

Inverness West Link Design Project Strategic Environmental Assessment Scoping Report
COVER NOTE

PART 1

To: SEA.gateway@scotland.gsi.gov.uk
or
SEA Gateway
Scottish Executive
Area 1 H (Bridge)
Victoria Quay
Edinburgh EH6 6QQ

PART 2

An SEA Scoping Report is attached for the plan, programme or strategy (PPS) entitled:

Inverness West Link Design Project

The Responsible Authority is:

The Highland Council

PART 3


Please tick the appropriate box

- The PPS falls under the scope of Section 5(3) of the Act and requires an SEA under the Environmental Assessment (Scotland) Act 2005. **or**
- The PPS falls under the scope of Section 5(4) of the Act and requires an SEA under the Environmental Assessment (Scotland) Act 2005. **or**
- The PPS does not require an SEA under the Environmental Assessment (Scotland) Act 2005. However, we wish to carry out an SEA on a voluntary basis. We accept that, as this SEA is voluntary, the statutory 5 week timescale for views from the Consultation Authorities cannot be guaranteed.

PART 4

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PART 5

Signature (electronic signature is acceptable)	
Date	25/07/2011

Introduction

The purpose of this Strategic Environmental Assessment Scoping Report is to set out sufficient information on the Inverness West Link Design Project to enable the Consultation Authorities to form a view on the consultation period and scope/level of detail that will be appropriate for the Environmental Report.

This report has been prepared in accordance with the Environmental Assessment (Scotland) Act 2005.

Key Facts

The key facts relating to this PPS are set out below:

Name of Responsible Authority

The Highland Council

Title

Inverness West Link Design Project

What prompted the Guidance

A detailed design of a river and canal crossing is required to ensure the road is delivered to facilitate a reduction in congestion within Inverness City Centre and the wider city area, including public transport and active travel improvements.

Subject

Transport

Period covered by Guidance

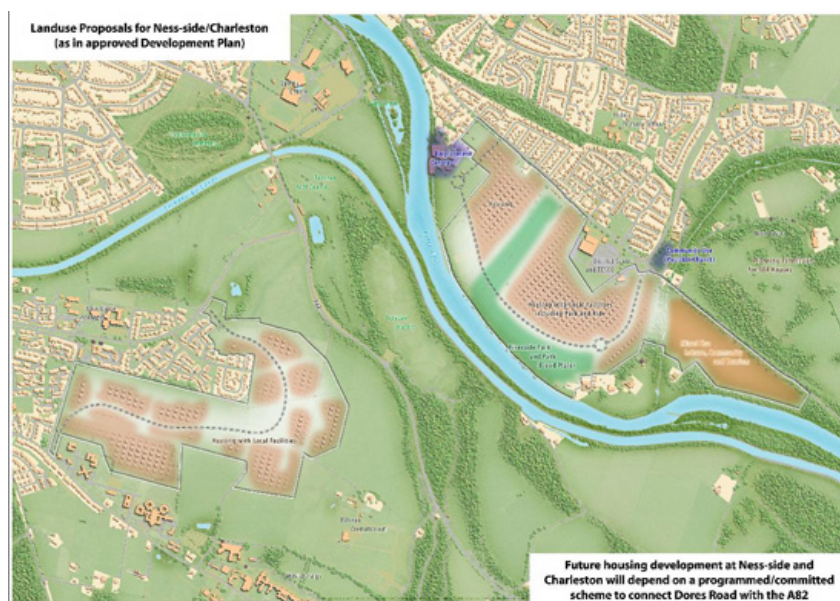
2011 onwards

Frequency of updates

As required

Area covered by Guidance

The area covered by the design project is shown in the map below:



Purpose and/or objectives of Guidance

The purpose of this design project is to consider the options for the delivery of a river and canal crossing to the south east of Inverness to be used as a distributor road.

Contact

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DESCRIPTION OF THE PROJECT CONTENT

The Inverness West Link Design Project will contain the following:

- Introduction
 - This will outline the purpose, aims, status and structure of the design project
- The options
 - This section will discuss each option in turn and how these solutions have been reached. This will include:
 - Summary of STAG appraisal;
 - Summary of environmental appraisal;
 - A potential land use framework (please note that this element of the document may lead to a future development brief).
- Delivery of the design
 - This section will focus on how the preferred solution could be delivered.
- Timescales
 - This section will outline how long it may take to deliver the final solution or if appropriate further work that needs to be completed.

CONTEXT

Relationship with other plans, programmes or strategies and environmental objectives

Table 1 lists the plans, policies and strategies which are relevant to the Inverness West Link Design Project and which may affect or influence its content. The contents of each plan, policy and strategy along with the relationship to the Inverness West Link Design Project and likely environmental impacts, is also summarised. We would welcome the Consultation Authorities views on any additional plans, policies or strategies which we may wish to consider.

Table 1. Plans, programmes, strategies and environmental objectives to be analysed in the Environmental Report for their relationship with Inverness West Link Design Project

No.	Name of PPS/Environmental Protection objective	Objective/Requirements of PPS	How it affects or is affected by the Inverness West Link Design Project in terms of issues at Schedule 3 of the Environmental Assessment (Scotland) Act 2005
International			
	EC Directive on the assessment of the effects of certain plans and programmes on the environment. Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) Directive (2001/42/EC)	The objective of this Directive is to provide for a high level of protection of the environment and to contribute to the integration of environmental considerations into the preparation and adoption of plans and programmes with a view to promoting sustainable development. Aims to identify and mitigate significant environmental effects arising from certain plans and programmes.	The Directive requires that an SEA be carried out on documents such as this and an Environmental Report produced.
European	European Climate Change Programme (2005)	The European Commission's main instrument to discuss and prepare the further development of the European Union's climate policy. To identify and develop all the necessary elements on an EU strategy to deliver the EU Kyoto Protocol commitment to reduce greenhouse gas emissions to 8% below 1990 levels by 2008-2012.	The project should promote choice and raise awareness of the need for change; and aim to reduce the need to travel. The Council will promote active travel.
EC	Directive establishing a framework for Community action in the Field of Water Policy Water Framework Directive (2000/60/EC)	The Water Framework Directive is designed to integrate the way we manage water bodies across Europe. It aims to protect and enhance our water environment, promote sustainable water consumption, reduce water pollution and lessen the effects of floods and droughts.	The Strategic Environment Assessment will consider the implications of the project on the water environment and how it can benefit the existing environment and reduce risk of flooding.
The	Johannesburg Declaration on Sustainable Development (2002)	Principles of international commitment to sustainable development reaffirmed. Aims to strengthen and improve Government at all levels to fulfil commitment to sustainable development.	The project will take into consideration the principles of sustainable development and seek to reflect these within the overarching objectives of the strategy and individual projects.
	Agenda 21(1992)	Agenda 21 underlines the growing awareness of the need	The project will reflect the

		to adopt a balanced and integrated approach to environment and development issues. Agenda 21 contains a broad range of qualitative objectives that relate to sustainable development. These include a requirement for countries to adopt integrated strategies to ensure compliance with legislation relating to sustainable development, to promote the use of renewable energy systems and to build public environmental awareness.	principles of sustainable development, and will make reference to the Council's development policy planning guidance – Planning for Sustainability in the Highlands.
	EC Directive On Public Access to Environmental Information (2003/4/EC)	Enforces the right of the public to view environmental information held by public authorities.	The Highland Council is required to ensure that all environmental information relating to the project is made available to the general public.
UNE	CE Convention on Access to Information, Public Participation in Decision-Making and Access to Justice in Environmental Matters. 'The Aarhus Convention' Adopted June 1998	Acknowledges the need for public participation in environmental issues and grants the public rights to access to justice and information on the environment.	Public involvement in the formulation of the project should be actively facilitated. Consultations should incorporate the views and suggestions of local residents, business groups, council representatives and government.
	The Convention on Biological Diversity (1992)	International commitment to maintaining the world's biodiversity. Three main goals established – the conservation of biological diversity; the sustainable use of its components and the fair and equitable sharing of the benefits from the use of genetic resources. Requirement for each country who has signed the declaration to develop national strategies, plans or programmes for the conservation and sustainable use of biological diversity.	Adequate consideration of impacts affecting biodiversity with support for more detailed assessment at the local level where appropriate will be recommended.
	The Convention on Wetlands of International Importance especially as Waterfowl Habitat 'The Ramsar Convention' Adopted February 1971	An international treaty that provides the framework for national and international co-operation for the conservation of wetlands primarily to provide a habitat for birds.	The project must recognise the legal status of any 'Ramsar' protected site and reflect its ecological importance in its biodiversity objectives.
	EU Soil Thematic Strategy (Consultation stage)	The emerging Soil Strategy aims to reduce soil pollution, erosion, compaction and sealing of soil. It also aims to protect the role of soil in storing CO2, avoiding water pollution and preserving biodiversity. Protection of the sustainable production of food and renewable resources is a further aim.	The project could highlight soil protection as an issue and implicates soil degradation as a forthcoming issue in relation to land use.
European	Landscape Convention (2000)	Promotes the protection, management and planning of European landscapes and organises European co-operation on landscape issues.	The Convention directs the way in which European designated landscapes issues should be taken into consideration.
EC	Air Quality Framework Directive	Sets new air quality standards for previously unregulated air pollutants. Includes sulphur dioxide, nitrogen dioxide, particulate matter, lead and ozone pollutants.	The project should consider the strategic approach to air quality in Highland.

	EC Birds and Habitats Directive	Protects all wild birds, their nests, eggs and habitats within the E.C. Gives basis to classify Special Protection Areas (SPA's) to protect habitat and vulnerable bird species. Gives basis to classify Special Areas of Conservation (SAC's)	The project will take into consideration the requirements of the directive in its section on Natural, Built and Cultural Heritage. The Council will work closely with the appropriate agencies on this matter.
European	Biodiversity Framework	Promotes the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity, emphasising education, training and awareness raising, species identification, monitoring and exchange of information.	The project should be implemented with regard to the Biodiversity Duty that is stated in the Nature Conservation (Scotland) Act 2004
European	Framework on Sustainable Development	Promotes coherent and cost-effective policy making; technological innovation; stronger involvement in civil society; and business in policy formation. Strategies for Sustainable Economic support progress in respect of the local environment.	The project will promote efficient resource use, and sustainable travel through a number of the topics. Sustainable development would be considered a cross cutting theme.
European	Spatial Development Perspective	Emphasises the importance of achieving, equally throughout the EU, economic and social cohesion, as well as the conservation and management of natural resources and cultural heritage. It stresses more balanced competitiveness of the European Community.	This will influence the delivery of all of the Objectives of the project.
Kyoto	Protocol (1992)	United Nations international treaty on climate change. The Protocol entered into force in February 2005. Developed countries that have ratified the Protocol are committed to reducing their emissions of greenhouse gases. Commitment signed by 38 countries (plus the EU) to introduce legally binding targets to limit or reduce greenhouse gas emissions by at least 5% of 1990 levels in the period 2008-2012. The UK has committed to an 8% reduction.	The project will take account of targets of reducing CO2 emissions and consider measures to reduce the need to travel and promote more sustainable and active forms of transport.
Water	Framework Directive 2000/60/EC	The Water Framework Directive is designed to integrate the way we manage water bodies across Europe. It aims to protect and enhance our water environment, promote sustainable water consumption, reduce water pollution and lessen the effects of floods and droughts.	In terms of degradation of water quality the project will make reference to the guidance in The Council's Designing for Sustainability in the Highlands.
The	Convention on Biological Diversity (1992)	The objectives of this Convention, to be pursued in accordance with its relevant provisions, are the conservation of biological diversity, the sustainable use of its components and the fair and equitable sharing of the benefits arising out of the utilization of genetic resources, including by appropriate access to genetic resources and by appropriate transfer of relevant technologies, taking into account all rights over those resources and to technologies, and by appropriate funding. Its short-term aim is to significantly reduce global biodiversity loss by 2010.	The project should be implemented with regard to the Biodiversity Duty that is stated in the Nature Conservation (Scotland) Act 2004
EU	EC Directive on the Assessment and Management of Flood Risks - 2007/60/EC	requires Member States to assess if all water courses and coastlines are at risk from flooding, to map the flood extent and assets and humans at risk in these areas and to take adequate and coordinated measures to reduce this flood risk.	The project will ensure due regard is given to flood risk.
EU	Thematic Strategy on Air Pollution (2005)	sets objectives for reducing certain pollutants and reinforces the legislative framework for combating air pollution via two main routes: improving Community	The project will take this strategy into consideration when assessing any impact

U	UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (1992)	environmental legislation and integrating air quality concerns into related policies. achieve stabilization of greenhouse gas concentrations in the atmosphere at a level that would prevent dangerous anthropogenic interference with the climate system. Such a level should be achieved within a time frame sufficient to allow ecosystems to adapt naturally to climate change, to ensure that food production is not threatened and to enable economic development to proceed in a sustainable manner.	on air quality. The project will consider the role it has to play with regard to climate change esp. Reduction of greenhouse gases.
EU	Wild Birds Directive (79/409/EEC)	Protection scheme for all of Europe's wild birds, identifying 194 species and sub-species. Provides a framework for the conservation of wild birds in Europe. The Directive requires the identification of Special Protection Areas (SPAs) to conserve rare or vulnerable species. Aims to sustain populations of naturally occurring wild birds by sustaining areas of habitats in order to maintain populations at ecologically and scientifically sound levels.	Adequate consideration will be given to the impacts affecting biodiversity, with support for more detailed assessment at the local level where appropriate. The project must ensure that the ecological value of important SPAs is not undermined.
EU	Habitats Directive (92/43/EC)	Aims to ensure biodiversity by conserving natural habitats of wild flora and fauna. It requires Special Areas of Conservation (SACs) to be identified which form a network of protected areas called Natura 2000 along with SPAs. Projects are only permitted on such sites under exceptional circumstances. Also aims to maintain, or restore, in a favourable condition designated natural types and habitats of designated species.	Ensure that the project is mindful of the list of sites of the natural habitats and species and take appropriate steps to avoid the deterioration of these habitats and avoid disturbance of scheduled, scarce or rare species. Ensure that schemes pursuant to the project do not result in damage to special areas of conservation.
European Commission	SE Circular Habitats and Birds Directive (2000) Transport White Paper – European Transport Policy for 2010: Time to Decide (2001) EU Urban Transport Green Paper: Clean Urban Transport (2007)	EU Nature conservation policy is based on two main pieces of legislation – the Birds Directive and the Habitats Directive. Its priorities are to create the European ecological network (of special areas of conservation) called NATURA 2000, and to integrate nature protection requirements into other EU policies such as agriculture, regional development and transport. The Commission proposes some 60 measures aimed at developing a European transport system capable of shifting the balance between modes of transport, revitalising the railways, promoting transport by sea and inland waterways and controlling the growth in air transport. The objective of this paper is to enhance mobility while at the same time reducing congestion, accidents and pollution in European cities.	The Local authority should be aware of the NATURA 2000 sites and protect the setting of these areas from unsympathetic development through the creation of the project. The document will have due regard to the measures contained within this paper. The document will have due regard to the provisions of this green paper.
Biofuels	Directive 2003/30/EC	Lays the foundation for the promotion of alternative fuels in the EU. In particular, it specifies that Member States should ensure that a minimum share of biofuels and other renewable fuels is placed on the market, and, to that effect, shall set national indicative targets.	The document will have due regard to the provisions of the directive.

National

SEA	Good Practice Guidelines (ODPM)	The guidelines are designed to assist practitioners responsible for plans and programmes requiring SEA,	The Council will use these guidelines to inform how best
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	2005	explain the role of the Environment Agency in the process and promote good practice approaches.	to carry out an environmental assessment on qualifying plans and programmes.
Forestry	Commission (2004) The UK Forestry Standard: The Government's Approach to Sustainable Forestry	The two central aims of the Standard are: - The sustainable management of our existing woods and forests; and - A steady expansion of tree cover to increase the many diverse benefits that forests provide.	The project will consider the implications for any areas of semi-natural and amenity woodland in the project area.
Wildlife	and Countryside Act (as amended)1981	This Act is the principle mechanism for the legislative protection of wildlife in Great Britain. The Local Plan will aim to protect designated areas and priority habitats from development influences.	There are a number of SSSIs in the area. The project should recognise their statutory importance and strive to ensure they are adequately protected.
	UK Wild Mammals (Protection) Act 1996	Offers protection for rare wild mammals throughout the UK, including species such as red squirrels, bats and otters.	The project will consider the location of habitats when assessing the options for the project.
	UK The Protection of Badgers Act 1992	UK legislation offering specific protection to badgers and their setts. It is an offence to wilfully kill, injure or mistreat a badger. Their setts are also protected from obstruction, destruction, damage and, when active, disturbance. Any work within 30 metres of a badger sett may require a licence from SNH, and if destruction of the sett is unavoidable, a licence will definitely be required from SNH beforehand.	Badger habitats will be considered when assessing options for the project.
	UK Climate Change Act	The UK Climate Change Act sets a target of 60% CO ₂ reduction by 2050.	The project will take a strategic view on how the project can contribute.
UK	Biodiversity Action Plan 1995 and 1999	It is the UK Government's response to the Convention on Biological Diversity signed in 1992. It describes the UK's biological resources and commits the government to a detailed plan for the protection of these resources. It currently has 391 Species Action Plans, 45 Habitat Action Plans and 162 Local Biodiversity Action Plans with targeted actions, a major review of the Priority Species and Habitats are underway, and will be completed in late 2008.	The project should be implemented with regard to the Biodiversity Duty that is stated in the Nature Conservation (Scotland) Act 2004
	Department for the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA) Air Quality Strategy for England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland (2000 – amended 2003)	Describes the plans drawn up by the Government and devolved administrations to improve and protect ambient air quality in the UK in the medium-term. Standards set for 8 main air pollutants of particular concern to human health: - Benzene; - 1,3-butadiene; - Carbon Monoxide; - Lead; - Nitrogen Dioxide; - Ozone; - Particles (PM10); and - Sulphur Dioxide Local authorities are charged with drawing up their own strategies to tackle the air quality objectives in their areas. Standards are to be achieved between 2003 and 2008. The standards are purely health based and objectives are to be derived from these, taking account practically, technical feasibility, and economic factors.	The project will have regard to the implications of different policies on air quality and promote measures which reduce the need to travel and encourage the development and uptake of more sustainable options. The project should seek to ensure that air pollution within the area is managed and where possible, steps are taken to alleviate air quality problems.

Scotland National

The Environmental Assessment (Scotland) Act 2005	The Act ensures that during the preparation of a qualifying plan or programme, there will be the carrying out of an environmental assessment. The SEA process that should be followed by a responsible authority is also outlined.	The Council will follow the procedure outlined in the Act when carrying out an environment assessment on a plan or programme.
Scottish Executive et al (2005) Securing the Future. The UK's shared framework for sustainable development	Sets out the guiding principles that have to be adhered to in order to achieve the goal of sustainable development. The following principles set out the framework for all sustainable development policy within the UK: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Living within environmental limits - Ensuring a strong, healthy and just society - Achieving a sustainable economy - Promoting good governance - Using sound science responsibly 	The project should adhere to the five principles in order that all policies are sustainable. The emphasis within the strategy is on balancing all aspects of sustainability, and this should be considered within the project.
Scottish Executive: Choosing Our Future Scotland's Sustainable Development Strategy (2005)	This document sets out the action that will be taken in Scotland to turn the shared priorities set out in the UK Framework for sustainable development into action. It has six key priorities; sustainable consumption and production, climate change and energy, natural resource protection and environmental enhancement, sustainable communities, learning to live differently and delivery.	The project will take account of objectives relating to sustainable development. Measures for reducing the need to travel and a shift to active and public transport will positively contribute to these indicators.
Land Reform (Scotland) Act 2003	Part 1 of the Act introduces: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - statutory right of responsible access; - reciprocal obligation on owners to manage their land responsibly; - places a duty on local authorities to uphold access rights and to maintain core paths; Part 2 introduces: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - community's right to buy Part 3 introduces: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -crofting community right to buy 	The project needs to be aware of community land ownership and liaise with communities in order to assess if there are any allocations that may be required for the community's benefit. The project will also take into account local paths that need to be maintained, improved and safeguarded from development.
Planning etc. (Scotland) Act 2006	Act of the Scottish Parliament to make further provision relating to town and country planning; to make provision for business improvement districts; and for connected purposes.	The project will be produced using the guidance set out in this Act and also the secondary legislation of the Town and Country Planning (Scotland) (Development Planning) Regulations 2009.
Scottish Outdoor Access Code (2003)	The Scottish Outdoor Access Code, which aims to support the access provisions of the Land Reform Act, is based on three key principles: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - respect the interests of other people - care for the environment - take responsibility for your own actions 	The project should contribute to the development of core path networks alongside the core path plan. The project will identify paths that play a key part in a green framework.
Scotland's Biodiversity (2004) It's In Your Hands. A Strategy for the conservation and enhancement of biodiversity in Scotland	Vision: 'It's 2030: Scotland is recognised as a world leader in biodiversity conservation. Everyone is involved; everyone benefits. The nation is enriched' Objectives: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - conserve what we have - sustain healthy ecosystems - create networks and connections - engage more people - promote sustainable development The strategy also underlines the need to promote	Sets out the overall approach to biodiversity conservation and enhancement which the project should contribute towards. The project should identify key species and habitats, and give adequate consideration to the impacts affecting biodiversity with support for more detailed assessment at

		understanding and appreciation of natural heritage.	the local level where appropriate.
Scottish	Historical Environment Policy (2008) (HS)	The Scottish Historic Environment Policy sets out Scottish Ministers' policies, providing direction for Historic Scotland and a policy framework that informs the work of a wide range of public sector organisations.	The project will take into consideration the SHEP when built and cultural heritage of the study area.
The	Conservation (Natural Habitats, &c.) Regulations 1994 (as amended)	Under the Regulations, competent authorities i.e. any Minister, government department, public body, or person holding public office, have a general duty, in the exercise of any of their functions, to have regard to the EC Habitats Directive.	The project will have regard to the EC Habitats Directive.
Scottish	Executive (2001) Potential Adaptation Strategies for Climate Change in Scotland	Identifies a full range of potential adaptation strategies for Scotland, including those specifically relating to agriculture, forestry, fishing and biodiversity. Emphasises the importance of flexible resource management and the need to move on from defining conservation objectives on the basis of single species or fixed locations as these may no longer be achievable. The strategy notes that: 'the fragmented and often overlapping nature of policies for forestry, agriculture and biodiversity impedes appropriate adaptation strategies. In the medium-term, drivers of change from agriculture, from mitigating greenhouse gas emissions, from sustainability issues and from the protection of biodiversity may lead to a blurring and perhaps complete removal of the distinctions between policies for forestry, agriculture and biodiversity.'	The project will take account of the Scottish share and consider measures from the transport sector which would positively contribute to the targets, for example reducing the need to travel and encouraging modal shifts to more sustainable methods.
Scottish	Executive (2003) Improving Health in Scotland The Challenge	Addresses wider health issues and aims to improve life expectancy. Also aims to reduce health inequalities between deprived and affluent people. Aims to 'mainstream' health policy so that it becomes an integral part of wider public sector policies. To achieve the required 1% annual increase, the strategy focuses on ensuring that physical activity is encouraged across the population as a whole, and targeting specific communities for basic changes in activity levels.	The project will take into account health related impacts of different strategies and seek to promote more active travel.
Water	Environment and Water Services (Scotland) Act 2003 (WEWS)	The Act translates the EC Water Framework Directive into the Scottish context. It includes a number of key commitments relating to Scotland's water environment: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • establishing River Basin Management districts; <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - preparing River Basin Management Plans - regulation of controlled activities (including those likely to cause pollution to the water environment, those involved in abstraction, and those from construction on or near water). The Act aims to prevent further deterioration of water quality and has given Scottish Ministers powers to introduce regulatory controls over activities in order to protect and improve Scotland's water environment. That is, wetlands, rivers, lochs, transitional waters (estuaries and saline lagoons), coastal waters and water under the ground (groundwater).	The project will reflect the Act in the development of adequate drainage systems. Future expansion of local water provision or abstraction and wastewater handling to cope with expected population increases will require close consultation with SEPA and Scottish Water.
The	Environment (Controlled Activities) (Scotland) Regulations 2005 (CAR)	Brings into effect the regulation of the following activities: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • abstractions from surface and groundwater; • impoundment of rivers, lochs, wetlands and transitional waters; • groundwater recharge; <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - engineering in rivers, lochs and wetlands; - engineering activities in the vicinity of rivers, lochs 	The Regulations apply across the water environment to provide a holistic approach to pollution control and protection of the water environment. Any activities that may fall

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - and wetland which are likely to have a significant adverse impact upon the water environment; - activities liable to cause pollution; - direct or indirect discharge of certain substances to groundwater; and • any other activities which directly or indirectly are liable to cause a significant impact upon the water environment. 	<p>within the remit of these regulations will require close consultation with SEPA and the receipt of appropriate licences.</p>
Flood	Prevention and Land Drainage (Scotland) Act 1997	<p>The introduction of the Flood Prevention and Land Drainage (Scotland) Act 1997 instigated changes to the responsibilities and duties of Local Authorities in Scotland. In respect of this Act the flooding referred to is the flooding of land, not being agricultural land. Flooding of agricultural land falls out with the requirements of the Act. The implications on The Highland Council of this Act impose the following additional requirements:-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Assessment of water courses, from time to time for the purpose of ascertaining whether any such watercourse is in a condition likely to flood. b) A duty to maintain water courses, which are in a condition likely to cause flooding, or where works would substantially reduce the likelihood of such flooding. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Notification of Local Authorities out with the area. Where it appears to The Highland Council that any watercourse in the area is in a condition which is likely to cause flooding, out with the area, the Council shall notify the local authority for the area in which the land is situated. • Reports shall be published, at two year intervals. 	<p>The project should take account of flood plains and areas at risk of flooding from SEPA's flood risk maps.</p>
	Passed to the Future (2002) Historic Scotland Policy for the Sustainable Management of the Historic Environment	<p>Sets out the Scottish Executive's policy for the sustainable management of the historic environment. It notes the irreplaceable nature of historic environment features, but also sets out the following key principles to guide the parameters in which change can take place:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - recognising value – in terms of quality of life and as a means of meeting social, environmental and economic needs - good stewardship – taking into account capacity for change and the sustainable use of resources • assessing impact – following the precautionary principle where impact is not clear • working together – to reduce damage, resolve conflict and maximise benefit 	<p>The project should recognise the important role of the historic environment and acknowledge the need to work together with others to consider a balance between social, economic and environmental needs.</p>
Scottish	Executive Trunk Road Biodiversity Action Plan (TRBAP) (2000)	<p>Sets the Scottish Executive's commitment to protecting Scottish biodiversity on the trunk road network. The purpose of the document is twofold:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - to assist in the delivery of biodiversity targets and objectives as set down in the Scottish Local Biodiversity Action Plans. - to raise awareness of biodiversity in all engineers, managers, planners, designers and ecologists working on the Scottish Trunk Road network. 	<p>The project should take account of any recommendations and actions outlined within the Trunk Road Biodiversity Action Plan.</p>
Sc	ottish Climate Change Bill	<p>The aim of the Bill is to establish a framework to enable more actions to reduce Scotland's greenhouse gas emissions and adapt to climate change. The Bill is currently out for consultation and The Highland Council have submitted a response</p>	<p>The project will take into consideration the provisions of the act.</p>
Histo	ric Scotland's Memorandum of	<p>This is the document to which all planning authorities are directed by Scottish Office Development Department</p>	<p>The project should recognise the importance of the historic</p>

	Guidance on Listed buildings and Conservation Areas.	Circular No.13/1998 in their consideration of conservation and listed building consent matters. The Memorandum aims to : • present the principles and policies upon which the legislation is based • offer clear guidance which will help both applicants and planning officers to determine whether they are following those principles and policies and achieving what is best for the site	environment and acknowledge the need to work together with others to consider a balance between social, economic and environmental needs.
Meeting	the Needs, Priorities, Actions and Targets for Sustainable Development in Scotland (2002)	Prioritises responsible resource use; Encourages energy conservation and promotes use of power from renewable sources; Ensures the provision of better land use planning, alternative service delivery and sustainable transport systems.	The project will promote sustainable travel
Nature	Conservation (Scotland) Act	Sets out a series of measures which are designed to conserve biodiversity and to protect and enhance the biological and geological natural heritage of Scotland. Places a general duty on all public bodies to further the conservation of biodiversity.	The project will take into consideration the measures proposed in the Act
S	Scottish Historic Environment Policy	Sets out the policy for the identification and designation of nationally important ancient monuments. Sets the context to conserve the evidence of Scotland's past based on their cultural significance.	The project should ensure the conservation of historic areas of cultural importance.
	Draft River Basin Management Plan for the Scottish River Basin District (2008)	The draft river basin management plans (below) will ensure that statutory agencies, private organisations, public sector bodies and individuals work together to create a final plan that addresses all aspects of water management.	The project will make sure that the recommendations and findings of the RBMP will be taken into consideration when working to formulate policies on the water environment.
	Changing our Ways - Scotland's Climate Change Programme (2006)	The Scottish Executive is committed to playing its full part to tackle climate change. Key elements of this programme are: - presenting a vision for Scotland and how we are to move forward - quantifying Scotland's 'equitable contribution' in carbon terms - setting a Scottish target for carbon emission reductions - demonstrating Scotland's achievements so far - setting out new actions and future directions across the main sectors - responding to the inevitable consequences of climate change	The project will support active and public transport, and will highlight the need for the provision of locally important pedestrian and cycle paths.
	The Air Quality Limit Values (Scotland) Regulations 2003		
Environmental	Impact Assessment (Scotland) Regulations 1999 (As Amended)	Sets out the types of developments which will be subject to EIA and the process.	The final road build project will be subject to Environmental Impact Assessment.
Transport	(Scotland) Act 2005	An act of the Scottish Parliament which places a range of duties related to transport on Local Authorities including the production of a regional transport strategy and local transport strategy and	The design project will give due regard to the provisions of the Act.
Scottish Planning Policy Tier			
National	Planning Framework for	This is the government's land use element of its economic strategy and sets out how each part of Scotland can play	The project must take into account the information within

Scotland 2		its part in making Scotland the best small country in the world.	NPF2
Scottish Planning Policy (2009)		This sets out national policy, the purpose of the planning system and the objectives for core parts of the planning system	The project will have regard to the SPP.
PAN 43 Golf Courses and Associated Developments (1994)		Golf course proposals will be assessed on the demand for such development in the area and their ability to fit into the landscape.	The project area includes a golf course and as such due regard will be had of the provisions contained within the PAN.
PAN 60 Planning for Natural Heritage (2000)		Complements SPP on Natural Heritage, with examples of good planning practice in relation to natural heritage from across Scotland highlighted in a number of cases. Provides advice on how development and the planning system can contribute to the conservation, enhancement, enjoyment and understanding of Scotland's natural environment, and encourages developers and planning authorities to be positive and creative in addressing natural heritage issues.	The project will consider the implications of this PAN
PAN 61 Planning and Sustainable Urban Drainage Systems (2001)		Planners have a key role in highlighting the need for Sustainable Urban Drainage Systems (SUDS) and coordinating SUDS projects.	The project should set out how SUDS will be incorporated.
PAN 65 Planning and Open Space (2008)		Gives advice on the role of the planning system in protecting and enhancing existing open spaces and providing high quality new spaces. Supports NPPG 11: Sport, Physical Recreation and Open Space. Also sets out how local authorities can prepare open space strategies and give examples of good practice in providing, managing and maintaining spaces. The advice relates to open space in settlements: villages, towns and major urban areas. A key aim of the PAN is to raise the profile of open space as a planning issue.	The project will consider the provisions of the PAN.
PAN 69 Planning and Building Standards Advice on Flooding (2004)		Provides background information and best practice advice in support of Scottish Planning Policy (SPP) 7: Planning and Flooding. The SPP aims to prevent future development which would have a significant probability of being affected by flooding or which would increase the probability of flooding elsewhere. The PAN takes as a starting point the responsibilities of local authorities and developers in ensuring that future development is not located in areas with a significant risk of flooding, including functional flood plains. However, there are circumstances where development would benefit from selecting designs, forms of construction and materials which may help to minimise the effects of a flood event on the property.	The project will consider role flooding will play in developing a design solution.
PAN 79 Water and Drainage (2006)		Development Plans guide the future development and use of land in the long term public interest. Local Plans play a key role in identifying suitable locations for development in the context of an overall settlement strategy. Provision of water and waste water is an important consideration in the delivery of public policy objectives, including those set out in development plans.	Issues relating to water and drainage should not be viewed in isolation but considered in relation to the objectives of the guidance.
Designing Streets		Designing Streets is the first policy statement in Scotland for street design and marks a change in the emphasis of guidance on street design towards place-making and away from a system focused up on the dominance of motor vehicles.	The document will have due regard to the agenda set out in Designing Streets.
Designing Places		Sets out the Scottish Government's aims to raise	The document will have due

standards of urban and rural development.

regard to the place-making agenda set out in design places.

Regional

<p>A Smart, Successful Highlands and Islands (Highlands and Islands Enterprise, 2005)</p>	<p>This is an enterprise strategy for the Highlands and Islands. Its central aim is to realise the populations' full potential on a sustainable basis, and outlines the strategic objectives of strengthening communities, developing skills, growing businesses and making global connections. In particular it addresses the issues of remoteness, affordability of housing, unique cultural and natural assets, lower than average incomes, increasing rural populations and balancing growth, and increasing business development.</p>	<p>The project will reflect the need to build communities' prospects for a sustainable future, through land allocations for business and housing (emphasising affordable housing), protecting and enhancing natural and built heritage, and encouraging (where appropriate) the use of renewable energy.</p>
<p>Highland Council Local Transport Strategy (2000)(currently being reviewed) City of Inverness Greenspace Strategy</p>	<p>The Highland Council prepare a Local Transport Strategy and implement the policies, plans and projects to improve and manage the Highland transport system.</p> <p>Sets out a long term vision for protecting and enhancing greenspace within the city. Sets out the importance of greenspace in Inverness and the positive impacts it can have on health, economy, environment, education and tourism.</p>	<p>This document will be utilised to enable and encourage active transport improvements.</p> <p>Should be implemented with regard to the Biodiversity Duty that is stated in the Nature Conservation (Scotland) Act 2004 and will deliver towards the objectives within the guidance to help create a healthier Highland.</p>
<p>A96 Corridor Master plan</p>	<p>An implementation scheme covering the overall phasing, infrastructure, funding, developer contributions protocol and deliver mechanisms for expansion and development eastwards of Inverness to the border with Moray.</p> <p>A requirement of being a signatory to Scotland's Climate Change Declaration, the Climate Change Strategy will set out Highland Councils actions to mitigate the causes of Climate Change and adapt to its likely impacts. The Strategy will be developed during the term of this administration.</p>	<p>The project is to update the green framework section of this masterplan</p> <p>This will be taken into consideration when bringing forward the project.</p>
<p>Inverness Local Plan</p>	<p>Sets the strategy and land use framework for the development of land and protection of the environment in the Inverness area</p>	<p>The project will supplement guidance already in the Local Plan.</p>
<p>Supplementary Planning Guideline on Developer Contributions</p>	<p>This guidance is in preparation and will set out guidance on Developer Contributions</p>	<p>The project will consider the implications of this emerging guidance.</p>
<p>Highland Access Strategy</p>	<p>Aims to address the needs and aspirations of people of all ages and abilities to deliver a wide range of recreational and enjoyment of the environment benefits for walkers, cyclists, equestrians and paddlers. Thereby contributing to social inclusion, health improvements, sustainable transport and improvement to the overall quality of life by unlocking this potential and guiding the way in which the Council and its partners can take forward plans for access throughout the Highland Council area.</p>	<p>The project will seek to meet the aims of the access strategy.</p>
<p>Highland Area Tourism Strategy (partnership strategy)</p>	<p>Produced in 2006 by the Highland Area Tourism Partnership sets out a Strategy (until 2015) and Action Plan (3 year) which sets out how Highland tourism could be developed to achieve the Government's 50% growth</p>	<p>Tourism will be a strong influence and drive a new crossing.</p>

	Inverness and Nairn Core Path Plan		target by 2015. This document identifies the key strategic links which will provide for a system of paths and waterways ("core paths") sufficient for the purpose of giving the public reasonable access throughout their area and to the wider access resource	The project will have due regard to core paths in the area.
Highl	and Open Space Audit		A comprehensive audit of open space in Highl and was carried out in Summer/Autumn 2009. The findings of this will be published in Summer 2011. The audit considers the quality, quantity and accessibility of greenspace in Highland.	The project will take into consideration the audits findings.
Highl	and wide Local Development Plan		Sets the strategic vision, strategy and general policies for the whole of the Highlands.	The project will have due regard to the land allocations and general policies on the local development plan.
Gree	n Networks: Interim Supplementary Guidance		Sets out detailed guidance and general principles for a Highland Green Network.	The project will have due regard to the guidance and cross refer if appropriate.
Inver	ness City Vision		Sets out a vision and provides detail on the strategy for the City of Inverness as set out in the Highland wide Local Development Plan.	The project will have due regard to the contents of the City Vision and help work towards the strategy for the city.
Inver	ness City Centre Development Brief		A document associated with the city vision it aims to identify the development opportunities in the City Centre.	The project will have due regard to the development opportunities in the City Centre and the impact these may have on the need for a river and canal crossing.

Relevant aspects of the current state of the environment

General

The design project will cover an area of approximately 4 square kilometres and is an area which is, at present, largely undeveloped. The wider area which may be impacted by the development is the City of Inverness which has a population of 60,890 (2009 mid-year estimates). This relevant aspects for the current state of the environment are broken down by SEA Topic. A table and maps showing all of the baseline data can be found in Appendix 1.

Biodiversity, Flora and Fauna

Torvean Landforms SSSI is a very large statutory site the northern part of which encompasses almost all of the land between the Caledonian Canal and the A82 from the edge of the golf course down to the ponds opposite Ness-side. This includes all of the former quarry and surrounding woodland/scrub. It is protected for its Quaternary geomorphology, containing an excellent assemblage of fluvio-glacial landforms comprising kame terraces, eskers, kames and kettleholes. It includes one of the best British examples of a suite of kame terraces and contains part of the Torvean esker, one of the largest such features in Britain. Torvean is significant, therefore, not only for some classic landforms, but also for a wider assemblage of interrelated geomorphological features. Although the designation is in respect of geological features, the site is also of note for unimproved neutral grassland, semi-natural woodland and scrub habitats.

The River Moriston Special Area of Conservation (SAC) although located in approximately 35km to the south is also a relevant baseline consideration. Atlantic salmon and Freshwater pearl mussel are both qualifying features of the River Moriston SAC which is located upstream from the River Ness and joins Loch Ness near Invermoriston. Atlantic Salmon pass through the River Ness when travelling upstream to the River Moriston. Any works affecting the River Ness therefore also have the potential to impact on the SAC. The conservation objectives for the SAC state, *'To a void deterioration of the habitats of the qualifying species or significant disturbance of the qualifying species, thus ensuring that the integrity of the site is maintained and the site makes an appropriate contribution to achieving favourable conservation status for each of the qualifying features.'*

Ancient Woodland Inventory in the vicinity of Torvean Landforms SSSI, and other locations to the south of the scheme. SNH have confirmed that the ancient woodland classification is "Long established Woodland of Plantation Origin". This is not a statutory designation, but does highlight the area as potentially high value ecological habitat.

The following habitats occur in the study area and are priority habitats in the UK BAP ('UK') or Inverness & Nairn LBAP ('Local'):

- Wetlands & Ponds (UK & Local)
- Drystone dykes & long-established field boundaries (Local)
- Gorse & scrub woodland (Local)
- Upland oakwood (UK)
- Upland birchwood (UK)
- Aspen stands (Local)
- Riparian woodland (Local)

The following selected species are known to occur (*) or could occur in the study area and are priority species in the UK BAP ('UK') or Inverness & Nairn LBAP ('Local'):

- Brown hare (UK) *
- Otter (UK) *
- Pine marten (Local)
- Badger (Local) *
- Polecat (Local)
- Bats (UK/Local) *
- Red squirrel (UK) *
- Slow worm (Local) *
- Common lizard (Local)
- Great crested newt (UK) *
- Toad, frog and palmate newt (Local) *
- Kingfisher (Local) *
- Skylark (UK) *
- Linnet (UK) *
- Yellow hammer (Local) *
- Osprey (Local) *
- Grey partridge (UK)
- Bullfinch (Local) *
- Song thrush (UK) *
- Common eel (Local)
- Atlantic salmon (Local) *
- Lampreys (Local) *
- Brown trout (Local)
- Speckled wood butterfly (Local) *
- Freshwater pearl mussel (UK)
- Bluebell (Local) *
- Aspen (Local) *

The most diverse and highest quality semi-natural broad-leaved woodland is found at Whin Island by the River Ness, especially near and at the river's edge. This is a mix mainly of sycamore *Acer pseudoplatanus*, ash *Fraxinus excelsior* and alder *Alnus glutinosa*, with some holly *Ilex aquifolium*, willow *Salix sp.* and locally oak *Quercus sp.*, incorporating a diverse ground flora including many species typical of lowland riparian woodland such as ramsons *Allium ursinum*, dog's mercury *Mercurialis perennis*, bluebell *Hyacinthoides non-scripta*, lesser celandine *Ranunculus ficaria* and pignut *Conopodium majus*. The quality of this woodland tends to decrease closer to the amenity areas, where there are patches of plantation and scrub.

Adjacent to the Caledonian Canal next to the playing fields and golf course there are strips of semi-natural broad-leaved woodland which are lower quality in terms of ground flora, but are notable for the abundance of mature wych elm *Ulmus glabra*. Where the canal and river are in closest proximity, the thin strip of land between them has for part of its length another strip of semi-natural broad-leaved woodland. This contains a large amount of mature beech, but the ground flora contains natural elements such as bluebell and great woodrush *Luzula sylvatica*.

Around the northern periphery of the former Torvean quarry, adjacent to beech plantation on slopes abutting the golf course, there is an extensive amount of semi-natural woodland dominated by birch with a generally acidic ground flora. To the south-east the dominant species changes to mature oak. Within the former quarry and on part of the south edge there are other stands of silver birch *Betula pendula* woodland, some of them within the quarry in a state of succession from dense gorse *Ulex europaeus* scrub.

A Phase 1 habitat survey and a badger survey of the study area has been undertaken.

Population

As discussed in the general section above the City of Inverness has a population of 60,890, with a population density of approximately 22 people per hectare. The census output areas which make up the area covered by the project have a combined population of 468 (2001 data).

Human Health

Information from the census is one of the best simple measures we have of the health of our population. In the area which is to be affected by this project the percentage of total with a long term limiting illness is 16.3% this is below the 18.4% of average in Highland as a whole.

It is considered likely that the dominant noise source in the area is road traffic, in particular on the A82 to the north and the B862 to the south, onto which the proposed scheme connects. Other potentially significant noise sources include activities on the River Ness and Caledonian Canal, the various sporting activities at Queens Park and industrial activities located between the B862 and the River Ness.

Soil

The Torvean Landforms is a geological Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) and is noted for its Quaternary of Scotland feature. No Regionally Important Geological Sites (RIGS) have been identified close to the West Link.

A sheet of "river overbank deposits" immediately underlies the flat lying area east of the River Ness. This deposit is thought to comprise up to 2 metres of brown loam or silty sand with scattered pebbles and cobbles. Locally, former river channels may be encountered on the floodplain. These former river channels may now be filled with several metres of potentially compressible water saturated organic sand, gravel and peat.

The Macaulay Institute Soil Survey of Scotland classifies the soils in this area as Fluvioglacial silts and raised beach sands of mainly Humus-iron podzols with some gleys.

The Macaulay Institute for Soil Research classifies land into 7 categories ranging from 1 (Land Capable of Producing a Very Wide Range of Crops) through to 7 (Land of very Limited Agricultural Value). The soil classification varies from 2 in the south through to 32 just south of the River Ness.

Water

The quality of the fresh water environment is also recognised internationally for its importance as a spawning ground for wild salmon and use by whisky distilleries. The many lochs and rivers that characterise the area are important for local economies and provide the scenic backdrop that encourages so many tourists to the area. The River Ness which runs through the area is classed as "Good" by SEPA and the Caledonian Canal is classed as a "Good Ecological Potential (Artificial)" in terms of water quality. There are two other man made water bodies within the vicinity of the project area, Loch Na Sanais, Whin Park Pond and Golf Course pond.

With regard to flooding it is noted that the SEPA Indicative River and Coastal Flood Map (Scotland) shows some flooding along the channel of the River in the vicinity of the Mill / Timber Yard on the southern bank, at Canal Park on the northern bank and also at Ness-side House on the eastern bank. A specific flood risk assessment is being carried out for the proposed scheme and this gives further details in regard to site specific flood risk. The purpose of the FRA is to advise the bridge design and

scheme development to ensure that mitigation of flood related effects is incorporated into the scheme design.

Air

Highland region is not affected by air pollution from extensive road networks and heavy industries as in other parts of Scotland. In the City of Inverness there are no Air Management Areas however there are some areas where air quality is becoming a problem, these are very localised to the City Centre (due to fumes from buses) and in Telford Street (solid fuel burning).

Highland Council operate a continuous monitoring site adjacent to the A862 Telford Street. The site has been in operation since July 2001 and currently monitors NO₂ and PM₁₀ (gravimetric). Up until 2007 carbon monoxide (CO) was also monitored at the site, however, the results were very low, well below the relevant air quality objectives and monitoring was therefore discontinued. Pollution concentrations at the automatic monitoring site are well below the current air quality objectives.

Climatic Factors

Transportation is one of the main contributors to climate change due to emissions of carbon dioxide (CO₂). High levels of CO₂ and other 'greenhouse gases' in the atmosphere are thought to accelerate the earth's natural warming. This warming is predicted to have a variety of environmental consequences including increased frequency and severity of storm events, as well as rises in sea level. Changes in rainfall patterns could lead to increased erosion and pollution associated with surface run-off.

Material Assets

The area covered by the study contains no significant material assets as the natural resources present have largely been utilised in the development of the City. There are a number of core paths which run through the site which may be affected by the provision of a river and canal crossing (some negatively, some positively).

Cultural Heritage

There are a number of Scheduled Monuments within the immediate and wider study area, these include;

- Caledonian Canal, Dochgarroch Lock – Muirton Lock (including Tomnahurich Swing Bridge)
- Torvean Motte, and
- Holm House.

Nearby listed buildings to the area of works for all options include:

- The Firs and its garden wall at 2 Dores Road – Category B;
- Drummond Tower at Stratherrick Road – Category B;
- Lodge, Drummond Hill, Stratherrick Road – Category B;
- Number 38 at Island Bank Road – Category B; and
- A number of other listed buildings at Stratherrick Road (Bellevue Nursing home – Category B), 42 & 44 Island Bank Road (Category C).

Tomnahurich Cemetery Garden and Designed Landscape lies on the edge of the site to the north east (see Figure 3.1 – Environmental Constraints Plan). This major 19th and 20th century public cemetery adds significant landscape value to the city of Inverness and the study area. It consists of an extensive series of sculptured monuments and plantations, with views of Tomnahurich Hill.

The Inverness (Riverside) Conservation Area is in the south east of the study area, to the south of the rugby club grounds and extends across the river.

The Highland Historic Environment Record identifies a number of features within the study area.

Landscape

The area within which the corridor is located is covered by the SNH Inverness District Landscape Character Assessment (LCA) 1999 (No. 114). The corridor is within the 'Inverness Urban Area' Character Type but straddles two sub-types: the 'Suburban Fringe' (3.11b) and the 'River Ness and Canal' (3.11c).

The adjacent Tomnahurich Cemetery is included in the Inventory of Gardens and Designed Landscapes in Scotland.

The site is located on the western edge of the City in an urban fringe area which gives way to neighbouring countryside. The landscape character within the vicinity of the proposed route options corridor is very distinctive. Although the wider setting of this landscape is part of the coastal plain with the land rising to the south of Inverness, the area has a more enclosed, leafy character formed by distinctive local topography, the presence of mature trees and woodland areas and built up areas of the City.

The key facts and the baseline information collated for this scoping report has enabled us to identify some environmental problems in the Highland area. Environmental problems that affect the area are identified in table 2 below. Some of the negative trends highlighted in this table are likely to continue if there is not a suitable design for a river and canal crossing in Inverness. Feedback from the Consultation Authorities is sought on the scope of environmental problems identified.

Table 2 Environmental Problems Relevant to the Inverness West Link Design Project

SEA Issue	Potential Environmental Impact resulting from the Inverness West Link Design Project	Implications for the Inverness West Link Design Project
Biodiversity, flora, fauna	<p>The land falls of a new crossing could impact on a designated site.</p> <p>Construction activities and crossing design may affect open water and have an impact down stream.</p> <p>The potential exists for European protected species and other protected species on the site.</p> <p>Loss, fragmentation and isolation of habitats and disturbance to species from the construction of a crossing.</p> <p>Habitat loss and fragmentation due to culverting of water courses.</p>	<p>The crossing should avoid adverse impacts on the Torvean SSSI.</p> <p>A Construction Environmental Management Plan should be produced and implemented to avoid significant adverse impacts.</p> <p>A protected species survey could be undertaken to look at the likelihood of the presence of protected species and identify potential mitigation.</p>
Population	Increasing population, increases traffic in and around the City leading to congestion at peak times.	Any crossing should build in provision for active travel.
Human health	Noise associated with high traffic flows can have a detrimental affect on human health.	The crossing should be designed and sited in a manner which avoids amenity impacts.
Soil	New infrastructure would result in both temporary impacts on and permanent loss of greenfield land. It should be noted that this land has been allocated for development in the Inverness Local Plan and the Highland wide Local Development Plan (Proposed Plan).	The guidance should seek to avoid impacts on soil and geology including the avoidance of impacts on important geomorphological features such as Torvean Landforms.
Water	Water quality in the River Ness is good and in the Caledonian Canal has good ecological potential. Disturbance of the river during construction may have an impact (albeit temporary) on the water quality.	Any crossing should avoid the use of culverting and put in place appropriate construction methods to avoid impact on the water environment.
Air	Potential disturbance to groundwater during the construction period.	
	If the river and canal crossing results in increased traffic then there may be an increase in emissions which may reduce air quality.	Any crossing should build in provision for active travel.
Climatic factors	Increased emissions for the potential increased traffic may have an impact on climate change.	Any crossing should build in provision for active travel.
Material assets	The crossing can enable the development of additional active travel links	Any crossing should seek to promote the sustainable use of natural resources.
Cultural heritage	Risk of impact on the setting of cultural heritage features.	Any crossing should seek to avoid significantly adverse impacts on the cultural heritage present in the surrounding area including the Caledonian Canal.
Landscape	Any new crossing is likely to have an impact on visual amenity and landscape character	Any crossing should be sensitively designed to avoid an impact on sensitive design.

The above has aided the Council in understanding the need for the level of detail and scope of the guidance and the environmental report.

Scope and Level of Detail Proposed for the Environmental Assessment

Alternatives

SEA requires that “reasonable alternatives” to the Plan are considered. These set the context for the following two sections of this report – scoping of SEA issues and consideration of a framework for the assessment of environmental effects.

As the Consultation Authorities will be aware, a large amount of work has been undertaken to identify the options for the River and Canal Crossing including a range of public consultation. Through this work a total of 8 options for the river and canal crossing have been identified. Each of the alternatives are shown on maps included as Appendix 2 of this scoping report.

Alternative Approach – Do Nothing

The other alternative approach is to not have a river and canal crossing to the south of Inverness. While this may have localised environmental benefits in terms of there being no change in the environment, there is likely to be more widespread negative environmental effects including impact on air quality in Inverness City Centre. There would also be significant repercussions in terms of social and economic however this is outwith the scope of the SEA process.

The alternative approaches will be assessed against appropriate SEA objectives. We would welcome the Consultation Authorities views on these alternatives.

Scoping in/out of SEA issues

In accordance with Schedule 2 of the Environmental Assessment (Scotland) Act 2005 the Highland Council has considered whether the environmental effects (positive and negative) of the proposed Inverness West Link Design Project are likely to be significant. It is anticipated that whichever option chosen there will be significant effects on the environment both positive and negative, therefore the role of the Strategic Environmental Assessment will be to maximise the positive impacts and minimise or suggest mitigation for any negative impacts that a river and canal crossing may have. From the environmental problems listed in Table 2 in above, there could be varying challenges relating to certain SEA issues. For this reason we consider the plan is likely to have significant effects (positive and negative) on some environmental issues at a strategic level. It should however be noted that the final chosen option will also be subject to EIA which may identify further mitigation and impacts. A summary of our conclusions is given in Table 3 below.

Table 3. Scoping of SEA issues

SEA issues	Scoped in	Scoped out	If scoped out, why
biodiversity, flora, fauna	X		
population	X		While there may be some impacts on human health these are likely to be minimal and therefore unlikely to have a significant negative effect/
human health	X		While any new crossing may lead to an effect on amenity, there are limited receptors in the direct vicinity of any of the options.
soil	X		It has been recognised that there may be some limited impact on soil but due to the location of important geological features within the project area it is considered there may be a significant impact if particular options are chosen.
water	X		There is potential for a temporary impact on water quality during the construction period but through the implementation of a construction environmental management plan there will be limited impact. All proposed options do pass through an area of flooding but any significant construction in these areas will be avoided.
air	X		There is the potential for any river and canal crossing to improve air quality in the wider area given the reduction in congestion that is anticipated by a crossing. However, this is not considered to be significant.
climatic factors	X		Again there is potential for any river

			and canal crossing to reduce congestion within the city but this is not likely to lead to a significant impact on the level of emissions therefore it is unlikely that there would be a significant impact on climate change.
material assets	X		Given the limited material assets in the area it is not anticipated that there would be significant impact. It is anticipated that no material assets would be sterilised by any of the crossing options.
cultural heritage	X		
landscape	X		

Methodology for Assessing Environmental Effects

The alternatives will be subject to detailed assessment against all the SEA objectives and criteria. We would welcome comment on the proposed SEA objectives as outlined below. The SEA objectives are derived from those used for the Strategic Environmental Assessment on the Highland wide Local Development Plan and modified to suit the particular circumstances and requirements of this project. In formulating these objectives it is again important to note that the purpose of this SEA is to identify and propose mitigation for the SEA topics where there is likely to be significant environmental effect and

This process will identify as far as possible what level of environmental impact the operation of these policies will have and any mitigation or improvement which will be required. The assessment will include consideration of the following aspects of possible environmental effects: length/duration; permanency; positive and negative; and cumulative and secondary.

A matrix approach will be used to assess the level of significant impact and the cumulative effects. It has been developed setting out environmental objectives, with indicators and columns for carrying out the appraisal of potential impacts. A sample of the method to be used is shown in Appendix 3.

SEA Topic	SEA Objective
Biodiversity, Flora and Fauna	1. Maintain and enhance designated wildlife sites, biodiversity, valuable habitats and protected species, avoiding irreversible losses.
Soil	2. Protect and enhance important geological features.
Cultural Heritage	3. Protect and, where appropriate, enhance the cultural heritage.
Landscape	4. Value and protect the diversity and local distinctiveness of landscapes.

Cumulative Effects

The cumulative effects of this guidance on each of the SEA objectives will be assessed with regard to the issues which have been scoped into the environmental report

Proposed Mitigation Measures

The SEA Directive requires the use of mitigation measures that make recommendations to prevent, reduce or offset significant adverse effects. The proposed mitigation measures will be discussed in the Environmental Report. In addition the Environmental Report will encourage the enhancement of the positive effects. Changes to the guidance will be considered should it provide for better mitigation against negative environmental effects.

Monitoring Framework

The Environmental Report will outline the proposed monitoring framework.

Next Steps

Proposed consultation timescales

The Environmental Report for the Inverness West Link Design Project will be published for consultation in tandem with the next stage of the project development. At present it is anticipated that this will be in Autumn 2011. It is envisaged that the consultation period may run for a period of 6 weeks. The views collected during this consultation period will be used in producing a revised Environmental Report. A proposed timetable for the various stages is outlined below:

Stage	Inverness West Link Design Project	Strategic Environmental Assessment	Time Scale
1	Review of public consultation responses.	Prepare a Scoping Report and send to the Consultation Authorities	July 2011
2	Release final options appraisal for the Inverness West Link Design Project	Publish an Environmental Report and consult the community and the Consultation Authorities on this for a total of 6 weeks.	Autumn 2011
3	Publish final version of options appraisal.	Publish revised Environmental Report, if required.	Tbc
4.	Finalise option and then continue to EIA, Planning Permission and delivery.	Publish Post-Adoption Statement and submit to SEA Gateway	Tbc

As noted in the next steps section above, and throughout this scoping report, whichever option is chosen for the final design of the river and canal crossing it will be subject to an Environmental Impact Assessment. This is being undertaken as a separate exercise however the findings of this SEA should be used to inform the EIA.