Marine Directorate

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Scottish Government
Riaghaltas na h-Alba

Henrietta Marriott
Golspie Community Council
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Date: 22 September 2026

Dear Henrietta Marriott,

SCREENING OPINION UNDER THE MARINE WORKS (ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT ASSESSMENT) (SCOTLAND) REGULATIONS 2017

Thank you for your screening opinion request dated 28 July 2026 in regards to the proposed replacement of the existing groyne, including the removal of the wooden groyne and construction of a new rock armour groyne at Golspie Pier ("the Proposed Works").

The Scottish Ministers consider the Proposed Works to fall under paragraph 10(m) of schedule 2 of The Marine Works (Environmental Impact Assessment) (Scotland) Regulations 2017 ("the 2017 MW Regulations"), with the Proposed Works meeting the corresponding threshold described in column 2 of schedule 2. Consequently, the Scottish Ministers are obliged to adopt a screening opinion as to whether the Proposed Works are an Environmental Impact Assessment ("EIA") project under the 2017 MW Regulations.

Under regulation 10(5) of the 2017 MW Regulations, the Scottish Ministers have consulted with NatureScot (formerly Scottish Natural Heritage), the Scottish Environment Protection Agency ("SEPA"), The Highland Council and Historic Environment Scotland ("HES") as to their view on whether the Proposed Works are an EIA project. Copies of the consultation responses received are attached for your review (at Appendix I).

When making a determination as to whether schedule 2 works are an EIA project, the Scottish Ministers must provide their reasons in a written statement, taking into account the selection criteria set out in schedule 3 of the 2017 MW Regulations, as are relevant to the Proposed Works. This is set out below.

Characteristics of the works

The Proposed Works comprise the removal of the degraded, existing timber framed gravity groyne and replacement with a rock armour groyne consisting of a solid core protected by two layers of 2.6 tonne rock armour, enhancing the resilience and effectiveness of the coastal defence infrastructure.

The structure would be approximately 50 metres ("m") in length and up to 15 m wide, with a maximum ridge height of 6 m above chart datum. The construction crosses the intertidal zone between Mean High Water Springs ("MHWS") and Mean Low Water Springs, extending into the zone above MHWS for approximately half its length.

Location of the works

The Proposed Works are adjacent to the Moray Firth Special Protection Area protected for its non-breeding common scoter, eider, goldeneye, great northern diver, long-tailed duck, red-breasted merganser, red-throated diver, scaup, shag, Slavonian grebe and velvet scoter and breeding shag. The Proposed Works are also adjacent to the Moray Firth Special Area of Conservation protected for its bottlenose dolphin and subtidal sandbanks.

NatureScot advised given the relatively small scale of the works, that it is unlikely that the proposal will have a significant effect on either designated site. NatureScot concluded that the Proposed Works are not an EIA project for aspects within its remit.

HES advised that the Proposed Works are unlikely to have effects on its historic environment interests of a level that would require consideration through the EIA process.

Characteristics of the potential impact

The Highland Council carried out their own screening of the Proposed Works under the Town and Country Planning (Environmental Impact Assessment) Regulations 2017 and considered the potential environmental effects likely to arise during the construction phase including temporary disturbance to the intertidal/subtidal environment and potential disturbance to marine mammals. It concluded that these effects are expected to be temporary, localised and reversible. It therefore determined that the Proposed Works do not constitute EIA development and an EIA is not required.

SEPA advised that the Proposed Works for this application fall below the thresholds that it would provide site specific information for. It advised the Proposed Works would not require an Environmental Impact Assessment to be carried out.

Conclusion

In view of the findings above, the Scottish Ministers are of the opinion that the Proposed Works are not an EIA project under the 2017 MW Regulations and, therefore, an EIA is not required to be carried out in respect of the Proposed Works.

If you increase, alter or extend the Proposed Works, you are advised to contact Marine Directorate - Licensing Operations Team again to confirm if the screening opinion is still valid.

A copy of the screening opinion has been forwarded to The Highland Council planning department. The screening opinion has also been made publicly available through the Marine Scotland Information website.

If you require any further assistance or advice on this matter, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Yours sincerely,

Peter Sparrow
Marine Directorate - Licensing Operations Team

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