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04/06/2026

Dear Sir / Madam

Golspie Pier Beach Groyne Environmental Impact Assessment Screening Opinion Request

Atmos Consulting Ltd ('Atmos'), acting on behalf of Golspie Community Council (GCC) ('the Applicant') have prepared this request for an Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) Screening Opinion in support of potential application for a Marine Licence in accordance with the Marine (Scotland) Act 2010 and Planning Permission under the Town and Country Planning (Scotland) Act 1997 for the replacement of the groyne at the southwestern end of Golspie Beach adjacent to Golspie Pier, Golspie, Sutherland (the Proposed Development).

Background

Golspie town has a history of coastal flooding with the whole of Golspie categorised by the Scottish Environment Protection Agency (SEPA) as a Potentially Vulnerable Area to flooding. In particular, the area immediately inland of Golspie Beach is classed as being at High Risk of coastal flooding.

A gravity groyne emplaced within the timber piles of a previous pier at the southwestern end of the beach offers some protection, however, this structure has reached the end of its life and deteriorated to the point where coastal erosion in the vicinity of the groyne is observable. Photographs of this structure in its current state are appended to this letter.

There is a need therefore to reinstate the defence through a replacement structure. An assessment of the engineering options available for this replacement has been conducted and has determined that the best option is a bulk groyne in the same location of the former gravity groyne.

Proposed Development

The Proposed Development consists of the removal of the existing wooden frame (the remains of the gravity groyne) and emplacement of a bulk groyne consisting of 2 layers of rock armour placed over a solid core. The plan and section figure attached to this letter shows an indicative design of this structure.

The structure would be approximately 50m in length and would lie predominantly in the intertidal zone between Mean High Water Springs (MHWS) and Mean Low Water Springs

(MLWS) extending upwards into the supralittoral zone above MHWS for approximately half its length.

EIA Screening

The Proposed Development has been assessed against Schedule 1, 2 and 3 of the EIA Regulations.

The Proposed Development does not fall within the definitions of Schedule 1 of the EIA Regulations and is therefore not EIA Development by virtue of this schedule.

The Proposed Development is considered to be an 'infrastructure project' under Paragraph 10(m) of Schedule 2 of both the Town and Country Planning (EIA) (Scotland) Regulations 2017, and the Marine Works (EIA) (Scotland) Regulations 2017 (jointly referred to as the EIA Regulations):

“Coastal work to combat erosion and maritime works capable of altering the coast through the construction, for example, of dykes, moles, jetties and other sea defence works, excluding the maintenance and reconstruction of such works”

It is therefore required to be screened against the criteria in the EIA Regulations to determine if the Proposed Development is likely to have significant effects on the environment.

The following sections therefore provide an assessment against those criteria.

Table 1 provides a summary of the information requirements for EIA Screening, as set out in the EIA Regulations, with comment or direction on where the information is provided in this letter.

Information in relation to the proposed development, the surrounding environment and an initial assessment of the potential environmental effects is contained within this letter and supported by the attached figure: Designated Sites and Flood Risk Area.

Atmos, on behalf of the Applicant requests the Marine Directorate Licensing Operations Team (MD-LOT) and the Highland Council to adopt an Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) Screening Opinion in accordance with the EIA Regulations.

Table 1: Screening Request Requirements

EIA Regulation 8 Requirement	Comment
(2)(a) A description of the location of the development, including a plan sufficient to identify the land.	See Proposed Development description Figure 1 and Appendix 1
(2)(b) A description of the proposed development, including in particular: (i) A description of the physical characteristics of the proposed development and, where relevant, of demolition works; and (ii) A description of the location of the proposed development, with particular regard to the environmental sensitivity of geographical areas likely to be affected.	See Project Description for a description of the physical characteristics of the Proposed Development. The location of the Proposed Development and specifically the sensitivity of the Proposed Development is discussed in Site Sensitivity section.
(2)(c) A description of the aspects of the environment likely to be significantly affected by the proposed development.	See Table 2, Potential Effects.
(2)(d) A description of any likely significant effects, to the extent of the information available on such effects, of the proposed development on the environment resulting from: (i) The expected residues and emissions and the production of waste, where relevant; and	See Table 2, Potential Effects.

EIA Regulation 8 Requirement	Comment
(ii) The use of natural resources, in particular soil, land, water and biodiversity.	
(3) A request for a screening opinion may, in addition to the information required in accordance with paragraph (2), also be accompanied by a description of any features of the proposed development, or proposed measures, envisaged to avoid or prevent significant adverse effects on the environment.	See Table 2, Potential Effects.

Site Sensitivity and Potential Environmental Effects

This section identifies the aspects of the environment that have the potential to be affected by the Proposed Development; the potential nature and significance of any effect and any mitigation that might be applicable to reduce the magnitude of any identified adverse effect.

An assessment of the sensitivity of the site and surrounding area has been undertaken through desk-based assessment. **Figure 2** illustrates the environmental designations within and in close proximity to the Site.

A summary of the site sensitivities and potential effects is provided in **Table 2**.

Table 2: Site Sensitivity and Potential Environmental Effects

Sensitivity	Summary of Site Sensitivity	Potential Effects
Landscape/ Seascape	The section of the Proposed Development above MHWS lies within the Landscape Character Type 140: Sandy Beaches and Dunes, a near continuous stretch of sandy beach between the Dornoch Firth and Brora. The Loch Fleet, Loch Brora and Glen Loth Local Landscape Area (LLA) lies approximately 1.5km northwest of the Proposed Development site. This is described as; <i>“an area of rolling moorland hills, punctuated by a series of southeast orientated glens, straths and lochs, and edged to a narrow strip of farmed coastal shelf running along the shoreline.”</i> The Proposed Development site lies in the National Coastal Character Type 3: Mainland deposition coastline with open views. This is described as Low-lying coastal sections comprising long, sweeping curved sandy beaches distinguished by a simple horizontal visual composition of sky, sea and land and uninterrupted views are long and expansive along beaches with low level, and sea level views over the North Sea.	The small scale of the Proposed Development and its nature as a replacement to an existing structure means that the effect on the landscape is considered to be imperceptible. Equally the Proposed Development is not considered to have the potential to affect the Special Qualities of the LLA. The Proposed Development will be low lying and immediately adjacent to an existing structure, so should have minimal effect on the existing seascape.
Visual Amenity	The Proposed Development lies seaward of the Golspie Pier car park in Golspie and at the southwestern edge of Golspie beach. There are no properties on the beachfront at this section of the beach, there is path the runs inland parallel to the beach from the Shore Road car park 200m to the northeast. The Proposed Development would likely be visible to users of the path and the beach and from the upper stories from nearby residences. It may also be visible as a distant object from higher elevations inland.	The Proposed Development is low lying and small scale with significant visibility only likely in the immediate vicinity. As a replacement to an existing dilapidated structure, the Proposed Development may also be seen as an improvement to the visual amenity of the beach.
Cultural Heritage and Archaeology	The nearest designated cultural heritage asset is the Dunrobin Castle Garden and Designed Landscape (GDL00160) located c. 1km to the northeast and the Rhives, Chambered Cairn Scheduled Monument (SM1814) c. 1km to the north.	There is no potential for any direct impact on any designated cultural heritage assets, neither will the Proposed Development offer any significant intervisibility with either the SM or the GDL.
Ecology and Ornithology	The Proposed Development site does not lie within any area designated for natural heritage interests. The site does lie adjacent (landward) to the Moray Firth Special Area of Conservation (SAC, whose designated features are Bottlenose dolphins and subtidal sandbanks) and the Moray Firth Special Protection Area (SPA, whose designated features are Common scoter, Eider, Goldeneye and Great northern diver).	As a replacement for an existing structure, the Proposed Development is not considered to have the potential to affect Bottlenose dolphin. Given that only a limited part of the Proposed Development will intrude onto the subtidal zone, the loss of any sandbank is considered to be negligible or imperceptible loss. The Proposed Development is not considered to have the potential to affect the designated features of the SPA. The Proposal will not involve a significant loss of intertidal habitat due to it occupying the same space as an existing structure.

Sensitivity	Summary of Site Sensitivity	Potential Effects
Flood Risk	The land in close proximity to the Proposed Development site is classed as a Potentially Vulnerable Area to flooding with the area immediately inland of Golspie Beach is classed as being at High Risk of coastal flooding	Through the reinstatement of a pre-existing coastal protection structure, the Proposed Development should help mitigate the risk of coastal flooding and result in a beneficial effect.
Coastal Processes	The Proposed Development is intended to alter naturally occurring coastal processes to mitigate the potential effects of coastal flooding and reduce coastal erosion	As a replacement to an existing structure serving the same purpose, the Proposed Development is considered to have a negligible effect on coastal processes.

Selection Criteria for Screening

Table 3 summarises the Characteristics of the Proposed Development against the criteria set out in the EIA Regulations.

Table 3: Characteristics of development

Criteria	Summary
Size and design of the Development	The Proposed Development is of a small scale and is intended to replace an existing dilapidated structure. It is of a simple design making use of mainly natural materials
Cumulation with other development	There are no other similar developments in the vicinity of the Proposed Development site that could result in cumulative effects.
Use of Natural Resources	The Proposed Development will require the emplacement of rock armour (armourstone or rip rap) which is likely to be sourced regionally. However, the small scale of the Proposed Development means that the quantity required will be minimal.
Production of Waste	The Proposed Development will generate waste in the form of the remains of the existing gravity groyne. This is predominately wood which would be extracted and disposed of as waste.
Pollution and Nuisance	The Proposed Development will require the use of heavy equipment to demolish the existing structure and construct the new groyne. All machinery will be kept in a good condition and best practice measures employed to minimise the risk of pollution.
Risk of Major Accidents	The construction and maintenance of the Proposed Development will make use of established best practice to avoid major accident risks.
Risks to Human Health	Due to its nature, the Proposed Development is not considered to have the potential to have direct significant effects on human health. Design principles and good practice mitigation will be in place to limit amenity effects and the potential for emissions to land, water and air are expected to be low to negligible.

Table 4 summaries the location of the Proposed Development against the criteria set out in the EIA Regulations.

Table 4: Schedule 3, Part 2 Criteria – Location of Development

Criteria	Summary
Existing Land Use	The existing land use of the Proposed Development site is a gravity groyne at the end of its life.
Natural Resources	See Table 2 for information on effects on natural resources.
Wetlands, Riparian Areas and River Mouths	The Proposed Development site is not located near any of these habitats.
Coastal Zones and the Marine Environment	See Table 2 for information on effects on coastal zones and the marine environment.
Mountain and forest areas	The Proposed Development site is not located near any of these habitats.
Nature Reserves and Parks	The Proposed Development site is not located near to any Nature Reserves or Parks.
European Sites / national designations / Natura 2000, Habitats Directive / Wild Birds Directive	See Table 2 for information on effects on European /National designated sites.
Areas in which there has already been a failure to meet the environmental quality standards laid down in EU legislation	The Proposed Development site is not located in an area with any known failure to meet environmental standards.
Densely Populated Areas	The Proposed Development site is not located near any densely populated areas.
Landscapes and sites of Historical, Cultural or Archaeological Significance	See Table 2 for information on effects on landscape and cultural heritage.

Table 5 summaries the Characteristics of the Proposed Development against the criteria set out in part 3 of Schedule 3 of the EIA Regulations.

Table 5: Schedule 3, Part 3 Criteria – Characteristics of the Development

Criteria	Summary
The magnitude and spatial extent of the impact (for example geographical area and size of the population likely to be affected)	The infrastructure associated with the Proposed Development would be limited to an area within the site boundary. The siting, nature and size of the Proposed Development means any impacts would be limited to the immediate surroundings of the site.
The nature of the impact	The Proposed Development is considered not likely to give rise to significant effects. Any potential negative impacts would be mitigated application of best practice methods.
The transboundary nature of the impact	No transboundary effects are anticipated.
The intensity and complexity of the impact	Any effects are likely to be limited and so of low intensity. The potential for impacts is limited to a small number of aspects and not considered to be complex.
The probability of the impact	Limited effects are anticipated. Impacts associated with the construction phase will be limited in duration. The probability of any lasting negative effects after construction are expected to be negligible in significance.
The expected onset, duration, frequency and reversibility of the impact	Impacts would primarily be associated with short duration associated with the construction phase. The impact on coastal processes is intended to be permanent and beneficial.
The cumulation of the impact with the impact of other existing and/or approved development	There are no other similar developments in the vicinity of the Proposed Development site that could result in cumulative effects.
The possibility of effectively reducing the impact.	Any potential impact controlled through application of best practice measures.

Conclusion

It is not considered that the Proposed Development has the potential to have significant effects on the environment due to its size, nature or location and therefore no EIA should be required.

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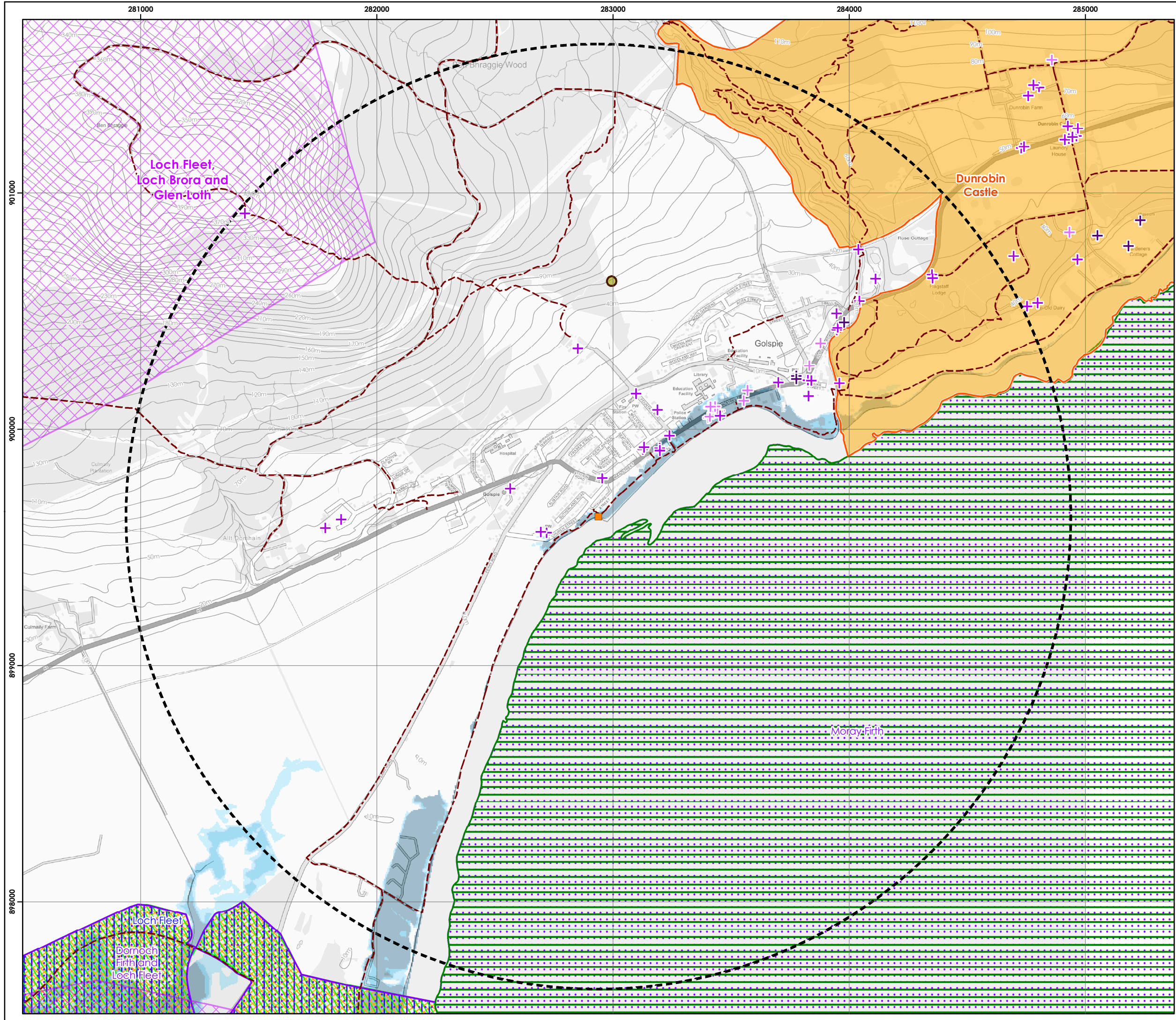
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Figure 1: Proposed Groyne Plan and Section

Figure 2: Designated Sites

Photographs

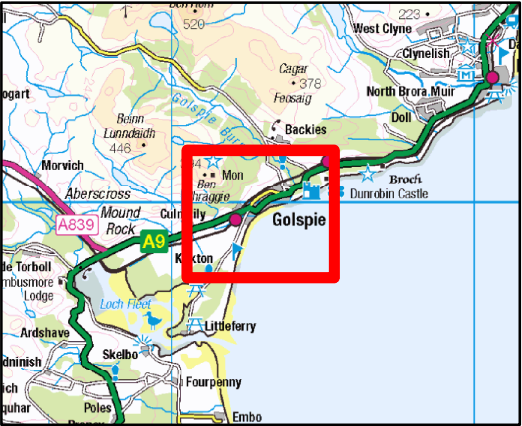


Golspie Sea Defence

Golspie Community Council

Designated sites and flood risk areas

- Key**
- Golspie Pier
 - 2km from Golspie Pier
 - Corepath
 - Scheduled Monument
 - Gardens and Designed Landscapes
 - Local Landscape Area
 - Special Area of Conservation
 - Special Protection Area
 - National Nature Reserve
 - Site of Special Scientific Interest
 - Ramsar wetland
 - Flood risk - High
 - Flood risk - Medium
 - Flood risk - Low
 - Category A Listed building
 - Category B Listed building
 - Category C Listed building



atmos
CONSULTING

0 125 250 500
Metres



Scale @ A3:
1:15,000



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