

Special Projects and Procurement  
**Major Transport Infrastructure Projects**

Victoria Quay, Edinburgh, EH6 6QQ  
Direct Line: 0131 244 4081  
Graham.Porteous@transportscotland.gsi.gov.uk



Janet Burns  
Principal Environmental Consultant  
Energised Environments  
7 Dundas Street  
Edinburgh  
EH3 6QG

Your ref: 10149-001

Our ref: Scoping Opinion

Date: 28/10/15

Dear Ms Burns

**The Transport and Works (Scotland) Act 2007 (Applications and Objections Procedure) Rules 2007**  
**Request for Scoping Opinion – Strathspey Railway Extension**

I refer to your letter of 9 September 2015, on behalf of the Strathspey Railway Charitable Trust, requesting a scoping opinion under rule 6 of the Transport and Works (Scotland) Act 2007 (Applications and Objections Procedure) Rules 2007 (“the Rules”).

In support of this request, you enclosed a ‘Scoping Report’ entitled:

Strathspey Railway Extension  
Scoping Report  
Request for Scoping Opinion  
The Transport and Works (Scotland) Act 2007 (Applications and Objections Procedure Rules 2007/570)  
Date: 26 August 2015

The Scoping Report describes the proposed scope and methodology for the Environmental Impact Assessment, which will be reported in the Environmental Statement (ES) to accompany an intended application for an order under the Transport and Works (Scotland) Act 2007 to build and operate an extension to the existing Strathspey Railway along the former railway line between the River Dulnain and Grantown on Spey. The proposed development would comprise a 4.8km extension to the existing Strathspey Railway, a new railway station and associated car parking at Grantown on Spey and road realignment work (including an underpass) to the A95 Trunk Road.

Your request for an opinion on the proposed content of the ES has been considered in accordance with rule 6 of the Rules. In forming a scoping opinion, the following organisations have been consulted, all of which have provided comment:

- the Highland Council
- the Cairngorms National Park Authority
- Scottish Natural Heritage
- the Scottish Environment Protection Agency

## Scoping Opinion

The Scottish Ministers consider that, subject to the comments below, the scope of the assessment outlined in the Scoping Report is appropriate.

Scottish Ministers consider that the following information should be included in the ES. References are given to sections in the Scoping Report.

### Section 1 – Introduction

The ES should include an outline of the main alternatives considered, including the site selection for the station, and the main reasons for the applicant's choice, taking into account the environmental effects.

### Section 2 – The Proposed Development

Alterations to the A95 trunk road, including new access arrangements, should be undertaken in accordance with the Design Manual for Roads and Bridges.

### Section 4 – Land Use

It would be helpful to include information on the Dava Way which utilizes the track bed to the north of the proposed station site. The scope of assessment, in identifying key receptors should acknowledge that the track bed from the industrial estate to the caravan park is an important path used by residents on a daily basis, supporting delivery of an active lifestyle.

The ES should identify how the loss of core paths will be dealt with in terms of alternative routes proposed and how crossings will be dealt with. These core paths are popular, well used and form an important part of the character and attractiveness of Grantown.

### Section 5 – Noise and Vibration

The relevant assessment and conclusions of the A95 traffic noise impact should be included in the ES.

### Section 7 – Landscape and Visual

The landscape and visual assessment should also include the following:

- assessment of effects on special landscape qualities of the National Park;
- consideration of options for mitigation and enhancement; and
- assessment of proposed development against landscape policy test of the Local Development Plan and the National Park Partnership Plan.

### Section 8 – Ecology and Nature Conservation

The proposed works have the potential to affect the River Spey Special Area of Conservation (SAC), which is designated for the following qualifying interests; Atlantic salmon, freshwater pearl mussels (FWPM), sea lamprey and otters. The River Dulnain and the Glenbeg Burn are both tributaries of the River Spey and are part of the River Spey SAC. Information on any likely significant effects on this designated site should be included in the Environmental Statement under a specific subject heading.

Otters will be present in both the Dulnain and Glenbeg Burn. The ES should therefore include information stating what work has been done to identify the presence of otters and the likely effects on them of the proposed development.

We would recommend that a survey for otters be undertaken by a suitably qualified ecologist using best practice guidance which can be found on the Scottish Natural Heritage website at: <http://www.snh.gov.uk/about-scotlands-nature/wildlife-and-you/otters/assessing/>

In addition, the ES should provide details of the following ecology work:

- a fungi survey up to 30m from the railway line where the proposal falls within in Ancient Woodland Inventory woodland. This survey to be carried out by a specialist, and will require at least 3 visits in late summer/autumn - August to October;
- an assessment for key invertebrates where suitable habitat exists within 30m of the line;
- any mature aspen trees that are likely to be impacted must be surveyed by a specialist for fungi, lichens, bryophytes;
- further survey work (Phase 1 Habitat survey and necessary protected species surveys) to include the A95 where road upgrading is required;
- details of the location for replacement footpaths are required together with the necessary survey work undertaken to determine ecological impact; and
- details of compensation for lost habitat; in this case, trees/woodland together with details of habitat enhancement.

### Section 10 – Hydrology, Hydrogeology and Geology

SPP7, referenced in the report, has now been superseded and any assessment of flood risk should be in line with the current Scottish Planning Policy and SEPA's Technical guidance for stakeholders on flood risk assessment.

Any landraising within the functional flood plain must be accompanied by the provision of compensatory storage to ensure that there is no loss of flood plain capacity.

Any proposed watercourse crossings or culverts should follow good practice guidelines and should be adequately sized to enable them to convey the 1 in 200 year design flow at each point without causing constriction of flow or exacerbation to flood risk elsewhere.

All aspects of site work that might impact upon the environment, potential pollution risks associated with the proposals and the principles of preventative measures and mitigation should be identified. This will establish a robust environmental management process for the development.

The site boundary of the station overlaps the Kylintra Burn so further details of works directly impacting this watercourse will be required.

A site survey of existing water features and a map of the location of all proposed engineering activities in the water environment should be included in the ES. A systematic table detailing the justification for the activity and how any adverse impact will be mitigated should also be included.

If there are wetlands or peatland systems present, the ES should demonstrate how the layout and design of the proposal, including any associated borrow pits, hard standing and roads, seeks to avoid or minimise impact on such areas.

If the proposed infrastructure will impact upon peatlands, the ES should detail the likely volumes of surplus peat that will be generated, including quantification of catotelmic and acrotelmic peat, and the principles of how the surplus peat will be reused or disposed.

### Section 11 – Transport and Accessibility

The Transport Assessment should be appended to the ES.

The Common Assessment Technique should include in its relevant transport policies the Cycling Action Plan for Scotland.

Public access should also be covered in this section.

Also enclosed for your information are copies of the detailed comments received from those consulted on this request, of which you should be aware, and take into account, in undertaking the Environmental Impact Assessment and development of the scheme.

Yours sincerely



Graham Porteous  
Head of Special Projects