Section 7(i)

The 10-year maintenance programme is split up into three types of activities: schemes, cyclic maintenance and investigations. Schemes represent specific projects that are planned and will be required at some point over the next 10 years, whilst cyclic maintenance works are carried out regularly and may be required at any time (likely more than once) over the next 10 years. Cyclic maintenance activities are not necessarily planned but may be identified as required during regular inspections or investigations. Investigations are tasks required to understand the degree of maintenance work needed and may be carried out at any time as necessary.

There are a large number of schemes planned at A9 Kessock Bridge over the next 10 years, alongside several cyclic maintenance activities and some investigation works. Refer to 'Supporting Information – A9 Kessock 10-year Programme' for additional details of these activities.

Much of the proposed maintenance work will be restricted to the A9 carriageway and will be carried out from the bridge deck with standard containment measures in place. However, some activities will require a degree of work under the bridge and a few schemes will require in-water access (e.g., via boats or barges). To prevent materials entering the marine environment from any of the activities on or under the bridge, good practice measures will include implementation of encapsulation, debris netting or sheeting, protective shelters, containment, and/or sumps (depending on the activity). Where the use of hydro-demolition is required, additional measures will be in place to fully contain the water and debris produced, and appropriate authorisation from SEPA will be obtained as required to permit any discharge of appropriately treated water used in hydro-demolition. Similarly, for grit-blasting and painting of the bridge, full encapsulation of working areas will be in place and all waste will be removed by licensed waste contractors.

No in-water works are currently planned; however, some works and inspections may require access from the water (e.g., via boats, barges, or divers). Appropriate containment measures will be in place on any watercraft used to prevent pollution or debris from entering the marine environment. In addition, measures will be in place to reduce the risk of spreading invasive species by adhering to good practice and utilising the Check/Clean/Dry methodology.

There are no Nature Conservation Orders or classified Shellfish Harvesting Areas present in proximity to the A9 Kessock Bridge. The nearest of these sites are located in the Cromarty Firth and no impacts to those sites are expected as a result of proposed works.

The A9 Kessock Bridge spans the junction of the Moray Firth and the Beauly Firth. The bridge spans or has connectivity with the following designated sites:

- Moray Firth Special Area of Conservation (SAC)
- Moray Firth Special Protection Area (SPA)
- Inner Moray Firth SPA
- Inner Moray Firth Ramsar
- Longman and Castle Stuart Bays Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI)
- Beauly Firth SSSI
- Munlochy Bay SSSI
- Cromarty Firth SPA
- Cromarty Firth Ramsar
- Cromarty Firth SSSI
- Dornoch Firth and Morrich More SAC
- River Moriston SAC

These sites are designated for a variety of breeding and non-breeding birds, bottle nose dolphin, harbour seal, Atlantic salmon, freshwater pearl mussel, and a variety of coastal and marine habitats. The qualifying features of Moray Firth SPA/SAC and Inner Moray Firth SPA/Ramsar and associated SSSIs are at highest risk of effects from works due to the location of the sites within the water spanned by the bridge and/or along the shores of Moray and Beauly Firths, close to the bridge.

A Habitats Regulations Appraisal (HRA) was completed to assess potential impacts of the proposed works on the qualifying features of these sites (refer to the supporting document 'F565 HRA Proforma – A9 Kessock Bridge 10YR ML'). Likely Significant Effects (LSE) could not be ruled out for the following qualifying features:

- Moray Firth SAC – all features
- Moray Firth SPA – all features
- Inner Moray Firth SPA – all features
- Inner Moray Firth Ramsar – qualifying bird species
- Cromarty Firth SPA – all features
- Cromarty Firth Ramsar – all features
- Dornoch Firth and Morrich More SAC – harbour seal
- River Moriston SAC – Atlantic salmon and freshwater pearl mussel

However, due to the localised and relatively minor nature of proposed works in addition to robust containment measures and specific mitigation to limit disturbance, it has been concluded that the proposed activities are not likely to result in Adverse Effects on Site Integrity (AESI) for any of the above designated sites. Similarly, no significant negative impacts were identified on the component SSSIs associated with the above European Sites.

The proposed works do not meet the thresholds to be considered Schedule 1 or Schedule 2 projects under the Marine Works (Scotland) Act 1984 (Environmental Impact Assessment) Regulations 2017. This legislation transposes the European Union's Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) Directive 2011/92/EU (as amended by 2014/52/EU) into Scottish law for projects within the Scottish Marine Area and includes the thresholds for Annex I and Annex II projects from the EIA Directive (as determined by the criteria within Annex II of the EIA Directive) within Schedules 1 and 2.

Proposed works will also be assessed under The Roads (Scotland) Act 1984 (Environmental Impact Assessment) Regulations 2017, which transposes the EIA Directive into Scottish law for projects related to trunk roads. Under this legislation, some of the proposed works could meet the threshold to be considered Annex II projects and may therefore require screening to determine whether a full EIA is required. In these cases, a Record of Determination (RoD) will be prepared which will provide evidence and information for the determination by Transport Scotland (Competent Authority for trunk road works) of whether a full EIA will be required. The RoD will include the main potential effects of proposed works on the environment and mitigation to be implemented that will minimise the environmental impact. Although unlikely, where a full EIA is required, the RoD will help to inform the screening and scoping process.