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Environmental Impact Assessment Record of Determination

A9 Munlochy Resilience Tree Felling

Contents

Project Details

Description

BEAR Scotland has been commissioned by Transport Scotland to carry out tree felling within the trunk road boundary along the A9 at Munlochy near North Kessock on the Black Isle (*Grid reference map*). Works will entail the felling of approximately 675 Category A-D trees and 8 Category E-G trees in addition to removal of scrub and netted fencing on the northbound side of the carriageway. Category of tree sizes is assessed using tree height, mean crown spread, and a species-specific branch density factor index (Standards for Highways Series NG 3000 – Landscape and Ecology page 9). Works on the southbound side of the carriageway will entail removal of approximately 850 Category A-D trees in addition to removal of scrub. The scheme has a total length of approximately 880m (540m northbound, 480m southbound with some overlap) and a total area of 1.2ha.

These works are required due to a substantial amount of timber harvesting undertaken in the land surrounding the trunk road by Forestry and Land Scotland which has left previously protected strips of trees adjacent to the trunk road vulnerable to blowing over in strong winds. Areas on the northbound side were harvested in recent years, and the southbound side is scheduled for thinning and harvesting in winter 2024/25. Trees adjacent to the trunk road have been identified as at-risk based on photographs taken on site and a history of similar failures following assessment by the BEAR NW Landscaping team,

The works are currently programmed to begin in Winter 2024/25 with a provisional start date of 1st December 2024. Works will be carried out over approximately two weeks using a daytime working pattern (likely 07:00 – 19:00). If the programme changes, there might be requirement for nighttime working. Traffic management will consist of single lane closures on the dual carriageway or closure of laybys within the scheme. The scheme is located on a trunk road stretch with limited pedestrian facilities present, however non-motorised users (NMUs) will still be accommodated within TM. No pedestrian diversions are required.

Location

The scheme is located on the A9 approximately 1.5km northwest of North Kessock on the Black Isle in the Highland Council area (Figure 1 & Figure 2). The scheme lies between the following grid references:

- Northbound: NH 62342 49815 - NH 61889 50121
- Southbound: NH 62222 49926 - NH 62627 49656

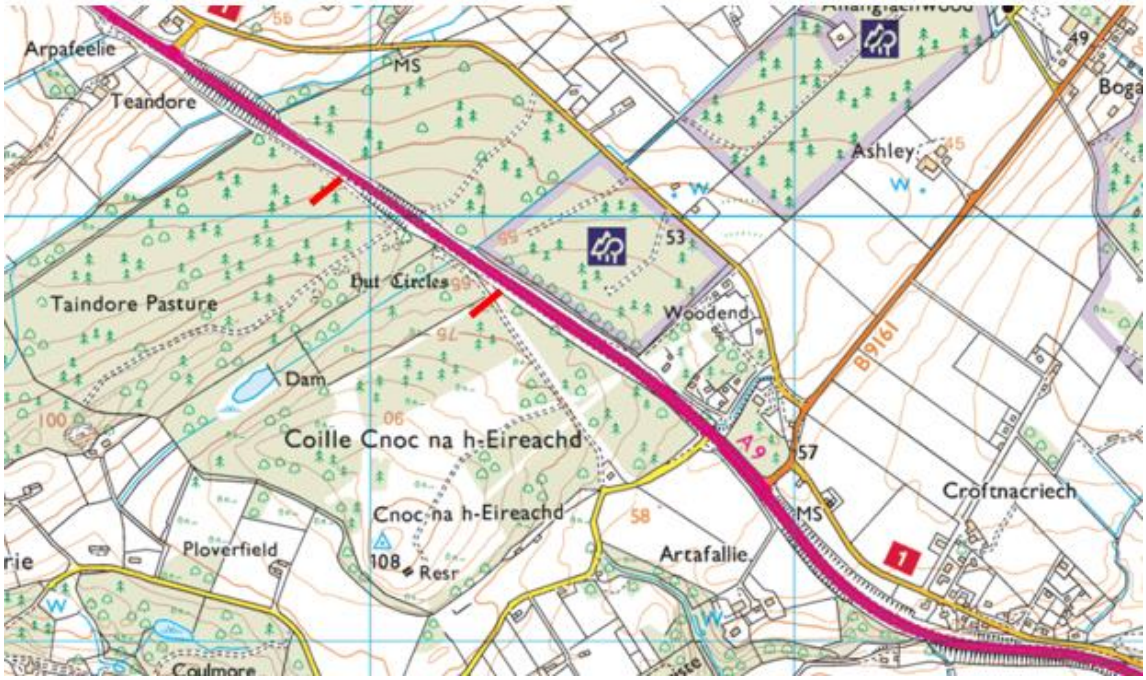

Figure 1. Location of A9 Munlochy **northbound** with red pins showing scheme extents. Source: Asset Management Performance System (AMPS). © Europa Technologies Ltd. Contains Ordnance Survey data © Crown copyright and database right 2018

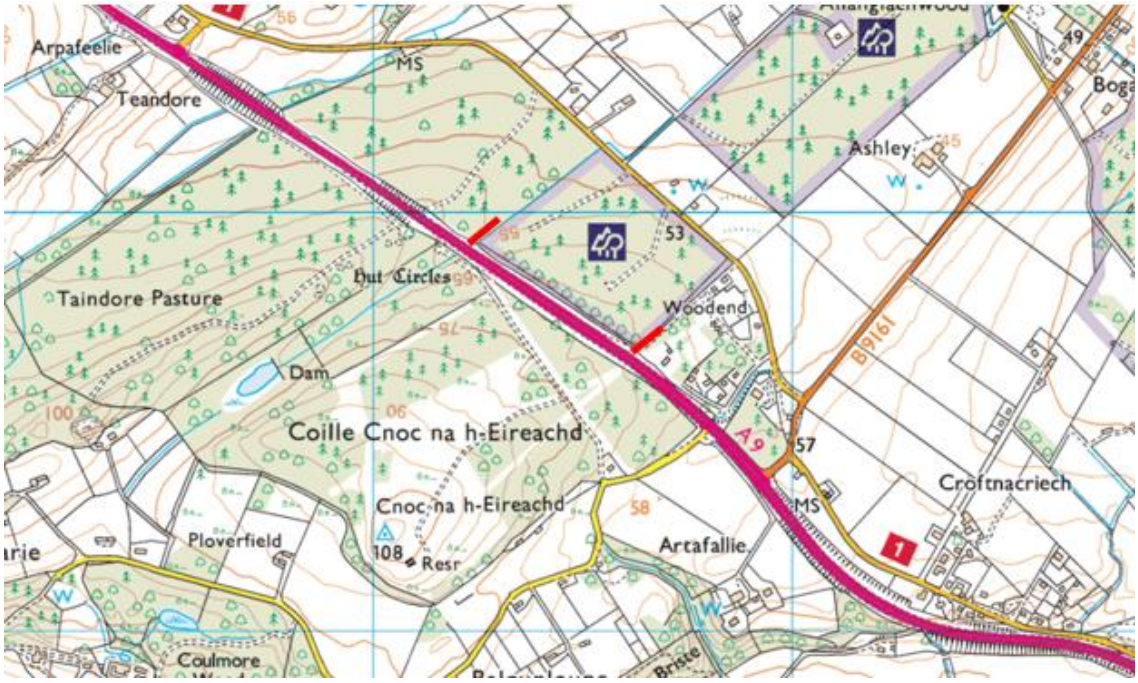

Figure 1. Location of A9 Munlochy **southbound** with red pins showing scheme extents. Source: Asset Management Performance System (AMPS). © Europa Technologies Ltd. Contains Ordnance Survey data © Crown copyright and database right 2018

Description of local environment

Air quality

The nearest air pollution monitoring station is located 5km southeast of the scheme in Inverness and records low levels of air pollution over the previous 90 days (Scottish Air Quality).

The scheme does not lie within 300m of any Air Quality Management Areas (Scottish Air Quality).

The Scottish Pollution Release Inventory (SPRI) records the following air pollution release sites within 10km of the scheme:

- Allanfearn Sewage Treatment Works, located 9km east of the scheme. Relevant pollutants include ammonia, hydrogen cyanide, and nitrogen oxides (NO and NO_2).
- Carbon Fibers, Muir of Ord Industrial Estate, located 9.5km west of the scheme. Relevant pollutants include methane.

The scheme lies within a rural area where baseline levels of air quality are anticipated to be high, with primary impacts on air quality coming from road traffic on the A9 and secondary sources derived from nearby forestry activities.

Cultural heritage

According to PastMap the following cultural heritage features are present within 300m of the scheme (PastMap):

- Eleven Historic Environment Records, with the nearest, a record of a hut circle settlement, lying partially within the trunk road boundary.
- Three Canmore database records, with the nearest located 80m east of the scheme.

There are no records of Listed Buildings, Garden & Designed Landscapes, Battlefields, Scheduled Monuments, Conservation Areas, or World Heritage Sites within 300m of the works.

Construction of the A9 trunk road and surrounding commercial forestry activities are likely to have removed any unlisted cultural heritage features from the proposed works location.

Landscape and visual effects

The scheme does not lie within any National Parks or National Scenic Areas (SiteLink).

NatureScot records the Landscape Character Type within the scheme as "345 – Farmed and Forested Slopes – Ross & Cromarty". This character type has the following Key Characteristics (NatureScot):

- Complex pattern of farmland, tree cover, forests and woodland on sloped, often terraced land rising from firths or river plains to mid-elevations and often backed by large scale forest plantations where there are adjacent hills.
- Overall impression of a well-treed landscape, but within which farming is the dominant land use.
- Generally higher proportion of trees, woodland and forest plantations in upper slopes, forming a well-connected network within which fields are located.
- Terraces of open land, interspersed with forest plantations and woodlands on mid slopes.
- Gradual change to more open landscapes at lower levels.
- Wide range and distribution of archaeological sites indicating a long history of human settlement.
- Occasional large settlements in a predominantly rural landscape.
- Views from more open, terraced areas across lowlands or firth to hills or out to sea.

Land use surrounding the scheme is dominated by commercial forestry operations with areas of pastural farmland in the wider landscape.

The A9 Trunk Road, within the North West, 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. The A9 within the scheme is a two-lane dual carriageway.

Biodiversity

The scheme is located within 2km of the following European protected sites:

- Moray Firth Special Area of Conservation (SAC)
- Moray Firth Special Protection Area (SPA)
- Inner Moray Firth SPA

- Inner Moray Firth RAMSAR

The NBN Atlas records no invasive non-native species (INNS) of plants and injurious weeds within 2km of the scheme.

Transport Scotland's Asset Management Performance System (AMPS) records one instance of common ragwort (*Jacobaea vulgaris*) and giant hogweed (*Heracleum mantegazzianum*) within the northbound verge of the scheme.

The Highland Council does not record any trees or woodlands covered by Tree Preservation Orders within 300m of the scheme (The Highland Council).

Woodland on the northbound side of the A9 adjacent to the trunk road boundary is recorded on the Ancient Woodland Inventory Scotland as 'Long-established (of plantation origin)' (Scotland's Environment).

Habitats surrounding the scheme include a large amount of commercial plantation forestry with large tracts of farmland present in the wider landscape. Few freshwater features are present in the vicinity of the scheme.

Geology and soils

The scheme does not lie within any Geological Conservation Review Sites or geological SSSIs (SiteLink).

Bedrock within the scheme is recorded as a conglomerate of the Kilmuir Conglomerate Formation (BGS GeologyViewer). Superficial deposits of Devensian diamicton till are present.

Soils within the scheme are recorded as humus-iron podzols and noncalcareous gleys (Scotland's Soils). The 2016 carbon and peatland map records the areas a "Class 0" which indicated mineral soils with no peat association

Material assets and waste

As this scheme involves tree felling and clearance there are no new materials required.

Wastes generated will include trees not fit for sawn timber and as such most will be chipped for biomass or sent to a nearby processing plant for use in manufacture of chipboard materials.

As the value of the scheme does not exceed £350,000 a Site Waste Management Plan (SWMP) is not required.

No site compound is required for these works. Storage of plant and equipment will be within TM on the A9 carriageway

Noise and vibration

The scheme does not lie within any Candidate Noise Management Areas (Transport Scotland).

Modelled noise data for this area records a range of between 60-75dB (SEPA - ArcGIS).

As the scheme lies within a rural area, the main noise sources are anticipated to arise from road traffic on the A9 with secondary sources from nearby commercial forestry activities.

Population and human health

There are eight residential properties within 300m of the scheme, with the nearest located 60m east of the southern scheme extent. This property receives no acoustic screening from either topography or woodland, however the remaining properties all benefit from interceding woodland belts.

There are two laybys located within the scheme extents.

National Cycle Network Route 1 is located 280m north of the scheme at its nearest point (OSMaps).

There are no Core Paths (The Highland Council) or routes listed on WalkHighlands within 300m of the scheme (WalkHighlands). There are no footpaths, bus stops, or other pedestrian facilities within the scheme extents.

The nearest traffic count point (ID: 80014) is located within the scheme extents and records an annual average daily flow of 24,445 vehicles, with 5% comprised of heavy goods vehicles (Department for Transport).

Road drainage and the water environment

The scheme lies within the Black Isle groundwater body (ID: 150643) which was classified by SEPA in 2022 as being in ‘Good’ condition and which is also a Drinking Water Protected Area (Ground) (SEPA).

Allanglach Burn (ID: 20155) is a surface watercourse located approximately 200m north of the scheme and was classified by SEPA in 2022 as being in 'Good' condition.

There is a single small unnamed and unclassified drainage channel which is channelled beneath the A9 within the scheme extents.

SEPA's Flood Map records patches of the road within the scheme as having a high likelihood of surface water flooding (defined as likely to occur once in every ten years) (SEPA Flood Map).

Road drainage within the scheme is provided via top-entry gullies.

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 includes a target of reducing CO2 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 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

Activities associated with the proposed works have the potential to temporarily cause local air quality impacts. The main sources are likely to be exhaust emissions from ancillary plant and vehicles as well as sawdust and debris from felling operations. As a result, there is potential for dust, particulate matter, and exhaust emissions 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.

- Ancillary plant, vehicles and non-road mobile machinery (NRMM) will have been regularly maintained, paying attention to the integrity of exhaust systems.
- Ancillary plant, vehicles and NRMM will be switched off when stationary to prevent exhaust emissions (e.g., there will be no idling vehicles).
- Cutting, grinding, and sawing equipment (if required) will be fitted or used in conjunction with suitable dust suppression techniques e.g., local exhaust ventilation system that fits directly onto tools.
- Regular monitoring (e.g., by engineer or Clerk of Works) will take place when activities generating air pollution are occurring. In the unlikely event that unacceptable levels of air pollution are emanating from the site, the operation will, where practicable, be modified and re-checked to verify that the corrective action has been effective. Actions to be considered include: (a) minimizing cutting and grinding on-site, (b) reducing the operating hours, (c) changing the method of working, etc.
- 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.
- Material products and wastes will be removed from site as soon as is practicable.
- Good housekeeping will be employed throughout the work.

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 Record of Determination (RoD

Cultural heritage

The works are not located within any protected cultural heritage sites. While there is one cultural heritage feature lying within the works area, this is a record indicative of a broad area of hut settlements and does not indicate any specific features. Some

hut circles are recorded 50m south of the scheme and will be highlighted within the SEMP as areas to be avoided. In addition, both construction of the A9 trunk road and adjacent commercial forestry works are likely to have removed any archaeological remains that may have been present within this road corridor. In addition, no excavation is required as part of the works.

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.
- Historic Environment Scotland will be consulted with as required, in the event of any discovery/exposure of suspected archaeological features.
- People, plant, and materials will, as much as is reasonably practicable, only be present on areas of made / engineered ground (including forestry tracks). Access required out with these areas will be reduced as much as is reasonably practicable and will utilise as few access points/tracks as possible.

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 will be a short-term impact on the landscape character and visual amenity of the site as a result of the presence of construction plant, vehicles, and TM. In addition, there will be a long-term visual impact upon completion of works due to the removal of a large number of trees from the vicinity of the A9. However, these trees are being removed due to the high risk of falling during periods of high winds (which would also cause uplift of root plates, a greater visual impact) and as such the long-term impact may be similar to if no felling was done, based on similar incidents in the past. Works also do not lie within any visually-sensitive areas (such as National Parks or National Scenic Areas).

In addition, 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 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 will be reinstated as much as is practicable.
- The site will be left clean and tidy following construction.

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

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. There will also be a residual impact following the completion of works due to the felling of trees which may be used as habitat for protected species. However, as the recently felled trees adjacent to the works area form part of a commercial forestry plantation, this is considered generally poor habitat and as such it is assumed there is limited presence of protected species. In addition, pre-works checks for protected species which reside in trees will be undertaken prior to any felling which will inform the need for any additional surveys or licence requirements as required by relevant legislation.

The scheme lies within 2km of a number of protected European sites including the Moray Firth SAC, Moray Firth SPA, Inner Moray Firth SPA, and Inner Moray Firth RAMSAR, however no impacts are anticipated as a result of works due to the following considerations:

- No works will take place within any of the European sites
- There is no direct connectivity between the scheme and the European sites, and there is a large amount of interceding topography and forestry.
- Potential for a pollution incident is remote
- There are no nearby ex-situ sites likely to be used by the bird species of the SPAs

One record of giant hogweed is noted within the verge of the scheme extents and as such a relevant toolbox talk will be included within the SEMP. Site operatives will also be advised to avoid any instances of INNS found within the verges. Works will also not require any excavation of soil. 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 Site Environmental Management Plan (SEMP) and adhered to on site. Any protected species in the area are likely to be accustomed to road noise on the A9 and the scheme is of short duration (two weeks of daytime works) and will be undertaken on a rolling programme. Works have also been programmed to take place well outside of the nesting bird season. Therefore, with the following mitigation measures in place, the risk of significant impacts on biodiversity are considered to be low:

- Pre-works checks of trees will be undertaken. This will include ground-based inspections which will inform any subsequent survey requirements (such as climbed inspections) and licencing requirements in order to comply with relevant wildlife legislation. All checks and surveys will be organised through the subcontractor.
- Works will be strictly limited to areas required for access and to carry out the works. Unnecessary encroachment onto terrestrial or aquatic areas will not be tolerated.
- All construction operatives will be briefed through toolbox talks prior to works commencing, which will be included in the SEMP. The toolbox talks will provide information on the legislation, general ecology, and best practice measures for relevant protected species.
- 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 will be reported to the BEAR Scotland Environmental Team.
- Artificial lighting will only be used to illuminate the worksite while works are active.
- Personnel will remain vigilant for the presence of INNS or injurious weeds in road verges throughout the works period. Should any INNS be identified in working areas, works will be restricted to a 7m buffer of any growth where reasonably practicable.
- 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.
- 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.
- 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.

- Plant, machinery and equipment must be fitted with effective silencers where possible. Where fitted, and where permitted under Health and Safety requirements, white noise reversing alarms will be utilised during construction.
- Where possible, inherently quiet plant will be selected for construction works.
- All plant, machinery, and vehicles will be switched off when not in use

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

Works will take place outwith the A9 carriageway verge and likely require heavy machinery and as such there may be localised impacts on soil during the works. The felling of trees may also have a long term impact on soil quality and structure. However, existing woodland tracks will be used to facilitate works where possible and felling of trees will leave roots and stumps in-situ which provides better long-term soil structure when compared with trees which have blown over which causes severe soil disturbance due to uplifting of root plates. No excavation of soil is planned for these works and no peat soils are present within the works area.

No works are required within geologically sensitive sites such as SSSIs or GCRSs. Therefore, with the following mitigation measures in place, the risk of significant impacts on geology and soils are considered to be low

- Mitigation measures to prevent contamination of soils through loss of containment will be strictly adhered to.
- The parking of machinery/vehicles and storage of equipment on road verges will be minimised as far as is reasonably practicable.
- Upon completion of the works, any damage to the local landscape (i.e., damage to the embankments) will be reinstated as much as is practicable.
- All relevant soil management toolbox talks will be included in the SEMP and sediment control measures will be in place to prevent soil eroding into the unnamed waterbody and travelling downstream.
- Additional pollution prevention measures as outlined in Road drainage and the water environment will be adhered to during construction.

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 of machinery and transportation. However, the use of machinery will be limited to minimal required times and machinery will not be left idling unnecessary.

There is potential for impacts during works as a result of the improper storage or disposal of waste. As the majority of trees will not be fit for sawn timber, they will be chipped for biomass or sent for shredding to be repurposed as chipboard. The following mitigation measures will also 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 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 be available for inspection. A copy of the Duty of Care paperwork will 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 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.
- Where applicable, all temporary signage will be removed from site on completion of the works.

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

Activities associated with the proposed works have the potential to cause noise and vibration impacts through the use of equipment and plant for the proposed activities. The works will employ a daytime working pattern, for a period of two weeks.

Eight residential properties lie within 300m of the scheme; the nearest of which is located 60m east of the scheme. As such, the proposed scheme is anticipated to result in temporary minor noise increases for nearby residential properties 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 tasks will be programmed to be as efficient as possible, with a view to limiting noise disruption to local sensitive receptors.
- 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 have the potential to have temporary adverse impacts on local residents, vehicle travellers and NMUs. 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 outwith the peak tourist season. No NMU facilities are present within the scheme.

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

- The works schedule and any changes to this will be communicated to local residents prior to and throughout the programme.
- Non-essential lighting will be switched off at night.
- Appropriate provisions / measures will be implemented within the traffic management to allow the safe passage of NMUs of all abilities through the site.

- 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'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

There is potential for temporary impacts on the water environment due to operation of plant within and within proximity to watercourses and/or drainage systems, which may lead to 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).

No in-water works will take place and there is no requirement for the abstraction or transfers of water from, or discharges to, a waterbody. As such, the potential for a direct pollution incident within a waterbody is unlikely. Experience gained from BEAR maintenance schemes elsewhere on the network has shown that where standard good working practice is adopted (e.g., adherence to SEPA good practice guidance, utilisation of drain covers or similar, etc.), water quality is protected.

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 will be detailed in the SEMP and adhered to on site.
- No discharges into any watercourses or drainage systems will be 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 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 shall 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 shall 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

Activities associated with the proposed 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, plant use, and transportation of waste from site. While works will involve cutting down a large number of trees, the majority are of a small size, therefore the impact on climate and local carbon storage is considered minimal. 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, waste will be repurposed for biomass or chipboard production.

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

There will be no anticipated change to the likelihood of flooding on the A9 within the scheme extents upon completion of the works.

Works are being carried out to eliminate the risk of tree fall on the A9 within the scheme during severe weather events.

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 cumulative effects

The proposed works are not anticipated to result in significant environmental effects.

A search of the Highland Council Planning Portal (Map Search) did not identify any approved planning applications within 300m of the scheme extents over the last 2 years. Therefore, due to the nature of the proposed works, no cumulative effects are anticipated with any other developments in the vicinity.

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. Due to the nature of the proposed works, no cumulative effects are anticipated with any other developments in the vicinity.

BEAR Scotland programme all of their proposed works 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 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.

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) exceed 1 hectare in area.

The project has been subject to screening using the Annex III criteria to determine whether a formal Environmental Impact Assessment 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, reference to consultations undertaken 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:

- Works entail removal of 1,533 trees in a 1.2ha area along the A9.
- Works will be undertaken during daylight hours for a duration of approximately two weeks.
- No excavation is required as part of the works.
- The risk of major accidents or disasters is considered to be low.

Location of the scheme:

- The scheme is not located within any European protected sites and while several are located within 2km of the scheme, there is no connectivity with these sites.
- There are no pedestrian facilities located within the scheme extents.
- The scheme is not located within any visually-sensitive areas.

Characteristics of potential impacts of the scheme:

- The scheme entails proactive felling of trees which are now unprotected and would likely fall during periods of high winds causing a risk for road users as well as loss of habitat, major visual impact, and disturbance of soil structure.
- Pre-works surveys will be conducted to ensure there will be no impacts on protected species which may reside within the trees.
- Measures will be in place to ensure appropriate removal and disposal of waste.
- A slight negative impact on the environment is 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 due to increased road safety.
- Works will reduce vulnerability of the road to the risk or severity of major accidents/disasters that would impact on the environment due to the proactive removal of potentially dangerous trees.
- Mitigation measures detailed above (and in the SEMP) will be put in place with the objective to prevent and, if required, subsequently control any potential impacts on sensitive receptors.

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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