

10-Year Marine Licence Application A9 Cromarty Bridge

Section 5(i)

The 10-year maintenance programme is split up into three types of activities: schemes, routine maintenance and investigations. Schemes represent specific projects that are planned and will be required at some point over the next 10 years, whilst routine maintenance works are carried out regularly and may be required at any time (likely more than once) over the next 10 years. Routine 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.

At A9 Cromarty Bridge, the activities 'Phase 3 bridge refurbishment', 'Phase 4 bridge refurbishment', and 'advanced electrical supply' are schemes. Remaining activities are smaller routine maintenance or inspection works which can be carried out on a regular basis.

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. To prevent materials entering the marine environment from any of the activities on or under the bridge, good practice measures will include implementation of debris netting, protective shelters, containment and sumps (depending on the activity). In the event that hydro-demolition activities are 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 water used in hydro-demolition. Similarly, for removal of asbestos material from the bridge, full containment will be in place and all waste will be removed by licensed special waste contractors.

Some works and inspections may include in-water works or require access from the waterbody via barges or boats; however appropriate containment measures will be in place on any watercraft used to prevent pollution or debris from entering the marine environment.

The A9 Cromarty Bridge spans the Cromarty Firth and is adjacent to the Cromarty Firth Special Protection Area (SPA), Ramsar site, and Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI), which are designated for breeding and non-breeding seabirds and breeding osprey, along with supporting marine and coastal habitats in the Ramsar site and SSSI. A9 Cromarty Bridge is located approximately 5.5km northeast of Conon Islands Special Area of Conservation (SAC) which is designated for alder woodland on floodplains. The bridge lies 9.1km northeast of Inner Moray Firth SPA and Ramsar site, which are designated for breeding and non-breeding seabirds and breeding osprey, along with supporting marine and coastal habitats in the Ramsar site. The bridge lies approximately 11.8km from Moray Firth SAC which is designated for bottlenose dolphin and subtidal sandbanks. The qualifying features of Cromarty Firth SPA/Ramsar site and SSSI are at highest risk of effects from works due to the location of the sites along the shores of Cromarty Firth, directly adjacent to the bridge. Of note, there is a known breeding colony of common terns (a qualifying species) located at Ardullie Point, which is adjacent to the northern abutment of A9 Cromarty 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 Cromarty Bridge 10YR ML'). Likely Significant Effects (LSE) could not be ruled out for the qualifying features of Cromarty Firth SPA/Ramsar and for bottlenose dolphins within Moray Firth SAC; however, due to the localised and relatively minor nature of proposed works in addition to robust containment measures and specific mitigation to limit in-water 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. Previous advice provided by NatureScot for similar works at A9 Cromarty Bridge was used to inform this assessment.

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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.