

A82 Ballachulish Bridge
10-Year Marine Licence Programme of Works
Habitats Regulations Appraisal Proforma
October 2023



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Document Control Sheet

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Document:	Habitats Regulations Appraisal Proforma (Form No. TBC)
Issue:	#1
Related to:	All Contracts



Table of Contents

European Site Details	4
Name of European Site(s) Potentially Affected	4
Name of Component SSSI, if Relevant	4
European Site(s) Qualifying Interest(s) and Whether Priority or Non-Priority	4
Conservation Objectives for Qualifying Species	4
Stage 1: What is the Plan or Project?	5
Proposal Title	5
Name of Competent Authority	5
Name of Consultee	5
Details of Proposal (Including Location, Timing and Methods)	6
Stage 2: Is the Plan or Project Directly Connected with or Necessary to Site Management for Nature Conservation?	10
Stage 3: Is the Plan or Project (Either Alone or in Combination with Other Plans or Projects) Likely to Have a Significant Effect on the Site?	11
Stage 4: Undertake an Appropriate Assessment of the Implications for the Site in View of its Conservation Objectives	14
Stage 5: Can it be Ascertained that the Proposal Will Not Adversely Affect the Integrity of the Site? ...	15
Modifications Required to Ensure Adverse Effects are Avoided and Reasons for These	16
Advice Sought	16
Conclusion in Relation to Plan or Project	16
References	18

Click here to enter Scheme Name.

Document:	Habitats Regulations Appraisal Proforma (Form No. TBC)
Issue:	#1
Related to:	All Contracts



Appraisal in relation to regulation 48 of the Conservation (Natural Habitats, &c.) Regulations 1994 as amended (Habitats Regulations Appraisal)

(Or, where relevant, under regulation 61 of The Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2010 as amended, or regulation 25 of The Offshore Marine Conservation (Natural Habitats, &c.) Regulations 2007 as amended)

European Site Details

Name of European Site(s) Potentially Affected

The Glen Etive and Glen Fyne Special Protection Area (SPA) is located approximately 900m south-east of the bridge.

Onich to North Ballachulish Woods Special Area of Conservation (SAC) is located 1km north of the scheme.

Name of Component SSSI, if Relevant

Onich to North Ballachulish Woods and Shores Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) is located 1km north of the bridge at the nearest point and overlaps with the Onich to North Ballachulish Woods SAC. It is designated for the following qualifying features ([SiteLink \(nature.scot\)](#)):

- Alkaline fen
- Dalradian rocks
- Upland mixed ash woodland; and
- Upland oak woodland

European Site(s) Qualifying Interest(s) and Whether Priority or Non-Priority

Details of qualifying features, conservation status, and negative pressures are listed for each of the European Sites noted above and were accessed on 17/10/2023 from NatureScot's SiteLink. Priority qualifying features are noted by (*) below.

Glen Etive and Glen Fyne SPA ([SiteLink \(nature.scot\)](#)):

- Golden eagle (*Aquila chrysaetos*); breeding
 - Condition: Favourable Maintained (2015)
 - Negative pressures: Recreation/disturbance

Onich to North Ballachulish Woods SAC ([SiteLink \(nature.scot\)](#)):

- Base-rich fens
 - Condition: Favourable Maintained (2007)
 - Negative pressures: Agricultural operations and invasive species
- Mixed woodland on base-rich soils associated with rocky slopes*
 - Condition: Unfavourable declining (2008)
 - Negative pressures: Invasive species
- Western acidic oak woodland
 - Condition: Unfavourable declining (2008)
 - Negative pressures: Invasive species

Conservation Objectives for Qualifying Species

Glen Etive and Glen Fyne SPA

Conservation Objectives for golden eagle:

1. To avoid deterioration of the habitats of the qualifying species or significant disturbance to the qualifying species, thus ensuring that the integrity of the site is maintained.



Click here to enter Scheme Name.

Document:	Habitats Regulations Appraisal Proforma (Form No. TBC)
Issue:	#1
Related to:	All Contracts

2. To ensure for the qualifying species that the following are maintained in the long term;
 - 2a. Population of the species as a viable component of the site
 - 2b. Distribution of the species within site
 - 2c. Distribution and extent of habitats supporting the species
 - 2d. Structure, function and supporting processes of habitats supporting the species
 - 2e. No significant disturbance of the species

Onich to North Ballachulish Woods SAC

Conservation Objectives for all habitat features:

1. To ensure that the qualifying features of Onich to Ballachulish woods SAC are in favourable condition and make an appropriate contribution to achieving favourable conservation status.
2. To ensure that the integrity of Onich to North Ballachulish Woods SAC is restored by meeting objectives 2a, 2b and 2c for each qualifying feature.

Conservation Objectives for base-rich fens:

- 2a. Maintain the extent and distribution of the habitat within the site.
- 2b. Maintain the structure, function and supporting processes of the habitat.
- 2c. Maintain the distribution and viability of typical species of the habitat.

Conservation Objectives for mixed woodland on base-rich soils associated with rocky slopes:

- 2a. Maintain the extent and distribution of the habitat within the site.
- 2b. Restore the structure, function and supporting processes of the habitat.
- 2c. Restore the distribution and viability of typical species of the habitat.

Conservation Objectives for western acidic oak woods:

- 2a. Maintain the extent and distribution of the habitat within the site.
- 2b. Restore the structure, function and supporting processes of the habitat.
- 2c. Restore the distribution and viability of typical species of the habitat.

Stage 1: What is the Plan or Project?

Proposal Title

BEAR Scotland – North West Trunk Road Unit – A82 Ballachulish Bridge: Schemes and Maintenance Activities (10 Year Programme of Works)

Name of Competent Authority

Transport Scotland

Name of Consultee

NatureScot

Click here to enter Scheme Name.	
Document:	Habitats Regulations Appraisal Proforma (Form No. TBC)
Issue:	#1
Related to:	All Contracts



Details of Proposal (Including Location, Timing and Methods)

General Information

This Habitat Regulations Appraisal (HRA) aims to cover various 'Schemes' and 'Maintenance Activities' programmed over the next ten years on the A82 Ballachulish Bridge, which has connectivity with the above European Sites.

The proposed maintenance activities are broken down into 'scheme' and 'cyclic maintenance' works. Schemes are specific projects that 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.

A summary of the proposed maintenance works (schemes and cyclic maintenance activities) is given below:

Schemes:

- Bridge deck bearing replacement
- Superstructure bearing replacement
- Bridge strengthening
- Bridge painting
- Parapet replacement
- Scour repairs
- Structural health monitoring system installation or maintenance
- Repair/removal of existing gantry rails

Cyclic Maintenance:

- Steelwork repairs
- Bridge deck repairs
- Bridge lighting repair or maintenance
- Drainage cleaning
- Bird guano removal
- Expansion joint maintenance or replacement
- Resurfacing operations
- Parapet repair
- Concrete repairs
- Ancillary highway item repair
- Inspections and surveys

Further information on each can be viewed in the supporting document 'A82 870 Ballachulish Bridge 10 Year Programme of Works', which provides a detailed description of all the proposed maintenance works, including mitigation measures and access requirements where relevant. Although some larger schemes may have a duration of several months, most smaller schemes and cyclic maintenance works would have much shorter durations. Schemes and cyclic maintenance activities may take place at any time of year and may entail works during the day, night, or both. All maintenance works on the bridge would be temporary and it should be noted that large schemes would not be carried out concurrently due to budget and network access constraints. Most works would be completed from the bridge deck, although some (e.g., scour repairs, bearing replacement works) would include some in-water works and/or access below the bridge.

The majority of works would be carried out following measures outlined below and in the attached Programme of Works document. However, please note that this HRA is not intended to cover the proposed activities if the scope of works is beyond what has been described below for each activity. In this case, additional consultation with NS will be carried out, a separate HRA will be completed, and a Statement to Inform Appropriate Assessment (SIAA) will be produced (if required) specific to those works. Examples where this situation may occur could include, but are not limited to:

- Mitigation measures specific to one of the European sites are identified to be required, additional to the standard working practices listed below.
- The scope of works is beyond that described in the proposed maintenance activities listed in this document (e.g., replacement of large-scale structures such as bridges).

Click here to enter Scheme Name.

Document:	Habitats Regulations Appraisal Proforma (Form No. TBC)
Issue:	#1
Related to:	All Contracts



This is an iterative document and will be subject to periodic review or when there are any relevant changes to the method of works or qualifying features of any of the designated sites. Any changes or updates will be documented in the Document Control section on the cover page of this document.

This document does not negate the need to consult with the Marine Directorate, and any subsequent licence conditions will be adhered to throughout construction. This document does not negate the requirement to consult with other statutory consultees such as Local District Salmon Fishery Boards (DSFB)/Trusts. Any subsequent advice will be followed during works.

Standard working practices for works in or near water

Works will be undertaken within the Marine Environment and as such are not subject to authorisation under The Water Environment (Controlled Activities) (Scotland) Regulations 2011 (as amended).. However, BEAR Scotland follow good practice guidance (including but not limited to the below list) as standard for works in or near water to reduce the risk of water pollution as much as possible:

- Engineering in the Water Environment Good Practice Guide. Temporary Construction Methods (SEPA, 2009);
- Engineering in the Water Environment Good Practice Guide. River Crossings (SEPA, 2010);
- SEPA Guidance for Pollution Prevention (GPP) 1: Understanding your environmental responsibilities – good environmental practices (NetRegs, 2021);
- SEPA GPP 5: Works and maintenance near water (NetRegs, 2021);
- SEPA GPP 21: Pollution incident response plans (NetRegs 2021);
- SEPA General Binding Rule (GBR) 6: Construction and maintenance of a minor bridge over a river, burn or ditch (SEPA, 2022);
- SEPA GBR 9: Operating any vehicle, plant or other equipment (machinery) in or near any surface water or wetland for the purpose of undertaking any other GBR activity or for the purpose of maintaining an existing man-made structure in or near any surface water or wetland (SEPA, 2022); and
- SEPA GBR 10(b): The discharge of water run-off from a surface water drainage system to the water environment from buildings, roads other than waterbound roads, yards, or any other built development constructed on or after 1 April 2007, with the exception of motorways and trunk roads where any one outfall serves a length of road greater than 1 km (SEPA, 2022).

Specific working practices outlined in the aforementioned guidance that must be adhered to include, but are not limited to:

- All reasonable steps must be taken to prevent silt from entering the watercourse (GPP 5);
- Plant and wheel washing to be carried out in a designated area of hardstanding at least 10m away from any watercourse or surface water drain. Where possible, washing will take place prior to moving vehicles/equipment to a different water bodies to reduce the risk of transporting invasive aquatic plants or other species (GPP 5 and GBR 9);
- Refuelling must take place at least 10m away from any surface water. Appropriate containment measures (e.g., drip trays, funnels, plant nappies, bunding) must be in place to reduce the risk of spills (GPP 5, GBR 9);
- Biodegradable hydraulic oils should be used for vehicles and plant where possible (GPP 5);
- Dust, debris and contaminated water will be appropriately contained to reduce the risk of pollution (GPP 5);
- Development of a pollution incidence response plan (GPP 21);
- The works must not prevent the free passage of migratory fish (GBR 6);
- All reasonable steps must be taken to ensure that the discharge does not result in pollution of the water environment (GBR 10(b)).

These measures will ensure that any potential pollutants, including fine sediments and materials required for works in or near water, will not enter the water environment during works. In addition, these measures will reduce the risk of transporting invasive aquatic species such as Himalayan balsam (*Impatiens glandulifera*) which may be found on the shoreline, and carpet sea squirt (*Didemnum vexillum*) within the marine environment. These measures and working practices would be in place regardless of the presence of nearby designated sites and are therefore not

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Document:	Habitats Regulations Appraisal Proforma (Form No. TBC)
Issue:	#1
Related to:	All Contracts



considered to be mitigation. All relevant pollution controls and other good practice measures will be detailed in the Site Environmental Management Plan (SEMP) for each scheme and adhered to on site.

Standard working practices

The following good practice and management measures will be adopted by the successful contractor for each of the above activities:

- Where required, relevant ecological surveys will be carried out prior to works, particularly for proposed in-water works or larger schemes. If surveys identify the requirement for protected species licencing, additional consultation with NS will be carried out and licences sought where required.
- The site supervisor will give appropriate toolbox talks (e.g., silt and breeding birds) prior to work commencing. These talks will highlight any sensitive features, including the designated sites and their qualifying features.
- The contractor will be required to produce a contingency plan for dealing with spills or environmental incidents on site. Spill kits must be present on site, quickly accessible, and all staff trained in their use.
- All spills must be logged and reported. In the event of any spills into the water environment, all works must stop and the incident be reported to the project manager and the BEAR Scotland Environmental Team. SEPA (and where required, the Marine Directorate) must be informed of any such incident as soon as possible, and within 24 hours at the latest. The local DSFB must also be informed of any incidents as soon as possible.
- Any waste generated will be removed from site and either recycled or disposed of in compliance with Waste Management Regulations.
- The best practice means, as defined in Section 72 of the Control of Pollution Act 1974 and BS5228-1:2009+A1:2014 Code of Practice for Noise and Vibration Control on Construction and Open Sites will always be employed to reduce noise produced during works as much as possible.
- Plant, machinery and equipment fitted with effective silencers where available will be utilised for the works. Where fitted, and where permitted under Health and Safety requirements, white noise reversing alarms should be utilised during construction.
- Where possible, inherently quiet plant should be selected for construction works. Where appropriate, pumps and generators will be sound-reduced models with fitted, lined, and sealed acoustic covers.
- All plant will be operated in such a way that minimises noise emissions and be switched off when not in use.
- All ancillary plant such as generators will be positioned so as to cause minimum noise disturbance. Where deemed necessary, acoustic screens will be utilised.
- Where possible, works will be programmed for daylight hours, although night works are likely to be required in some cases. If artificial lighting is required, it should be used for as short a duration as possible and directed on the immediate area of works. Artificial lighting (including lights from the site compound and other infrastructure) should avoid being directed onto nearby watercourses or habitats as far as is safe and reasonably practicable.

Activity-specific methods

Details on methods and specific working practices for each of the above maintenance activities is provided in the supporting document '**A82 870 Ballachulish Bridge 10 Year Programme of Works**'.

All activities are highly localised and will take place within the immediate vicinity of the trunk road and trunk road bridge. All maintenance works are considered temporary and are unlikely to be carried out simultaneously with any other maintenance works due to traffic management restrictions and budget constraints.

Various access requirements may be required to facilitate the above activities. Some activities will take place from the bridge deck only, but some activities may require access beneath the bridge deck or access at height to the bridge parapets, abutments, or piers. Access at height may be provided via a lorry-mounted mobile elevated moving platform (MEWP) with underbridge capabilities (underbridge unit) or via a fixed platform such as scaffolding, which may be suspended from the bridge or footed on the ground (or in the watercourse) below. Temporary jacking equipment will be required for bearing replacement works. In line with health and safety requirements, any work being carried out beneath the bridge will require an adequate working platform and railing to prevent any workers from falling. In line with good practice, this platform and railing containment will be achieved by the attachment of either debris netting or thickened sheets to prevent materials falling from the platform. Any in-water works (e.g., scour



[Click here to enter Scheme Name.](#)



Document:	Habitats Regulations Appraisal Proforma (Form No. TBC)
Issue:	#1
Related to:	All Contracts

repairs) carried out would require access via jack-up barges beneath the bridge. In line with good practice, strict containment measures will be in place on any barges to prevent pollution incidents in the marine environment.

In addition to the standard working practices and measures listed above, the following measures will be in place during the construction phase for activities at higher risk of pollution:

Hydro-demolition

Larger concrete repair works and superstructure bearing replacement works will likely require the use of hydro-demolition whereas smaller repairs will likely be done using hand tools. Where works are required beneath the bridge, they will be facilitated by an underbridge unit/ MEWP or scaffolding. In line with health and safety requirements, any work being carried out beneath bridges will require an adequate working platform and railing to prevent any workers from falling. Containment of the access platform/working area will be achieved by the attachment of either debris netting or thickened sheets (for hydro-demolition). If hydro-demolition is being carried out, the floor of the platform will be layered with materials (e.g., Terram and Visquine layers) to fully contain the water and debris. Concrete fragments that land on the access system floor during large or small repair works will be collected, taken to the surface of the bridge, and removed from site by licensed waste carriers.

For works on the deck of the bridge, debris netting or sheeting will be applied around the working area to prevent materials and/or hydro-demolition water from entering the water environment. Material will be collected in the same manner as described above and removed from the site by licensed waste carriers.

For hydro-demolition works, it is the responsibility of the construction contractor to devise a method to appropriately capture, treat (to remove suspended solids to an acceptable level and neutralise the high pH), and/or dispose of the wastewater; and to have appropriate consenting in place if required. Wastewater generated during hydro-demolition works is considered a trade effluent and will be collected and removed off-site for disposal under appropriate permits/authorisation (which the sub-contractor is responsible for obtaining) unless alternative methods of treatment and disposal are agreed between the construction contractor and the relevant authorisation body.

Scour Repair

Specific working methods and mitigation measures are yet to be confirmed, however it is anticipated that the scour repair activity will encompass works on the pier bases and will require use of jack-up barges. Excavators utilising the jack-up barges will place scour protection (usually large rocks/rock armour loose or bagged) around the pier pile caps.

Where required, a geotextile membrane may be placed prior to siting of rock armour. To ensure no contaminants are brought into contact with the marine environment, all rock armour and equipment will be washed and cleaned prior to immersion in any water bodies to ensure that no contaminants or INNS are introduced to the water environment.

Grit-blasting and painting

Where grit-blasting and painting are required, containment of the working areas will be established by fully encapsulating temporary working platforms. Grit and old paint will be collected and removed from site to appropriate waste facilities. Activities that generate high levels of noise will be carried out during daylight hours to reduce noise impacts on the surrounding area.

Click here to enter Scheme Name.	
Document:	Habitats Regulations Appraisal Proforma (Form No. TBC)
Issue:	#1
Related to:	All Contracts



Stage 2: Is the Plan or Project Directly Connected with or Necessary to Site Management for Nature Conservation?

Connection to Site Management

This test is to identify and remove from further assessment those proposals which are clearly necessary to, or of value to, or inevitable as part of, management of the site for its qualifying interests. For the majority of proposals competent authorities deal with the answer to stage 2 will be 'no'. However, where it is thought this could be applicable the following points should be considered:

- I. Has the effect on all qualifying interests been considered?
- II. Is the proposal part of a fully assessed and agreed management plan? If not, then further consideration or supporting information will be required.
- III. Is there a clear rationale to justify the connection with the conservation objectives?
- IV. If there is a clear connection with the conservation objectives will any benefits arising from the proposal outweigh any negative effects?
- V. Have any alternative methods of implementing the proposal been explored, including building in any relevant mitigation, to demonstrate that this is the least damaging option?
- VI. Give a Yes / No conclusion in terms of whether the plan or project is considered directly connected with or necessary to site management for nature conservation.

If Yes for all elements of a plan or project, for all the European site qualifying interests (preferably as part of a fully assessed and agreed management plan), then consent can be issued. The rationale should be detailed below, and no further appraisal is required (no need to proceed to stage 3 or 4).

If No for one or more European site qualifying interests then proceed to stage 3.

If a plan has multiple elements (e.g., a range of policies or management objectives), elements of the plan considered directly connected with or necessary to site management for nature conservation should be discussed below and a rationale given for this conclusion. No further appraisal is then required for those elements. All other elements of the plan must proceed to stage 3.

None of the activities covered by this document are directly connected with, or necessary to, the site management for nature conservation.

[Click here to enter Scheme Name.](#)



Document:	Habitats Regulations Appraisal Proforma (Form No. TBC)
Issue:	#1
Related to:	All Contracts

Stage 3: Is the Plan or Project (Either Alone or in Combination with Other Plans or Projects) Likely to Have a Significant Effect on the Site?

Assessment for LSE

The test of Likely Significant Effect (LSE) is a simple screening stage to determine whether or not an appropriate assessment is required. Each qualifying interest must be considered in relation to their conservation objectives. The following points should be considered:

- I. Briefly indicate which qualifying interest could be affected by the proposal and how; if none, provide a brief justification for this decision, and then proceed to v), otherwise continue:
- II. consider whether there is connectivity between the proposal and each of the qualifying interests i.e. are there processes or pathways by which the proposal may influence the site's interests? Conclude no LSE only if there is no connection, or it is obvious that the proposal will not undermine the conservation objectives despite a connection. The potential for negative effects on the qualifying interests may be immediately obvious, in which case conclude likely significant effect and move straight to the next step.
- III. consider the nature, scale, location, longevity, and reversibility of effects.
- IV. consider whether the proposal contributes to cumulative or incremental impacts in combination with other plans or projects completed, underway or proposed.
- V. Where the impacts of a proposal are the same for different qualifying interests these can be considered together however a clear conclusion should be given for each interest.
- VI. give Yes / No conclusion for each interest.

If Yes, or in cases of doubt, continue to stage 4.

If No for all features, a consent can be given and recorded below. There is no need to then proceed to stage 4.

Remember if mitigation is required to prevent there being an effect on qualifying interests, then LSE must be concluded, and an appropriate assessment (stage 4) must be conducted. Further guidance on the handling of mitigation can be found as part of the European site Casework Guidance.

Below is an assessment of the potential for Likely Significant Effects (LSE) of the maintenance activities on the qualifying features of the following designated sites:

- Glen Etive and Glen Fyne SPA
- Onich to North Ballachulish Woods SAC

If the scope of works is beyond what has been detailed in Stage 1 for each activity, additional consultation with NS will be carried out, a separate HRA/Appropriate Assessment will be completed, and an SIAA will be produced (if required) specific to those works. Examples where this situation may occur could include, but are not limited to:

- Mitigation measures specific to one of the European sites are identified to be required, additional to the standard working practices listed above.
- The scope of works is beyond that described in the proposed maintenance activities listed in this document (e.g., replacement of large-scale structures such as bridges).

Assessment of the potential effects of the proposed maintenance activities has been carried out below. Qualifying features for each site have been grouped where possible for brevity.

1. Glen Etive and Glen Fyne SPA

Glen Etive and Glen Fyne SPA is designated for breeding golden eagle, a mobile feature, and is located 900m south-east of Ballachulish bridge.

Assessment against the conservation objectives for golden eagle

Click here to enter Scheme Name.

Document:	Habitats Regulations Appraisal Proforma (Form No. TBC)
Issue:	#1
Related to:	All Contracts



None of the proposed maintenance activities would entail works within, or within close proximity of, the boundary of the SPA. Therefore, no direct effects (e.g., habitat loss, mortality or nest destruction due to construction activities) on breeding golden eagle or their associated habitat/resources within the SPA would result from the proposed maintenance activities. The standard working practices listed in Stage 1 include robust containment measures to prevent pollution events for both in-water and terrestrial works. With these and the additional good practice measures listed in Stage 1 in place during works, the risk of indirect effects on golden eagle and their supporting habitats and prey species as a result of pollution is limited. Therefore, no LSE on golden eagle associated with the SPA, their supporting habitats and prey species has been identified as a result of the proposed maintenance activities and the conservation objectives to maintain golden eagle population, distribution, supporting habitats, and food availability within the site will be met.

For all of the proposed maintenance activities, there is potential for indirect effects on golden eagle associated with the SPA as a result of disturbance from construction activities. However, the recommended disturbance buffer for golden eagle during the breeding season is 750-1000m, and 250-500m during nonbreeding seasons (NatureScot: Goodship and Furness, 2022). The bridge is located 900m from the SPA, which is just within the upper recommended disturbance buffer for breeding golden eagle; however, it is screened from the SPA by the surrounding topography and lies on lower ground than the more mountainous areas of the SPA where eagles are likely to nest. Works may result in minor, temporary, and highly localised disturbance to golden eagle that may forage or commute in the vicinity of works. However, there is abundant alternative foraging and commuting habitat for golden eagle in the surrounding area. In addition, any golden eagle within the vicinity of the bridge are likely to be habituated to existing levels of noise and activity due to traffic and the nearby settlements of North and South Ballachulish, and most of the proposed maintenance activities are unlikely to result in significantly higher levels of noise than baseline levels. Activities that will result in higher levels of noise (e.g., grit-blasting) will be programmed during daylight hours to reduce impacts on local residents and protected species, and additional acoustic mitigation will be implemented if required. Therefore, no significant effects as a result of disturbance to golden eagle associated with the SPA have been identified. This conclusion contributes to meeting the conservation objectives to maintain the population (2a) and distribution (2b) of golden eagle within the SPA.

Cumulative and in-combination effects

The proposed maintenance activities will be localised to the A82 trunk road and Ballachulish Bridge. Considering the scale and 10-year duration of the proposed maintenance activities, it is not feasible to search the full area for other plans or projects that may have cumulative or in-combination effects until individual maintenance schemes are designed and submitted for environmental assessment. However, as part of the environmental assessment for each scheme, a search will be undertaken for other plans and projects that could have cumulative or in-combination effects in the vicinity of the proposed maintenance works. If there is potential for these effects, additional consultation will be carried out with NS. However, it should be noted that large schemes would not be carried out concurrently due to budget constraints and network access restrictions. Considering the nature and scale of each of the maintenance activities, there is likely to be limited potential for significant cumulative or in-combination effects due to other plans or projects. In addition, BEAR Scotland programme all proposed works in line with appropriate guidance and contractual requirements to take into account existing and future planned works on the trunk roads with a view to limiting any cumulative effects relating to traffic management. As a result of this approach, disturbance in localised areas due to construction noise and activities is also limited. Overall, due to the nature and scale of the proposed activities and the limited potential for overlap of any activities in localised areas, it is unlikely that any of the proposed maintenance activities would result in significant cumulative or in-combination effects on the qualifying features of the Glen Etive and Glen Fyne SPA.

Conclusion

Taking the above into account, no LSE, either alone or in combination with other projects, have been identified on the qualifying species of the Glen Etive and Glen Fyne SPA as a result of any of the proposed maintenance activities.

2. Onich to North Ballachulish Woods SAC

The Onich to North Ballachulish Woods SAC is located 1km north of the scheme and is designated for various non-mobile woodland and upland habitat features. The Onich to North Ballachulish Woods and Shores SSSI overlaps with the SAC and is also designated for non-mobile habitat and geological features. Although it is not subject to HRA, consideration of the SSSI features has been included in this assessment for completeness.

Assessment against the conservation objectives for woodland and upland habitat features



Click here to enter Scheme Name.

Document:	Habitats Regulations Appraisal Proforma (Form No. TBC)
Issue:	#1
Related to:	All Contracts



None of the proposed maintenance activities would entail works within the boundary of the SAC or SSSI, however potential hydrological connectivity exists between watercourses within the SAC/SSSI and Loch Leven which is spanned by Ballachulish bridge. The works would be highly localised to the structure and/or road and adjacent verges and piers within the watercourse spanned by the A82. Therefore, no direct effects (e.g., habitat loss) within the SAC or SSSI would result from the proposed maintenance activities.

The majority of proposed works will take place on the existing bridge structure, with mitigation methods included to minimise entry of materials into the marine environment. Where works take place close to water level, in the case of potential scour repairs, any hydro-demolition works will be fully contained, with wastewater and debris collected and removed off site, unless otherwise agreed and appropriately consented by relevant regulators. Similarly, painting and grit-blasting works will be fully contained within encapsulated working areas to prevent debris or pollutants spreading by air from the construction site.

Therefore, no LSE on the habitats within the SAC has been identified as a result of the proposed maintenance activities and the conservation objectives within the site will be met. Similarly, no likely negative effects on the qualifying features of the SSSI have been identified.

Cumulative and in-combination effects

As above, the proposed maintenance activities will be localised to the A82 trunk road and Ballachulish Bridge. As such, the assessment of cumulative and in-combination effects for Onich to North Ballachulish Woods SAC is the same for Glen Etive and Glen Fyne SPA, and it is unlikely that any of the proposed maintenance activities would result in significant cumulative or in-combination effects on the qualifying features of Onich to North Ballachulish Woods SAC or Onich to North Ballachulish Woods and Shores SSSI.

Conclusion

Taking the above into account, no LSE, either alone or in combination with other projects, are expected on the qualifying features of the Onich to North Ballachulish Woods SAC as a result of any of the proposed maintenance activities. No likely negative changes on the qualifying features of Onich to North Ballachulish Woods and Shores SSSI have been identified as a result of the proposed maintenance activities.

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Stage 4: Undertake an Appropriate Assessment of the Implications for the Site in View of its Conservation Objectives

Appropriate Assessment

It is the responsibility of the competent authority to carry out the appropriate assessment. The competent authority must consult SNH (NatureScot) on the appropriate assessment. NatureScot can provide advice on what issues should be considered in the appropriate assessment, what information is required to carry out the assessment, in some circumstances carry out an appraisal to inform an appropriate assessment and/or provide comments on an assessment carried out.

An 'appropriate assessment' consists of two parts: a scientific, reasoned appraisal (stage 4) and a conclusion (stage 5). Consider the proposed plan/project, its impact on the qualifying interests assessed against their conservation objectives and take account of any possible in combination effects with other plans or projects.

The following points should be considered:

- I. Describe for each qualifying interest the potential impacts of the proposal detailing which aspects or effects of the proposal could impact upon them and their conservation objectives.
- II. Evaluate the potential impacts, e.g., whether short/long term, reversible or irreversible, and in relation to the proportion/importance of the interest affected, and the overall effect on the site's conservation objectives. This should be in sufficient detail to ensure all impacts have been considered and sufficiently appraised. Record if additional survey information or specialist advice has been obtained.
- III. Each conservation objective should be considered, and a decision reached as to whether the proposal will affect achievement of this objective i.e., whether the conservation objective will be undermined if the proposal is consented to. Restore objectives may have been set where qualifying features of a site are in an unfavourable condition. In such cases the appropriate assessment should consider whether the plan or project would prevent the qualifying feature from being able to be restored.

Not identified as required, as activities covered within this document have all been assessed as having no LSE.

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Issue:	#1
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Stage 5: Can it be Ascertained that the Proposal Will Not Adversely Affect the Integrity of the Site?

Assessment for AESI
In the light of the appraisal, ascertain whether the proposal will not adversely affect the integrity of the site. Conclusions should be reached beyond reasonable scientific doubt. If more than one SAC and/or SPA is involved, give separate conclusions. If mitigation or modifications are required, detail these below.

The proposed maintenance activities have limited potential to affect the integrity of the above designated sites, either alone or in combination with other plans or projects.

With the proper application of the standard working practices and measures described in Stage 1, it is concluded that the proposed maintenance activities would not result in LSE and therefore would also not result in adverse effects on site integrity (AESI) on any of the qualifying features of the following sites:

- **Glen Etive and Glen Fyne SPA**
- **Onich to North Ballachulish Woods SAC**



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Issue:	#1
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Modifications Required to Ensure Adverse Effects are Avoided and Reasons for These

Required Modifications

Only list those modifications (i.e., further mitigation) that have been identified as being required to prevent there being an adverse effect on site integrity.

Do not include mitigation that has already been planned in the plan/project or best practice that is already being followed unless you believe these should be added as conditions to the permission given.

N/A

Advice Sought

Consultation

Include here details of, or clear reference to, any advice sought. If an appropriate assessment has been carried out NatureScot must be consulted.

Due to potential connectivity, advice on assessment for Glen Etive and Glen Fyne SPA and Onich to North Ballachulish Woods SAC was sought from NatureScot.

Rachael Haylett of NatureScot provided comment via email (received 14/09/2023) on the proposed scheme and cyclic maintenance works for the A82 Ballachulish bridge, and potential for impacts from these on the SPA and SAC.

It was concluded that the proposal will not have a significant effect on any qualifying interests of the Glen Etive and Glen Fyne SPA or the Onich to North Ballachulish Woods SAC either directly or indirectly. An appropriate assessment is therefore not required.

A copy of this consultation is available in Appendix A.

Conclusion in Relation to Plan or Project

Conclusion

In view of the appraisal above select the appropriate response position and whether the plan or project can be consented/approved/undertaken. Note: this conclusion is just in relation to effects on a European site. There may be impacts to other natural heritage interests that also need to be considered.

This HRA has been undertaken to assess the potential effects of various trunk road and bridge maintenance activities (described in Stage 1) on the qualifying features of the below European Sites, and has **concluded that the proposed activities will not result in LSE on any of the qualifying features of the following sites:**

- **Glen Etive and Glen Fyne SPA**
- **Onich to North Ballachulish Woods SAC**

The assessment has considered standard working practices and standard measures for protected species and pollution mitigation to comply with relevant legislation (as described in Stage 1 above) in its conclusion that the proposed works will not result in LSE on the above designated sites. While these standard working practices will benefit the qualifying features of the above sites, these working practices and measures are not being undertaken specifically for the qualifying interests. Instead, these working practices are required to comply with The Water Environment (Controlled Activities) (Scotland) Regulations 2011 (as amended) which applies regardless of nature conservation designations.

This HRA is not intended to apply in certain circumstances that are described above and which may include but are not limited to:

- Mitigation measures specific to one of the European sites are identified to be required, additional to the standard working practices described in Stage 1 of this HRA; and/or

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Document:	Habitats Regulations Appraisal Proforma (Form No. TBC)
Issue:	#1
Related to:	All Contracts



- The scope of works is beyond that described in Stage 1 of this HRA.

In these cases, additional consultation with NS will be carried out, and a separate HRA will be completed specific to those proposed works.

Click here to enter Scheme Name.	
Document:	Habitats Regulations Appraisal Proforma (Form No. TBC)
Issue:	#1
Related to:	All Contracts



References

NatureScot (2008). SSSI Citation – Onich to North Ballachulish Woods and Shore. Available from: [NatureScot Sitelink \(Site 10104\)](#). [Accessed 16/10/2023]

NatureScot (2020). Conservation Advice Package – Onich to North Ballachulish Woods SAC. Available from: [NatureScot Sitelink \(Site 8637\)](#). [Accessed 16/10/2023]

NatureScot (2020). Conservation Objectives – Glen Etive and Glen Fyne SPA. Available from: [NatureScot Sitelink \(Site 10113\)](#). [Accessed 16/10/2023]

NatureScot (Goodship, N.M. and Furness, R.W. (MacArthur Green)) (2022). Research Report 1283 - Disturbance Distances Review: An updated literature review of disturbance distances of selected bird species. Available from <https://www.nature.scot/doc/naturescot-research-report-1283-disturbance-distances-review-updated-literature-review-disturbance>. [Accessed 16/10/2023]

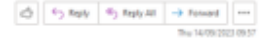
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Appendix A – NatureScot Consultation Response

RE: BEAR Scotland proposed works A82 Ballachulish Bridge



Dear Stuart

Thanks for getting in touch.

As you have identified, the proposed works are close to a number of designated sites, and would take place within the Ben Nevis and Glencoe National Scenic Area (NSA).

We agree that there will be no likely significant effect on any of the designated sites you have listed below. The qualifying features of Onich to North Ballachulish Woods Special Area of Conservation (SAC), Onich to North Ballachulish Woods and Shore Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) and St Johns Church SSSI are sufficiently far away for there to be no direct effects.

Regarding Glen Etive and Glen Fyne Special Protection Area (SPA), designated for breeding golden eagle, the Ballachulish Bridge is out-with the Protected Area and therefore will be on the edge of the golden eagle home range. As the bridge is already present, and lies within existing areas of human activity including the settlements of North and South Ballachulish and the usual traffic movements of the A82 main road, the maintenance works to the bridge will not affect the protected feature of the SPA.

The site lies within the Ben Nevis and Glencoe National Scenic Area which is of national importance for its landscapes and scenery. Details of the Special Qualities of the NSA are available at: <https://sitelink.nature.scot/site/9120>. The most relevant Special Quality in this area is: *The narrow and enclosed Loch Leven, specifically, "The wooded slopes of the north shore, the peak of the Pap of Glencoe and the forested southern valley sides provide a sense of enclosure, which the bridge contributes to by affording a visual barrier to the openness of the outer loch."* We agree that as the works are to the bridge only, with any required structures being temporary in nature, the objectives of the designation and the overall integrity of the area will not be compromised.

Please note that as the Marine Directorate have requested you apply for a license, we will be consulted through this process in due course.

Kind regards

Rachael

Please note that I am mostly working from home. My normal working hours are 8.30 – 4.30.

**Rachael Haylett | Operations Officer – Central Highland
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