030 (Scotland's contribution to the Paris Agreement: indicative Nationally Determined Contribution - gov.scot (www.gov.scot)). By 2040, the Scottish Government is committed to reducing emissions by 90%, with the aim of reaching net-zero by 2045 at the latest.

Transport Scotland is committed to reducing carbon across Scotland's transport network and this commitment is being enacted through the Mission Zero for Transport (Mission Zero for transport | Transport Scotland). Transport is the largest contributor to harmful climate emissions in Scotland. In response to the climate emergency, Transport Scotland are committed to reducing their emissions by 75% by 2030 and to a legally binding target of net-zero by 2045.

Policies and plans

This Record of Determination (RoD) has been undertaken in accordance with all relevant regulations, guidance, policies and plans, notably including the Environment and Sustainability Discipline of the Design Manual for Roads and Bridges (Design Manual for Roads and Bridges (DMRB)) and Transport Scotland's Environmental Impact Assessment Guidance (Guidance - Environmental Impact Assessments for road projects (transport.gov.scot)).

Description of main environmental impacts and proposed mitigation

Air quality

Construction activities associated with the proposed works have the potential to temporarily cause local air quality impacts. Activities undertaken on site may cause dust and particulate matter to be emitted to the atmosphere. However, taking into account the nature and scale of the works and the following mitigation measures, the risk of significant impacts to air are considered to be low.

- When not in use, plant and vehicles will be switched off; there will be no idling vehicles.
- All plant, machinery and vehicles associated with the works will be maintained in order to minimise emissions, as per manufacturing and legal requirements. No significant dust, particulate matter, and exhaust emissions sources will be introduced by the works.
- Green driving techniques will be adopted, and effective route preparation and planning to be undertaken prior to works.
- All delivery vehicles carrying material with dust potential will be covered when travelling to or leaving site, preventing the spread of dust beyond the work area.
- Activities will be appropriately managed to reduce the potential for dust creation. This will involve use of measures such as dampening down or on tool extraction where required.
- Material stockpiles will be reduced as far as is reasonably practicable by using a ‘just in time’ delivery system. All material will also be stored on made ground.
- Any stockpiled material on site will be monitored daily to ensure no risks of dust emissions exists.
- Materials will be removed from site as soon as is practicable.
- Good housekeeping will be employed throughout the work.
- Surfaces will be swept where loose material remains.

With the above mitigation measures in place, it is anticipated that any air quality effects associated with the proposed works are unlikely to be significant. This receptor is not considered further in this RoD.

Cultural Heritage

Although there are records of cultural heritage interest within the scheme and within 300m of the scheme extents, any excavation works associated with the scheme are restricted to the already engineered carriageway boundary, and as such the potential for exposure of cultural heritage features is considered to be negligible. Construction of the A9 road corridor is likely to have removed any archaeological remains that may have been present.

As standard, the following good practice measures will be in place to reduce the risk of impacts to undiscovered features of cultural heritage interest:

- There will be no storage of vehicles, plant, or materials against any buildings, walls or fences.
- Should any unexpected archaeological evidence be discovered, works will stop temporarily in the vicinity and the BEAR Scotland Environment Team contacted for advice.
- People, plant, and materials shall, as much as is reasonably practicable, only be present on areas of made / engineered ground. Where access out with these areas is required for the safe and effective completion of the scheme, it will be reduced as much as is reasonably practicable and ideally be limited to access on foot.

With the above mitigation measures in place, it is anticipated that any cultural heritage effects associated with the proposed works are unlikely to be significant. This receptor is not considered further in this RoD.

Landscape and visual effects.

There is potential for minor visual impacts to the local landscape during the construction phase as a result of obstructed views due to vehicles and machinery and residual impacts through installation and/or removal of road signs. Works will be restricted to the A9 carriageway boundary and will entail replacement of sign faces, which will not alter the visual character of the trunk road, and some new signage installation. The new signage will be limited to the minimum necessary to comply with road safety standards and will be in keeping with existing road signage on the A9. The works are essential road safety upgrades and will be undertaken over a night time working pattern on a rolling programme. As such, no negative impact on the local landscape, CNP or nearby Cairngorm Mountains NSA are expected. CNP will be notified of the proposed works in advance.

Land use will not change as a result of the works, and the works will not result in any significant residual change to the visual amenity of the local landscape. The following mitigation measures will be put in place during works:

- Throughout all stages of the works, the site will be kept clean and tidy, with materials, equipment, plant and wastes appropriately stored, reducing the landscape and visual effects as much as possible.
- Works will avoid encroaching on land and areas where work is not required or is not permitted. This includes general works, storage of equipment/containers and parking.
- Where applicable, upon completion of the works, any damage to the local landscape shall be reinstated as much as is practicable.

With the above mitigation measures in place, it is anticipated that any landscape and visual effects associated with the proposed works are unlikely to be significant. This receptor is not considered further in this RoD.

Biodiversity

The scheme is located in proximity to various areas designated for biodiversity features, including River Spey SAC, Kinveachy Forest SAC and SPA, Cairngorms SAC and SPA, Loch Vaa SPA, Drumochter Hills SAC, and Drumochter Hills SPA. BEAR Scotland produced a Habitats Regulations Appraisal (HRA) Proforma in 2023 to assess potential impacts of a range of maintenance activities (including signage works) within the River Spey SAC, Drumochter Hills SAC, and Drumochter Hills SPA European Sites. The HRA Proforma outlines standard good practice measures to reduce the risk of pollution or disturbance to qualifying features of these designated sites and concluded that none of the proposed maintenance works would result in Likely Significant Effects (LSE) on the qualifying features of Spey SAC, Drumochter Hills SAC, and Drumochter Hills SPA European Sites. The HRA Proforma was approved by NatureScot and Transport Scotland as the Competent Authority.

An additional Habitats Regulations Appraisal (HRA) was carried out to assess the risk of potential effects on the Kinveachy Forest SAC and SPA, Cairngorms SAC and SPA, Loch Vaa SPA. The HRA concluded that as the works are minor, transient, and highly localised; the requirement for artificial lighting is minimal and restricted to the direct roadside verge. In addition, the works will be undertaken by hand and as such increased noise levels are not anticipated. It has been also determined that the proposed works will not result in LSE on the qualifying features of the Kinveachy Forest SAC and SPA, Cairngorms SAC and SPA, Loch Vaa SPA.

All relevant good practice measures will be detailed in the Site Environmental Management Plan (SEMP) and adhered to during works. As such, no significant impacts on the European Sites are anticipated by virtue of the following factors:

- All works are minor, transient, highly localised, and restricted to the A9 carriageway boundary with only sign installation and/or replacement being undertaken. There will be no in-stream works; therefore, no direct impacts to any of the above European sites are anticipated.
- There is no requirement for land take (or resources) or site clearance from within the sites and no works are required within any part of the site boundaries.
- The works will not involve any in-stream works or any discharges to the natural water environment, and therefore there will be no change to water quality or impact on qualifying features.
- Standard good practice measures to prevent pollution and reduce noise and lighting associated with works will be in place.
- The works will not result in significantly higher levels of noise or lighting than existing levels of traffic on the A9.
- Works will not promote the known negative pressure on the various designated species.
- No significant dust, particulate matter, and exhaust emissions sources will be introduced by the works, and standard pollution prevention measures will be in place during works.

Activities undertaken on site could potentially have a temporary adverse impact on biodiversity in the area as a result of an increased vehicle presence and the potential for disturbance to protected species and pollution of habitats. However, works are restricted to the A9 carriageway boundary, and the number of construction vehicles and construction operatives required onsite is low given the scale and scope of works. The standard good practice measures to prevent pollution and reduce noise and lighting (as noted above) will be in place across the full scheme extent. In addition, any species in the area are likely to be accustomed to noise and visual disturbance pertaining to vehicle movements on the A9 and the scheme is of short duration (40 nights) with the works moving across the 44km-long section. The potential for significant species disturbance within the area of likely construction disturbance is therefore considered to be low.

The works will be restricted to the A9 carriageway soft verge. Although one record of rhododendron was noted within 2km of the scheme, a search of AMPS did not confirm INNS within the scheme extents. There is no requirement to import topsoil and the small amounts of excavated soil required for new signposts will be spread

within the road verge at the scheme extents. As such, there is limited potential to spread or introduce INNS, invasive native perennials, or injurious flowering plant species.

Pollution controls and good practice measures to reduce impacts of works on the local environment will be detailed in the SEMP and adhered to on site. Therefore, with the following mitigation measures in place, the risk of significant impacts on biodiversity are considered to be low:

- Site personnel will remain vigilant for the presence of potentially unrecorded instances of INNS, invasive native perennials or injurious weeds in road verges throughout the works period. Should any INNS, invasive native perennials or injurious weeds be identified in working areas, no works shall take place within 7m of these areas until the BEAR Scotland Environment Team can provide further advice on additional mitigation measures.
- Works will be strictly limited to areas required for access and signage works. Unnecessary encroachment onto terrestrial or aquatic areas will not be tolerated.
- Site personnel will remain vigilant for the presence of any protected species throughout the works period. Should a protected species be noted during construction, works will temporarily halt until the species has sufficiently moved on. Any sightings of protected species shall be reported to the BEAR Scotland Environment Team.
- A ‘soft start’ will be implemented on site each day. This will involve switching on vehicles and checking under/around vehicles and the immediate work area for mammals prior to works commencing to ensure none are present and that there is a gradual increase in noise.
- Relevant toolbox talks for working with protected species will be included in the SEMP.
- Any excavations, exposed pipes/drains, or areas where an animal could become trapped (e.g., storage containers) will be covered over when not in use, at the end of each shift, and following completion of the works to avoid animals falling in and becoming trapped.
- Any artificial lighting used during night works or periods of low light levels will be directional and will avoid spilling into sensitive areas where possible.
- If fencing is utilised at any point during the works, a gap of 200mm from ground level will be provided, allowing free passage for mammals and preventing entrapment.

With the above mitigation measures in place, it is anticipated that any biodiversity effects associated with the proposed works are unlikely to be significant. This receptor is not considered further in this RoD.

Geology and Soils

All works are confined to the A9 carriageway boundary (including adjacent verges) and are restricted to signage works. Although it is expected that there might be sign installation works within the Slochd GCRS, Allt Dubhaig GCRS and Drumochter SSSI, all works will be confined to the trunk road boundary with only minor excavation of the top soil layers for installation of signs being undertaken. The works do not fall under Operation Requiring Consent (ORC), however NatureScot will be notified and consent obtained (if required). All excavated soil material will be side casted within the site. The following measures will be applied to on site:

- The parking of machinery/personnel and storage of equipment on road verges will not be permitted.
- Mitigation measures to prevent contamination of soils through loss of containment will be strictly adhered to.
- Standard good practice measures, like containment measures for working near water, to prevent water and soil pollution will be detailed in the SEMP and adhered to on site.

With the above mitigation measures in place, it is anticipated that any geology and soils effects associated with the proposed works are unlikely to be significant. This receptor is not considered further in this RoD.

Material assets and waste

There is potential for impacts as a result of resource depletion through use and transportation of new materials. However, materials will be sourced locally where possible and the following mitigation measures will be put in place:

- Materials will be sourced from recycled origins as far as reasonably practicable within design specifications.
- Care will be taken to order the correct quantity of required materials to prevent the disposal of unused materials.
- Where possible, minimal packaging will be requested on required deliveries to reduce unnecessary waste and production of packaging materials.

There is potential for impacts during works as a result of the improper storage or disposal of waste. The following mitigation measures will be put in place:

- The waste hierarchy (Reduce, Reuse, Recycle and Dispose) will be employed throughout the construction works.
- The subcontractor will adhere to waste management legislation and ensure they comply with their Duty of Care.
- Containment measures will be in place to prevent debris or pollutants from entering the surrounding environment.
- All wastes and unused materials will be removed from site in a safe and legal manner by a licensed waste carrier upon completion of the works. The appointed waste carrier will have a valid SEPA waste carrier registration, a copy of which will be provided to and retained by BEAR Scotland as early as possible.
- All appropriate waste documentation will be present on site and will be available for inspection. A copy of the Duty of Care paperwork must be provided and filed appropriately in accordance with the Code of Practice (as made under Section 34 of Environmental Protection Act 1990 as amended).
- Re-use and recycling of waste will be encouraged and undertaken where possible, and the subcontractor will be required to fully outline their plans and provide documentary evidence for waste arising from the works (e.g., waste carrier's licence, transfer notes, and waste exemption certificates).
- Staff will be informed that littering will not be tolerated. Staff will be encouraged to collect any litter seen on site.

With the above mitigation measures in place, it is anticipated that any material assets and waste effects associated with the proposed works are unlikely to be significant. This receptor is not considered further in this RoD.

Noise and vibration

Construction activities associated with the proposed works have the potential to cause noise and vibration impacts through the use of equipment and construction vehicles for the proposed activities. The works will employ a night-time working pattern, and several properties fall within 300m of the schemes. Due to the short duration and localised nature of the works, the proposed scheme is anticipated to result in temporary minor noise impacts during the construction programme. The following mitigation measures will be put in place:

- The Best Practicable Means, as defined in Section 72 of the Control of Pollution Act 1974, will be employed at all times to reduce noise to a minimum. On-site construction tasks will be programmed to be as efficient as possible, with a view to limiting noise disruption to local sensitive receptors.

- Residents within 300m of the scheme will be notified in advance of the works, likely by a letter drop. This notification will include details of proposed nature, timings and duration of the works, and a 24-hour contact number for the BEAR Scotland Control Room.
- The Environmental Health Officers (EHOs) for the Highland Council and Perth and Kinross Council will be notified of works.
- The noisiest works will be programmed to be completed as early in the nightly schedule as possible, where reasonably practicable.
- All site personnel will be fully briefed in advance of works regarding the need to minimise noise during works and of the site-specific sensitivities.
- All plant will be operated in such a way that minimises noise emissions and will have been maintained regularly to the appropriate standards.
- Where fitted, and where permitted under Health and Safety requirements, white noise reversing alarms will be utilised during construction.
- Where ancillary plant such as generators are required, they will be positioned so as to cause minimum noise disturbance. Where deemed necessary, acoustic screens will be utilised.

With the above mitigation measures in place, it is anticipated that any noise and vibration effects associated with the proposed works are unlikely to be significant. This receptor is not considered further in this RoD.

Population and human health

During construction, activities undertaken on site may have temporary adverse impacts on local residents, vehicle travellers, and non-motorised road users (NMUs) as a result of construction presence, and associated noise and delays due to traffic management measures. Numerous access points to local roads lie within the scheme extents, however local access will be granted where required. Road users and local bus operators will be informed of works through a media release, which will provide details of construction dates and times. The works will be of limited duration and will move progressively along the full scheme extent.

No significant congestion issues are noted during the proposed construction hours; however increased journey times may occur, but these are considered insignificant considering the relatively low traffic counts and works being undertaken out of the traffic peak hours. Numerous NMUs lie in proximity to the scheme, however the access to NMU facilities will be maintained and the works are being undertaken at night when footfall and cyclist count is at its lowest.

With the following mitigation measures in place, the risk of significant impacts on population and human health is considered to be low:

- Notification will be issued to local residents and local public transport operators prior to commencement of the works, advising of any proposed works and expected restrictions.
- Any changes of schedule (e.g. change from night-time works to daytime works) will be communicated to local residents throughout the programme.
- Appropriate provisions / measures will be implemented within the traffic management to allow the safe passage of NMUs of all abilities through the site.
- In the event of bus stop closures, appropriate alternative bus stops will be set-up outwith traffic management, which will be clearly signed and fully accessible.
- Construction lighting will consider the need to avoid illuminating surrounding environment to avoid a nuisance at night, and non-essential lighting will be switched off at night.
- Journey planning information will be available for drivers online at the trafficscotland.org website. Journey planning information will also be available for drivers online through BEAR Scotland's social media platforms.

With the above mitigation measures in place, it is anticipated that any population and human health effects associated with the proposed works are unlikely to be significant. This receptor is not considered further in this RoD.

Road drainage and the water environment

During the works, there is potential for temporary impacts on the water environment. Potential changes in water quality from pollution events (either by accidental spillage of sediments, particulate matter, chemicals, fuels or by mobilisation of these in surface water caused by rain/flooding) during works have the potential to have a direct or indirect effect on the surrounding waterbodies. The following mitigation measures will be put in place to reduce the risk of pollution incidents as a result of works:

- The scheme will not entail any in-stream works.
- Standard working practices to comply with The Water Environment (Controlled Activities) (Scotland) Regulations 2011 (as amended) for works in or near water are detailed in the SEMP and will be adhered to on site.
- No discharges into any watercourses or drainage systems are permitted. Appropriate containment measures will be in place to prevent any loss of construction materials into the water environment.

- An incident response (contingency) plan will be put in place to reduce the risk from pollution incidents or accidental spillages. All necessary containment equipment, including suitable spill kits (for oil and chemicals) will be available on site, quickly accessible if needed, and staff trained in their use.
- All spills will be logged and reported. In the event of any spills into the water environment, all works will stop, and the incident will be reported to the project manager and the BEAR Scotland Environmental Team. SEPA will be informed of any such incident as soon as possible using the SEPA Pollution Hotline.
- All plant and equipment will be regularly inspected for any signs of damage and leaks. A checklist will be present to make sure that the checks have been carried out.
- Storage of hazardous material, oil and fuel containers will be distanced more than 10m away from any watercourses.
- If required, a designated refuelling area will be identified. Fuel bowsers will be stored on an impermeable area and will be fully bunded. This will be distanced more than 10m from any watercourses.
- During refuelling of smaller mobile plant, a funnel will be used, and drip trays will be in place. Care will be taken to reduce the chance of spillages. Spill kits will be quickly accessible to capture any spills should they occur. The ground / stone around the site of a spill will be removed, double bagged and taken off site as special contaminated waste.
- Generators and static plant may have the potential to leak fuel and / or other hydrocarbons and will have bunding with a capacity of 110%. If these are not bunded then drip trays must also be supplied beneath the equipment with a capacity of 110%.

With the above mitigation measures in place, it is anticipated that any road drainage and the water environment effects associated with the proposed works are unlikely to be significant. This receptor is not considered further in this RoD.

Climate

Construction activities associated with the proposed scheme works have the potential to cause local air quality impacts as a result of the emission of greenhouse gases through the use of vehicles and machinery, material use and production, and transportation of materials to and from site. The following mitigation measures will be put in place:

- BEAR Scotland will adhere to their Carbon Management Policy.

- Local contractors and suppliers will be used as far as practicable to reduce fuel use and greenhouse gas emitted as part of the works.
- Where possible, materials will be sourced locally to reduce greenhouse gas emissions associated with materials movement, and waste will be disposed at local landfill.

With the above mitigation measures in place, it is anticipated that any climate effects associated with the proposed works are unlikely to be significant. This receptor is not considered further in this RoD.

Vulnerability of the project to risks

Numerous areas of the A9 carriageway within the works location are recorded as being between low risk (0.1% chance each year) and high risk of (10% chance each year) of flooding. Works will be programmed as far as is reasonably practicable to avoid periods of adverse weather or heavy rainfall.

Works are restricted to the boundary of the A9 carriageway and traffic management will be designed in line with existing guidance. Verge TM will be prioritised however if TM on live carriageway lines is required, it will consist of lane closures facilitated by two-way temporary traffic lights. Where required, alternative NMU provisions/routes will be included in the traffic management setup, to minimise impact of the works on NMUs.

A Traffic Management Plan (TMP), which includes measures to avoid or reduce disruption to road traffic, will be produced in accordance with the Traffic Signs Manual (Department of Transport 2009). The TMP will ensure that there is no severance of community assets, access routes or residential development.

These measures, along with mitigation measures and standard working practices, will be detailed in the SEMP and adhered to on site. The vulnerability of the project to risks of major accidents and disasters is considered to be low.

Assessment of cumulative effects

During construction, activities associated with the works may create several types of minor temporary disturbances such as changes to noise and vibration and air quality. However, these impacts will be temporary in nature and are not anticipated to result in a significant cumulative effect.

A search of the Perth and Kinross Council (Map Search) and Highland Council (Map Search) Planning Portals identified a number of approved planning applications within 300m of the scheme:

- 24/01563/PNO Erection of agricultural building
- 23/05939/FUL Temporary siting of ice rink within marquee (renewal)
- 24/00901/FUL Erection of extension and formation of extra decking area
- 23/04693/CLE Use of property as short term letting unit
- 24/00692/FUL Erection of walls, gates and flag pole
- 24/00690/SCOP Clune Wind Farm - Erection and operation of 27 wind turbines with a maximum blade tip height of 200m, battery energy storage system and ancillary infrastructure

It has been noted that there is potential for cumulative effects to arise from overlapping construction periods with the other developments. However, due to a number of factors - such as the scale of the development, and the timing and nature of the works and mitigation committed to for the proposed scheme (SEMP) - the assessment concluded that no significant cumulative effects are anticipated during the construction phase. It is expected that the projects will not overlap due to signage works being undertaken during the night-time. No cumulative effects on people or property receptors are anticipated during operation given there will be no change to the existing road conditions.

A search of the Scottish Roads Works Commissioner website (Map Search) has identified that no other roadworks are currently ongoing, or noted as being planned, on the trunk road at the same time as this scheme. However, BEAR Scotland are programming a number of other signage works to be undertaken in proximity to the scheme extents; all works will be in line with appropriate guidance and contractual requirements. All schemes are programmed to take into account existing and future planned works, with a view of limiting any cumulative effects relating to TM. As a result of this exercise, where a potential for cumulative impacts is identified, BEAR Scotland will reprogramme schemes to avoid / limit any cumulative effects or will utilise existing TM to complete multiple schemes at once. This approach allows BEAR Scotland to effectively manage the potential cumulative effects as a result of TM, resulting in minimal disruption to users of the Scottish trunk road network.

Overall, it is unlikely that the proposed works will have a significant cumulative effect with any other future works in the area.

Assessments of the environmental effects

As detailed in the Description of Main Environmental Impacts and Proposed Mitigation section within this Record of Determination, there are no significant effects anticipated on any environmental receptors as a result of the proposed works. An Habitat Regulations Appraisal has determined that the works will not result in Likely Significant Effects on designated features of the River Spey SAC, Drumochter Hills

SPA, Drumochter Hills SAC, Kinveachy Forest SAC and SPA, Cairngorms SAC and SPA and Loch Vaa SPA.

Statement of case in support of a Determination that a statutory EIA is not required

This is a relevant project in terms of section 55A(16) of the Roads (Scotland) Act 1984 as it is a project for the improvement of a road and the completed works (together with any area occupied by apparatus, equipment, machinery, materials, plant, spoil heaps, or other such facilities or stores required during the period of construction) is situated in whole within the CNP and partially within Drumochter Hills SSSI which are sensitive areas within the meaning of regulation 2(1) of the Environmental Impact Assessment (Scotland) Regulations 1999.

The project has been subject to screening using the Annex III criteria to determine whether a formal Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) is required under the Roads (Scotland) Act 1984 (as amended by The Roads (Scotland) Act 1984 (Environmental Impact Assessment) Regulations 2017). Screening using Annex III criteria and review of available information has not identified the need for a statutory EIA.

The project will not have significant effects on the environment by virtue of factors such as:

Characteristics of the scheme:

- The total working area is restricted to <1ha of existing carriageway boundary.
- The works include signage works across a 45km stretch of A9 with all works restricted to the carriageway verges.
- The works will be temporary, transient, highly localised, and completed during night-time hours on a rolling programme.
- Works are not expected to result in significant disturbance to protected species that may be present in the wider area.
- The risk of major accidents or disasters is considered to be low.
- No impacts on the environment are expected during the operational phase as a result of works. The works are expected to result in positive impacts on road users during the operational phase.
- Measures will be in place to ensure appropriate removal and disposal of waste.

Location of the works:

- The River Spey SAC, Drumochter Hill SAC and Drumochter Hill SPA lie within 2km of the scheme. An HRA Proforma was produced in 2023 which concluded that the proposed works will not result in LSE on the qualifying features of these European sites (or the associated SSSIs). The HRA Proforma was approved by NatureScot and Transport Scotland as the Competent Authority. In addition to existing a new HRA Proforma was produced for Kinveachy Forest SAC and SPA, Cairngorms SAC and SPA and Loch Vaa SPA European sites which also concluded no LSE from to the designated features of these sites.
- The scheme extent is partly located within Allt Dubhaig GCRS, which is overlapped by Drumochter Hills SSSI.
- The scheme extent is located within CNP, which will be notified of the proposed works.
- The scheme will be confined within the existing carriageway boundary and as a result will not require any land take or alter any local land uses or habitats.
- Any impacts to the local landscape during the construction phase will be minor and will not result in significant visual changes to the A9 road corridor or the CNP. In addition, no operational impacts are anticipated.

Characteristics of potential impacts of the works:

- Any potential impacts of the works are expected to be temporary, short-term, non-significant, and limited to the construction phase.
- Measures will be in place to ensure appropriate removal and disposal of waste.
- Works are programmed to only take 40 nights to complete on a rolling programme, with the aim being to complete the noisiest works by 23:00.
- Residual impacts are considered to be beneficial for the travelling public which may use this stretch of carriageway.
- The SEMP will include plans to address environmental incidents.
- Mitigation measures detailed above and in the SEMP are put in place with the objective to prevent and, if required, subsequently control any potential impacts on sensitive receptors.
- In the event that INNS are found on site, measures to prevent potential INNS spread will be implemented.
- No in-combination effects have been identified.

References of supporting documentation

BEAR Scotland. 2023. Roads and Bridges Maintenance Activities within the Drumochter Hills, River Spey and River Spey - Insh Marshes European Sites, Highland Region Habitats Regulations Appraisal (HRA) Proforma - Rev 2.0.

BEAR Scotland. 2024. Habitats Regulations Appraisal (HRA) Proforma A9 Dalraddy to Slochd.

Annex A

"sensitive area" means any of the following:

- land notified under sections 3(1) or 5(1) (sites of special scientific interest) of the Nature Conservation (Scotland) Act 2004
- land in respect of which an order has been made under section 23 (nature conservation orders) of the Nature Conservation (Scotland) Act 2004
- a European site within the meaning of regulation 10 of the Conservation (Natural Habitats, &c.) Regulations 1994
- a property appearing in the World Heritage List kept under article 11(2) of the 1972 UNESCO Convention for the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage
- a scheduled monument within the meaning of the Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Areas Act 1979
- a National Scenic Area as designated by a direction made by the Scottish Ministers under section 263A of the Town and Country Planning (Scotland) Act 1997
- an area designated as a National Park by a designation order made by the Scottish Ministers under section 6(1) of the National Parks (Scotland) Act 2000.

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