Bridge of Dee Study (Nestrans HRA)

Nestrans

Nestrans Regional Transport Strategy, Habitat Regulations Appraisal

November 2015

JACOBS

Bridge of Dee Study (Nestrans HRA)

Project no:	B1566300
Document title:	Nestrans Regional Transport Strategy, Habitat Regulations Appraisal
Document No.:	
Revision:	1
Date:	November 2015
Client name:	Nestrans
Client no:	N/A
Project manager:	Gavin Dyet
Author:	John Fowbert
File name:	Nestrans RTS-HRA Report-V3.1 Rev 1_Final Issued 201115

Jacobs

95 Bothwell Street
Glasgow, Scotland G2 7HX
United Kingdom
T +44 (0)141 243 8000
F +44 (0)141 226 3109
www.jacobs.com

© Copyright 2015 Jacobs. The concepts and information contained in this document are the property of Jacobs. Use or copying of this document in whole or in part without the written permission of Jacobs constitutes an infringement of copyright.

Limitation: This report has been prepared on behalf of, and for the exclusive use of Jacobs' Client, and is subject to, and issued in accordance with, the provisions of the contract between Jacobs and the Client. Jacobs accepts no liability or responsibility whatsoever for, or in respect of, any use of, or reliance upon, this report by any third party.

Document history and status

Revision	Date	Description	By	Review	Approved
0	14/05/2015	Client Issue	J. Fowbert	P. Gilchrist	R. Galbraith
1	26/10/2015	Final amendment (inclusion of SNH response)	J. Fowbert	P. Gilchrist	G. Dyet

Contents

1. Introduction 1
1.1 Background 1
1.2 The Habitats Directive and Natura 2000 Sites 1
1.3 Purpose of this Document 1
2. Requirement for HRA 3
2.1 Introduction 3
2.2 The HRA Process 3
2.3 Consultation 3
2.4 Is the Nestrans RTS (Refresh) Subject to HRA? 3
3. Description of the Plan 5
3.1 Introduction 5
3.2 Strategic Objectives 5
3.3 RTS Proposals and Interventions 5
4. Natura 2000 Sites 13
5. Identification of Likely Significant Effects of the RTS 15
5.1 Introduction 15
5.2 Identifying Likely Significant Effects 15
6. Screening for LSEs 17
6.1 Introduction 17
6.2 Screening the Plan for LSEs 17
6.3 Mitigation 33
7. In-combination Assessment 36
8. Summary 37
9. References 38

Appendix A. Scottish Natural Heritage Consultation Response 39
Appendix B. Nestrans Regional Transport Strategy 41
Appendix C. Assessment Matrices 62

1. Introduction

1.1 Background

Nestrans is the Transport Partnership for Aberdeen City and Shire. Its purpose is to develop and deliver a long-term regional transport strategy and take forward strategic transport improvements that support and improve the economy, environment and quality of life across Aberdeen City and Shire (Nestrans, 2015). The Regional Transport Strategy (RTS) sets out the challenges and how they will be addressed, including setting out clear objectives.

The RTS was first adopted as a statutory document in 2008 following approval by Scottish Ministers. In 2012, the Nestrans Board agreed to carry out a review of the RTS to take account of a number of changes in policy and to better align it to the Structure Plan and emerging Strategic Development Plan for the North East. A refreshed RTS was published in 2014 (Nestrans, 2014a).

The proposed changes to the RTS were subject to a Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) (Nestrans, 2014b) as required under the Environmental Assessment (Scotland) Act 2005. A full SEA had been undertaken at the time of the original RTS and therefore the new SEA only assessed the anticipated environmental impacts of any actions that it was proposed were significantly amended and any proposed new actions of the RTS (Nestrans, 2014b).

The Post Adoption Statement (Nestrans, 2014c) identified that many interventions would require further assessment and that these would most appropriately be done at the project level. However, the SEA also identified the need for a Habitat Regulations Appraisal (HRA) of the interventions, highlighting the River Dee link and possible effects of the action on the River Dee Special Area of Conservation (SAC).

1.2 The Habitats Directive and Natura 2000 Sites

The European Union (EU) Council Directive 92/43/EEC on the Conservation of Natural Habitats and of Wild Fauna and Flora was adopted in 1992, with a consolidated version published on 1 January 2007 (hereafter referred to as the Habitats Directive). The main aim of the Habitats Directive is to promote the maintenance of biodiversity by requiring Member States to take measures to maintain or restore natural habitats and wild species listed on the Annexes to the Directive at a favourable conservation status, introducing robust protection for those habitats and species of European importance.

The Habitats Directive includes a number of provisions including the designation of SACs for habitats listed on Annex I and for species listed on Annex II. These measures are also to be applied to Special Protection Areas (SPAs) classified under Article 4 of the Birds Directive (Directive 2009/147/EC on the conservation of wild birds (codified version of Directive 79/409/EEC)). SACs and SPAs make up the Natura 2000 network (Article 3, Habitats Directive). In the UK, Ramsar sites also form part of this network.

Ramsar sites are wetland sites of international importance and are named after the Convention on Wetlands of International Importance adopted in Ramsar, Iran, in 1971. The mission of the Convention is 'the conservation and wise use of all wetlands through local and national actions and international cooperation, as a contribution towards achieving sustainable development throughout the world'. All Ramsar sites in Scotland are also either SPAs or SACs Scottish Natural Heritage (SNH), (2015).

1.3 Purpose of this Document

Article 6(3) of the Habitats Directive requires that 'any plan or project' not directly connected with or necessary to the management of a Natura 2000 site, but likely to have a significant effect thereon, shall be subject to an Appropriate Assessment (AA) of its implications for the site in view of the site conservation objectives.

This document provides the Habitat Regulations Appraisal (HRA) of the Nestrans RTS (Refresh 2013-2035, Nestrans (2014a)) to inform the AA for the strategy.

2. Requirement for HRA

2.1 Introduction

Projects or plans which could affect Natura 2000 sites have to undergo an AA as specified in Article 6 of the Habitats Directive. This Directive was transposed in UK legislation via the Conservation (Natural Habitats &c.) Regulations 1994 (the Habitats Regulations) (hereafter referred to as the Habitats Regulations).

In Scotland the Habitats Regulations have undergone a series of amendments, the most recent being in 2012. Amendments have also taken place to the UK (England and Wales) legislation, and in Scotland implementation of the species protection requirements of the Habitats Directive is now through a combination of the Conservation (Natural Habitats &c.) Regulations 1994 (as amended for Scotland), and the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2010 (in relation to reserved matters). The domestic legislation stipulates the provision for Ramsar sites to have the same protection as SACs and SPAs.

In the context of this appraisal, assessments will be carried out under the Conservation (Natural Habitats &c.) Regulations 1994 (as amended for Scotland).

2.2 The HRA Process

The Habitats Regulations require that an AA be undertaken by a Competent Authority where any plan or project not directly connected with or necessary to the management of the Natura 2000 site (i.e. a SAC or SPA, or candidate or potential SAC/SPA, or a Ramsar site), is likely to have a significant effect. HRA refers to the process that informs the Competent Authority's conclusions with respect to the AA and the AA must be undertaken in relation to '*the implications for the site in view of the site's conservation objectives'*.

There are three basic questions that are required to be answered in the HRA process.

1) Is the proposal directly connected with or necessary for site management for nature conservation?
2) Is the proposal likely to have a significant effect on the site?
3) Can it be ascertained that the proposal will not adversely affect the integrity of the site?

Guidance (David Tyldesley and Associates, 2015) describes a 13 stage appraisal process (Diagram 2.1).

- Stage 1 – Advises whether the plan is one that should be checked for its effects on European (Natura 2000) sites.
- Stages 2-4 – Provides the evidence base for the appraisal.
- Stages 5-7 – Systematic screening of all aspects of the plan.
- Stages 8 and 9 are referred to in the Directive and Regulations as the 'appropriate assessment'.
- Stages 10-13 – Details of consultations on a draft of the appraisal record.

2.3 Consultation

Initial consultation with SNH on the draft report was undertaken in August and September 2015. A final response was received in October 2015 (Appendix A) stating that with the proposed mitigation in place, it could be concluded that the RTS should not adversely affect the integrity of the Natura 2000 sites, including the River Dee SAC.

2.4 Is the Nestrans RTS (Refresh) Subject to HRA?

In accordance with the guidance (David Tyldesley and Associates, 2015), the Nestrans RTS (Refresh) is one that is subject to HRA as it is not directly connected with or necessary to Natura 2000 site management.

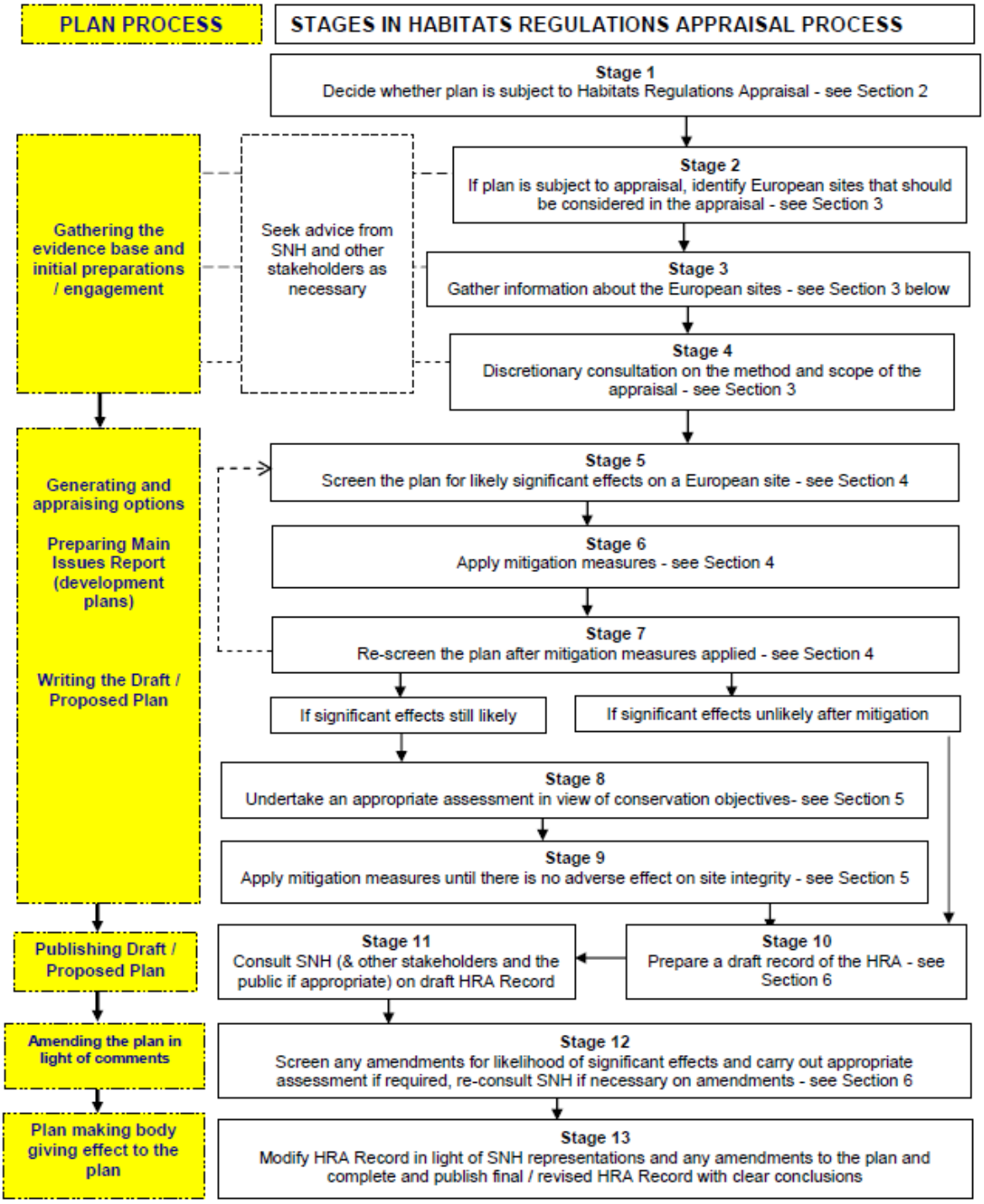

Diagram 2.1 : The 13 key stages of the HRA process for Plans (David Tyldesley and Associates, 2015). Section numbers refer to the Tyldesley report.

3. Description of the Plan

3.1 Introduction

The Nestrans Transport Partnership published its RTS in 2008. The Strategy sets out a "*comprehensive appraisal of the problems and issues affecting transport in the north east and sets clear objectives for improving transport in the region between 2007 and 2021*" (Nestrans, 2008).

Changes in the economic climate and policy, including the publication of the Structure Plan, and other plans and strategies, led to a review of the transport strategy for the north-east of Scotland (Aberdeen City Council (ACC) and Aberdeenshire Council (AC) areas). This led to the development and publication of a refresh of the RTS (Nestrans, 2014a).

3.2 Strategic Objectives

The transport strategy for the north-east of Scotland is achieved through a vision:

> "A transport system for the north east of Scotland which enables a more economically competitive, sustainable and socially inclusive society."

This vision is underpinned by four Strategic Objectives:

- Objective 1: Economy;
- Objective 2: Accessibility, Safety and Social Inclusion;
- Objective 3: Environment; and
- Objective 4: Spatial Planning.

Three strategies support these objectives:

- the External Connections Strategy (EC);
- the Internal Connections Strategy (IC); and
- the Strategy Policy Framework.

3.3 RTS Proposals and Interventions

The three strategies of the Nestrans RTS will be implemented through a series of proposals or actions. The preferred strategy package sets out a strategic framework of integrated measures and interventions and represents a balanced approach offering economic, environmental and accessibility improvements (Nestrans, 2015a).

The proposals are grouped under the three objectives and are described in the following tables (Tables 3.1-3.3) and in Appendix B. The Strategy Policy Framework objective sets the boundaries and context for all other strategic measures. It is intended to set the key cross cutting themes of the RTS and to define the overall strategic thrust of the RTS (Nestrans, 2014a).

Table 3.1 : Proposals for action within the External Connections Strategy

External Connections Strategy	Adopted RTS Action from (2007-2021)	Revised Action in Refresh (2013-2035)
EC1 Rail links and services	i) Reducing journey times to Edinburgh and Glasgow, and further south.	Amended to: "Reduce rail journey times to Edinburgh and Glasgow (and further south) and Inverness."
	ii) Improved train capacity, comfort and reliability.	No change.
	iii) Support for High Speed Rail connections to London, which benefit the north east.	No change.
EC2 Strategic roads	i) Overcoming constraints on the network that have a direct impact on travel to/from the north east, such as the A90 through Dundee.	Amended to: "Overcoming constraints on the network that have a direct impact on travel to/ from the north east, such as the A90 through Dundee and dualling the A96 to Inverness."
EC3 Inter-regional bus and coach travel	i) Support further development of inter-regional bus and coach travel between the north east and other Scottish towns and cities and further afield.	No change.
	ii) Explore possible links to park and ride sites.	No change.
EC4 Connections by sea	i) Closer joint working through the North East Ports Forum.	Amended to: "Closer joint working through the North East Freight Forum."
	ii) Improved access and facilities at ports and interchange with passenger ferries.	No change.
	iii) Development of new freight and passenger facilities.	Amended to: "Continue to enhance freight and passenger facilities at north east ports."
	New Action	iv) Continue dialogue with the Scottish Government and Northern Isles ferry service operator to ensure continuing services from Aberdeen.
EC5 Connections by air	i) Support expansion of direct destinations from Aberdeen and frequency of popular services.	No change.
	ii) Support runway extension to facilitate wider range of destinations and more efficient, modern aircraft.	No change.
	iii) Ensure protection of slots for Aberdeen services at key hubs such as London Heathrow.	No change.

Table 3.2 : Proposals for action within the Internal Communications Strategy

Internal Connections Strategy	Adopted RTS Action from (2007-2021)	Revised Action in Refresh (2013-2035)
IC1 Rail connections	i) Increased frequency of services between Inverurie-Aberdeen-Stonehaven through Aberdeen Crossrail and improved services to Inverness.	Amended to: "Seek to secure an increased frequency of services between Inverurie-Aberdeen-Stonehaven and improved services to Inverness."
	ii) Proposed new station at Kintore and further development of the rail system to be set out in the Rail Action Plan.	Amended to include the following text after existing action: "including improvements to the accessibility of existing stations."
	New Action	iii) Investigate, in line with the principles of STAG, the potential for further stations in the context of upgrades to the existing rail lines and assessing future demand for local rail services.
	New Action	iv) Investigate, in line with the principles of STAG, the feasibility, costs and benefits of new railway lines to expand rail provision in the north east in the longer term.
IC2 Road improvements	i) Strategic road capacity improvements – tackle constraints on the A90 Ellon to Peterhead, A96 west of Inverurie, Haudagain junction, Access to Aberdeen from the south, and at other junctions serving Aberdeenshire towns.	No change.
	ii) Strategic road safety improvements – alignment and junction improvements on A90 South. Overtaking, junction and alignment improvements on A90 north and A96. Route action on A92, A93, A944, A947.	No change.
	iii) Car share lanes – trialling priority lanes for cars with multiple occupancy.	No change.
	iv) Prioritised maintenance for strategic routes, with particular benefits for public transport and sustainable modes.	No change.
	v) Support Local Authorities in bringing forward LTS projects that contribute to strategic objectives.	No change.
	vi) The above actions build on the AWPR and dualling of A90 Balmedie-Tipperty which are being taken forward by Transport Scotland and are due to be completed in 2012.	Not an action in refresh, rather a comment in IC2. Text amended to say: "These build on the AWPR and dualling of A90 Balmedie-Tipperty which are being taken forward by Transport Scotland and are due to be completed in 2018."

Internal Connections Strategy	Adopted RTS Action from (2007-2021)	Revised Action in Refresh (2013-2035)
	New Action	vii) Strategic road improvements to mitigate the cumulative impact of development: • Parkway, Persley Bridge & Parkhill junction and capacity improvements; • Capacity improvements & upgrade AWPR Kingswells north junction; • Upgrade A944 junctions and safety / limited capacity improvements on access to A93; • A956/A90 junction capacity improvements; and • River Dee link. These improvements will be funded through the Strategic Transport Fund and in line with the SDPA supplementary planning guidance "Delivering Identified Projects through a Strategic Transport Fund" and will be designed with the needs of all road users in mind, including cyclists and pedestrians.
IC3 Bus Improvements	i) Quality bus corridor improvements to services and facilities.	No change.
	ii) Develop a Bus Action Plan to improve quality and reliability of services and set out proposals for extending bus priority measures.	Amended to: " Review and continue to deliver the Bus Action Plan to improve quality and reliability of services and set out proposals for extending bus priority measures."
	iii) Explore Rapid Transit options through the Bus Action Plan.	This remains a relevant action, however amended to: "Expand Park and Ride provision linked to the development of the AWPR and explore the potential for mini-hubs that can be served by existing bus provision."
	iv) Expand Park and Ride provision linked to the development of the AWPR.	No change.
	v) Improve information provision including expanding real-time information systems across Aberdeen City and Shire.	No change.
	New Action	vi) Strategic bus priority and bus frequency improvements as well as additional bus services linking new development sites to the city centre and key employment destinations to mitigate the cumulative impact of development."
IC4 Demand Responsive Transport	i) Support extension of 'Dial-a-Bus' and similar services to serve those unable to access conventional buses and to link with scheduled bus services.	No change.
	ii) Support community transport providers and encourage development of services.	No change.
	iii) Seek to ensure that taxis are provided in an efficient and effective way, which meets the needs of customers.	No change.

Internal Connections Strategy	Adopted RTS Action from (2007-2021)	Revised Action in Refresh (2013-2035)
IC5 Transport Interchange	i) Maximising interchange potential of Guild Street development and link with Union Street and support enhancement of other interchange points in Aberdeen.	This remains a relevant action however it is updated to reflect the current situation and all modes. Amended to: "Maximise the interchange potential of the bus and rail station developments, the links between Union Square and Union Street, facilities for pedestrians, cyclists and taxis and support enhancement of other interchange points in Aberdeen."
	ii) Support further improvements to interchange facilities in Aberdeenshire towns, in particular building on developments at Inverurie, Peterhead and Banchory.	This remains a relevant action. Change proposed to bring the action up-to-date and reflect the current situation: "Support further improvements to interchange facilities in Aberdeenshire towns catering for bus, rail (where appropriate), cycling, walking and taxis."
	iii) Work with operators to develop integrated ticketing across services and operators in the north east.	This action to be amended to reflect the opportunities for smart ticketing, either through smartcards or other emerging technologies: "Work with operators to develop integrated and smart ticketing across services and operators in the north east."
IC6 Walking and Cycling	i) Support investment in measures to increase safety and security of walking and in particular to facilitate interchange between different modes of transport.	No change.
	ii) Urban realm improvements to improve the pedestrian environment.	Changed to emphasise the strategic importance of pedestrianisation in city and town centres: "Urban realm improvements to improve the pedestrian environment, including the pedestrianisation of Union Street."
	iv) Continue development of cycle routes on key routes within Aberdeenshire, into Aberdeen and on routes through the City.	This remains a relevant action but strengthened on the issue of creating a network of routes and is amended to: "Continued development of a connected network of strategic cycle routes on key routes within Aberdeenshire, across the boundary into Aberdeen and on routes through the City to work towards the Cycling Action Plan for Scotland 10% vision for cycling and lock in the benefits of other infrastructure improvements, including the AWPR."
	New Action	v) Ensure that all new developments and transport infrastructure improvements take consideration of and make provisions for pedestrians and cyclists as an integral part of the design process.

Internal Connections Strategy	Adopted RTS Action from (2007-2021)	Revised Action in Refresh (2013-2035)
IC7 Airport Surface Connections	i) Encourage enhanced bus services to Aberdeen Airport to be detailed in the Bus Action Plan and Delivery Plan.	This action to be amended to cover enhanced access to the airport by all modes of transport. Amended to: "Work with Aberdeen Airport in developing and monitoring a Surface Access Strategy to ensure high quality links to the airport by all modes."
	ii) Support a shuttle bus between Dyce station and the airport terminal.	Recognising the importance of Dyce as an international gateway it is proposed that this action be amended to: "Work with partners to develop links to the airport including the upgrade of Dyce railway station and improved access for public transport."
	iii) In the longer term, explore the potential for Bus Rapid Transit or enhanced rail services to the airport, providing faster, more reliable journey times.	Amended to: "Support high quality transport links to the airport using innovative and technological advances where appropriate."
IC8 Port Surface Connections	i) Support measures to improve access to port facilities.	No change.
	ii) Facilitate improved interchange between Aberdeen ferry terminal and bus and rail stations.	No change.
IC9 Freight	i) Support the development of modern intermodal freight terminals to provide future capacity for rail freight expansion.	Amended to: "Retain and develop modern intermodal freight terminals to serve the region and tackle the barriers to mode shift through the Freight Action Plan."
	ii) Investigate potential for measures to provide more reliable journey times for HGVs and identify a trial route for implementation of priority measures.	No change.
IC10 Powered two-wheelers	i) Support measures to improve safety of motorcycles and other powered two-wheelers and provide appropriate parking facilities.	No change.

Table 3.3 : Proposals for action within the Strategy Policy Framework

Strategy Policy Framework	Adopted RTS Action from (2007-2021)	Revised Action in Refresh(2013-2035)
TB1 Promoting travel planning and travel awareness	i) Implementation and future development of Nestrans' Travel Planning Strategy.	This remains a relevant action although it is recommended that the strategy be updated in line with a re-fresh of the other action plans. This re-fresh should remove the reference to TMOs and insert a statement that Nestrans will facilitate and encourage businesses to work together on area-wide travel plans.
	ii) Continue to provide support through the Sustainable Travel Grants Scheme.	No change.
	iii) Encourage increased take-up of car-sharing.	Amended to: "Encourage increased take-up of car-sharing and car club schemes."
	New Action	iv) Continue to promote and strengthen the Getabout brand.
TB2 Promoting active travel	i) Encourage more people to walk and cycle more often.	Amended to: "Develop an active travel action plan with the aim of encouraging more people to walk and cycle more often".
	ii) Work with NHS Grampian and Community Planning Partnerships to promote the benefits of active travel and achieve objectives for a healthier population.	Amended to: "Work with NHS Grampian and Community Planning Partnerships to deliver the Health and Transport Action Plan and achieve objectives for a healthier population."
TB3 Improving safety	i) Work with Councils, Emergency Services and others to promote road safety as part of a comprehensive approach covering Education, Engineering, Enforcement and Encouragement measures.	No change although the formation of new national forces for Police and Fire and Rescue may require a new approach to this area of work.
	ii) Improve security for users of public transport services and interchanges.	No change.
IE1 Changing choices through incentives and partnerships	i) Work with operators to identify possible fare incentives to encourage increased bus use, particularly where this enables access to employment or training.	No change.
	ii) Through the Local Authorities/Bus Operator Forum (LABOF) continue to develop the Quality Partnership for Public Transport and consider introducing Punctuality Improvement Partnerships.	Amended to: "Through the Local Authorities/Bus Operator Forum (LABOF) continue to develop the Quality Partnership for Public Transport and the Bus Punctuality Improvement Partnership to achieve improvements in bus provision and increased levels of bus use."
	iii) Support measures which encourage uptake of alternative fuels, particularly by public transport providers, to build on the north east's role as an energy hub.	It is proposed that this action be moved under a new carbon reduction heading (see CR1 below).

Strategy Policy Framework	Adopted RTS Action from (2007-2021)	Revised Action in Refresh(2013-2035)
IE2 Using enforcement	i) Support enforcement of vehicle emissions standards to improve air quality in Aberdeen City Centre and towns across the north east.	No change.
	ii) Support measures to enforce speed limits to improve road safety and reduce carbon emissions.	No change.
	iii) Promote the establishment of a Casualty Reductions Partnership to support NESCAMP's (North East Safety Camera Partnership's) activities and support the trial of average speed cameras.	Amend action to emphasise the prospect for joint working towards a shared vision of casualty reduction and cooperation among agencies towards achieving a safer transport system. Links to TB3i).
	New Action	iv) Support measures to enforce the operation of bus lanes to ensure the efficient movement of buses and taxis.
IE3 Parking	i) Develop a Regional Parking Strategy to ensure a coherent approach to parking controls and standards across the north east.	Action updated to focus on the delivery of the regional parking strategy. Ensure a coherent approach to parking controls and standards across the north east through the delivery of the Regional Parking Strategy.
	ii) Support enforcement of parking restrictions, particularly where these exist to support strategic traffic movements, bus / pedestrian priority and road safety.	No change.
	iii) Investigate the potential for parking incentives to encourage use of small or multi-occupancy vehicles.	No change.
CR1 Carbon reduction & Air Quality	i) Support measures which encourage uptake of alternative fuels, particularly by public transport providers, to build on the north east's role as an energy hub.	Amended to: "Support measures which encourage uptake of alternative fuels for public transport, private and public sector vehicles, to build on the north east's role as an energy hub and work towards the decarbonisation of transport and improvements in air quality."
	New Action	ii) Support the development and trial of technological advances, such as hydrogen fuel and electric vehicles that will reduce carbon emissions from the transport network.
	New Action	iii) Support demand management measures, including the re-allocation of road space to public transport, cyclists and pedestrians in order to lock in the benefits of other schemes and where it can be demonstrated that this will help the longer term efficient movement of traffic.
E1 Engagement	New Action	i) Take an active and inclusive approach to engagement and consultation with communities, relevant sectors of the community and interest groups and stakeholders.

4. Natura 2000 Sites

This section comprises Stages 2-4 of the HRA process for plans (David Tyldesley and Associates, 2015). Within the north-east of Scotland there are, either wholly or partly, 40 Natura 2000 sites. There are:

- 21 SACs;
- 14 SPAs; and
- five Ramsar sites.

In addition, one potential SPA (Ladder Hills pSPA) was identified (JNCC, 2015a).

A full list can be found below (Table 4.1). Further details, including qualifying interests, condition assessment and conservation objectives, can be found in Appendix C. Locations of the classified sites are shown on Figures 1 and 2.1-2.3. The Ladder Hills pSPA is not shown as its area has not been confirmed (Joint Nature Conservation Committee (JNCC), 2015a), although it is likely to be in the vicinity of the Ladder Hills SAC and the Ladder Hills Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI).

Information on Natura 2000 sites, including access to Natura 2000 data forms, was obtained from the following resources:

- JNCC, Designated and Proposed Ramsar sites in Scotland (webpage) http://jncc.defra.gov.uk/page-1391;
- JNCC, SACs in Scotland (webpage) http://jncc.defra.gov.uk/ProtectedSites/SACselection/SAC_list.asp?Country=S;
- JNCC, Special Protection Areas (SPAs): Scotland (webpage) http://jncc.defra.gov.uk/page-1402; and
- SNH Sitelink (website) https://gateway.snh.gov.uk/sitelink/.

All information was accessed in March 2015.

Table 4.1 : Natura 2000 sites within the Nestrans RTS Area

Site Code (EU)	Site Code (SNH)	Site Name
SACs		
UK0030030	8194	1. Ballochbuie
UK0030101	8214	2. Buchan Ness to Collieston
UK0012821	8216	3. Caenlochan
UK0016412	8217	4. Cairngorms
UK0030122	8231	5. Coyles of Muick
UK0030134	8240	6. Dinnet Oakwood
UK0030356	8671	7. Garron Point
UK0012756	8266	8. Glen Tanar
UK0030159	8268	9. Green Hill of Strathdon
UK0012576	8271	10. Hill of Towanreef
UK0030179	8286	11. Ladder Hills
UK0012894	8328	12. Morrone Birkwood
UK0030216	8329	13. Mortlach Moss
UK0019958	8330	14. Morven and Mullachdubh
UK0019959	8334	15. Muir of Dinnet

Site Code (EU)	Site Code (SNH)	Site Name
UK0030315	4601	16. Red Moss of Netherley
UK0019767	8351	17. Reidside Moss
UK0030251	8357	18. River Dee
UK0013042	8373	19. Sands of Forvie
UK0030348	8625	20. The Maim
UK0019800	8402	21. Turclossie Moss
SPAs		
UK9002781	8467	22. Ballochbuie
UK9002491	8473	23. Buchan Ness to Collieston Coast
UK9004011	8474	24. Caenlochan
UK9002241	8475	25. Cairngorms
UK9020308	10234	26. Cairngorms Massif
UK9002271	8505	27. Fowlsheugh
UK9020307	8508	28. Glen Tanar
UK9002261	8536	29. Loch of Skene
UK9002211	8537	30. Loch of Strathbeg
UK9002281	8542	31. Lochnagar
UK9002791	8552	32. Muir of Dinnet
UK9002811	8584	33. Tips of Corsemaul and Tom Mor
UK9002471	8587	34. Troup, Pennan and Lion's Heads
UK9002221	8592	35. Ythan Estuary, Sands of Forvie and Meikle Loch
Ramsar sites		
UK13002	8411	36. Cairngorm Lochs
UK13040	8442	37. Loch of Skene
UK13041	8443	38. Loch of Strathbeg
UK13049	8448	39. Muir of Dinnet
Uk13061	8460	40. Ythan Estuary and Meikle Loch
Potential SPA		
UK9002951	n/a	41. Ladder Hills

5. Identification of Likely Significant Effects of the RTS

5.1 Introduction

This section describes the likely activities of the Nestrans RTS and its interventions. It also describes the potential effects that these activities might have on the Natura 2000 sites within the Nestrans RTS area. As the RTS is a high-level, strategic document and as a result of the general nature of the interventions any assessment is at a strategic level.

5.2 Identifying Likely Significant Effects

Interventions can have a wide variety of effects on species and habitats for which a site is designated. It is necessary to determine what effects pathways there might be from the interventions to ecological receptors of the Natura 2000 network. These effects pathways could result in Likely Significant Effects (LSEs) on the qualifying features of the Natura 2000 sites and could potentially have implications for the conservation objectives of the sites and lead to adverse effects on site integrity (AESI).

RTS actions and interventions may lead to infrastructure development for instance, that could result in a variety of possible effect pathways through, but not limited to:

- species mortality;
- habitat loss and/or fragmentation;
- disturbance (noise, vibration, movement, lighting);
- changes in water quality;
- changes in hydrology; and
- changes in air quality.

These are discussed in more detail in Table 5.1.

Table 5.1 : Potential effects pathways resulting from RTS Policies and Proposals

Impact to Species/ Habitat	Effects Pathways
Mortality	• Mortality of some species could occur through an increase in wildlife casualty incidents. • Mortality may also occur as a result of pollution events such as oil or chemical spillages, or; • through chronic run-off to habitats that support Natura 2000 animal or plant species.
Habitat loss/ fragmentation	• Direct loss of designated habitat may occur or • Loss of habitat which supports a designated species, either within or outwith a Natura 2000 site. • Habitat fragmentation may lead to the isolation of designated habitats/ species resulting in a deterioration of their populations or, in the case of species, an increase in mortality.
Disturbance	• Interventions could result in the significant disturbance of Natura 2000 species or habitats. • This disturbance may include, but not be limited to, noise, vibration, movement (of people and/or vehicles) and lighting. • Disturbance may lead to the abandonment of habitats by qualifying species, which could include designated or supporting habitats.

Impact to Species/ Habitat	Effects Pathways
Changes in water quality (pollution)	• Water quality can be affected by oil, chemical, heavy metals etc. or through chronic runoff of such materials. • Water quality can also be affected by sedimentation through runoff from construction sites during culvert construction and extensions, or watercourse realignments. New infrastructure could result in a chronic runoff of sediments. • Changes in water quality could directly affect species or habitats, or affect them indirectly through loss of aquatic prey species, or through changes in their habitat.
Hydrological changes	• The construction of structures within floodplains and watercourses can lead to hydrological changes which alter flow rates and volumes. • Changes in hydrology can alter geomorphological processes which can affect the deposition of shingle or other material. • Changes in these processes can affect aquatic habitats and species either directly or indirectly.
Changes in air quality (pollution)	• Air pollution can affect terrestrial, freshwater and marine habitats and species. • Pollution from transport includes nitrogen deposition (ammonia (NH3) and nitrogen oxides (NOx)), heavy metals and particulates/dust. • Nitrogen deposition can lead to changes in species composition. • In watercourses and upland lakes, it may also change algal productivity and nutrient regimes. • Increased availability of nitrogen from enhanced atmospheric inputs can result in the eutrophication of both terrestrial and freshwater ecosystems.

These effects pathways could result in possible LSEs such as (but not limited to):

- a permanent reduction in habitat area and/or species population;
- direct or indirect changes to the physical quality of the environment or habitat within the site;
- a reduction in the resilience of a feature, and therefore an increase in the vulnerability of populations/habitats to external perturbations or additional changes;
- changes to the coherence of a site leading to changes to the coherence of the Natura 2000 network (e.g. through fragmentation);
- significant disturbance to species/habitats; and
- any of the above pathways affecting the supporting functions and processes of qualifying species and habitats.

6. Screening for LSEs

6.1 Introduction

This section describes stages 5-7 of the HRA process for plans (David Tyldesley and Associates, 2015). Stage 5 comprises three screening steps:

- identification of and screening out of general policy statements;
- screening out of references to specific proposals referred to in, but not proposed by, the plan (e.g. national infrastructure projects promoted by national government); and
- screening out elements of the plan which could have no LSEs on a European (Natura 2000) site.

This process enables a reduction in the number of interventions presented in Appendix B to only those that have a potential to have an ecological effect which could result in LSE (Tables 6.1-6.3).

Each of the interventions has been assessed against the potential to result in ecological impacts as a result of the identified effects pathways (see Table 5.1).

Where no ecological effects have been identified it has been assumed that the intervention would not result in LSEs and therefore has been screened out from further assessment.

6.2 Screening the Plan for LSEs

6.2.1 General Policy Statements

It is appropriate to screen out general policy statements, including “general criteria based policies” (David Tyldesley and Associates, 2015).

6.2.2 Specific Proposals Referred to in, but not Proposed by, the Plan

Completion of the dualling of the A96 between Aberdeen and Inverness is a priority for the Scottish Government and is being delivered by Transport Scotland (TS). TS have the objective of completing the full dualling between Inverness and Aberdeen by 2030 (TS, 2015a).

The Aberdeen Western Peripheral Route (AWPR) including the Balmedie to Tipperty section is a priority for the Scottish Government and is being delivered by TS in partnership with Aberdeen City and Aberdeenshire Councils (TS, 2015b). Full project completion is due in winter 2017, with sections opening from autumn 2016.

The A96 dualling programme and the AWPR are not proposed by the Nestrans RTS and they are being delivered by the national agency, TS and are therefore screened out of any further assessment.

6.2.3 Elements of the Plan which could have no LSEs

Elements of the plan that could have no LSEs have been screened out. The reasons for this may include, but are not limited to:

- proposals intended to protect the natural environment including the Natura 2000 network;
- proposals which will not themselves lead to development or other change;
- proposals which make provision for change but which could have no conceivable effects pathway to ecological receptors of the Natura 2000 network;
- proposals which make provision for change but which could have no likely significant effect on the conservation objectives of a Natura 2000 site; and

- proposals for which effects on any particular European (Natura 2000) site cannot be identified, because the policy is too general (for example, it is not possible to identify where, when or how the policy may be implemented).

Table 6.1 : Preliminary screening of External Connections proposals for action

Connections Strategy	Proposals for Action	Screening Commentary	Outcome (Take forward to AA stage)
EC1 Rail links and services	i) Reduce rail journey times to Edinburgh and Glasgow (and further south) and Inverness.	Effects on a Natura 2000 site are conceivable, but it is not possible to ascertain what or where these effects might be, or when they may occur. As a result this proposal can be **Screened Out**.	x
	ii) Improved train capacity, comfort and reliability.	This is a general policy statement. As a result this proposal can be **Screened Out**.	x
	iii) Support for High Speed Rail connections to London, which benefit the north east.	This is a general policy statement. As a result this proposal can be **Screened Out**.	x
EC2 Strategic roads	i) Overcoming constraints on the network that have a direct impact on travel to/from the north east, such as the A90 through Dundee and dualling the A96 to Inverness.	This is a general policy statement. Nestrans would not have responsibility for any proposals regarding the A90 through Dundee, and the A96 dualling is a project being taken forward by Transport Scotland and is therefore a scheme not proposed by the RTS. As a result this proposal can be **Screened Out**.	x
EC3 Inter-regional bus and coach travel	i) Support further development of inter-regional bus and coach travel between the north east and other Scottish towns and cities and further afield.	This is a general policy statement. As a result this proposal can be **Screened Out**.	x
	ii) Explore possible links to park and ride sites.	Effects on a Natura 2000 site are conceivable, but it is not possible to ascertain what or where these effects might be, or when they may occur. No specific location for development or detail on what the development might be is mentioned in the policy and therefore it is possible to conclude no LSE on a Natura 2000 site. As a result this proposal can be **Screened Out**.	x
EC4 Connections by sea	i) Closer joint working through the North East Freight Forum.	This is a general policy statement. As a result this proposal can be **Screened Out**.	x
	ii) Improved access and facilities at ports and interchange with passenger ferries.	Effects on a Natura 2000 site are conceivable, but it is not possible to ascertain what or where these effects might be, or when they may occur. No specific location for development or detail on what the development might be is mentioned in the policy and therefore it is possible to conclude no LSE on a Natura 2000 site. As a result this proposal can be **Screened Out**.	x

Connections Strategy	Proposals for Action	Screening Commentary	Outcome (Take forward to AA stage)
	iii) Development of new freight and passenger facilities.	Effects on a Natura 2000 site are conceivable, but it is not possible to ascertain what or where these effects might be, or when they may occur. No specific location for development or detail on what the development might be is mentioned in the policy and therefore it is possible to conclude no LSE on a Natura 2000 site. As a result this proposal can be **Screened Out**.	x
	iv) Continue dialogue with the Scottish Government and Northern isles ferry service operator to ensure continuing services from Aberdeen.	This is a general policy statement. As a result this proposal can be **Screened Out**.	x
EC5 Connections by air	i) Support expansion of direct destinations from Aberdeen and frequency of popular services.	This is a general policy statement. As a result this proposal can be **Screened Out**.	x
	ii) Support runway extension to facilitate wider range of destinations and more efficient, modern aircraft.	Planning permission has been previously granted for an extension up to 300m and the runway was extended in 2011 by 124m. The remaining 176m has planning permission and is proposed for the longer term (Nestrans, 2014a). The RTS supports the extension this is therefore a general policy statement. As a result this proposal can be **Screened Out**.	x
	iii) Ensure protection of slots for Aberdeen services at key hubs such as London Heathrow.	This is a general policy statement. As a result this proposal can be **Screened Out**.	x

Table 6.2 : Preliminary screening of internal connections proposals for action

Connections Strategy	Proposals for Action	Screening Commentary	Outcome (Take forward to AA stage)
IC1 Rail Connections	i) Seek to secure an increased frequency of services between Inverurie-Aberdeen-Stonehaven and improved services to Inverness.	This is a general policy statement. As a result this proposal can be **Screened Out**.	×
	ii) Proposed new station at Kintore and further development of the rail system to be set out in the Rail Action Plan, including improvements to the accessibility of existing stations.	No conceivable pathways for LSEs to Natura 2000 sites can be discerned as a result of a new station at Kintore. Whilst further development of the rail system could result in effects to Natura 2000 sites, it is not currently possible to identify where, when or how the policy may be implemented. As a result this proposal can be **Screened Out**.	×
	iii) Investigate, in line with the principles of STAG, the potential for further stations in the context of upgrades to the existing rail lines and assessing future demand for local rail services.	Effects on a Natura 2000 site are conceivable, but it is not possible to ascertain what or where these effects might be, or when they may occur. No specific location for development or detail on what the development might be is mentioned in the policy and therefore it is possible to conclude no LSE on a Natura 2000 site. As a result this proposal can be **Screened Out**.	×
	iv) Investigate, in line with the principles of STAG, the feasibility, costs and benefits of new railway lines to expand rail provision in the North East in the longer term.	This is a general policy statement and are long-term aspirations in terms of delivery. Effects on a Natura 2000 site are conceivable, but it is not possible to ascertain what or where these effects might be, or when they may occur. As a result this proposal can be **Screened Out**.	×
IC2 Road improvements	i) Strategic road capacity improvements – tackle constraints on the A90 Ellon to Peterhead, A96 west of Inverurie, Haudagain junction, Access to Aberdeen from the south, and at other junctions serving Aberdeenshire towns.	Effects on a Natura 2000 site are conceivable,. For these projects, no specific location for development or detail on what the development might be is mentioned in the policy and therefore it is possible to conclude no LSE on a Natura 2000 site. However, initial studies have been undertaken on the *Access to Aberdeen from the south* proposal, all options of which includes a new bridge over the River Dee. This proposal cannot be screened out. For further information see Table 6.4.	✓
	ii) Strategic road safety improvements – alignment and junction improvements on A90 South. Overtaking, junction and alignment improvements on A90 north and A96. Route Action on A92, A93, A944, A947.	Effects on a Natura 2000 site are conceivable, but it is not possible to ascertain what or where these effects might be, or when they may occur. No specific location for development or detail on what the development might be is mentioned in the policy and therefore it is possible to conclude no LSE on a Natura 2000 site. As a result this proposal can be **Screened Out**.	×

Connections Strategy	Proposals for Action	Screening Commentary	Outcome (Take forward to AA stage)
	iii) Car share lanes – trialling priority lanes for cars with multiple occupancy.	This is a general policy statement. As a result this proposal can be **Screened Out**.	×
	iv) Prioritised maintenance for strategic routes, with particular benefits for public transport and sustainable modes.	This is a general policy statement. As a result this proposal can be **Screened Out**.	×
	v) Support Local Authorities in bringing forward LTS projects that contribute to strategic objectives.	This is a general policy statement. As a result this proposal can be **Screened Out**.	×
	vi) The above actions build on the AWPR and dualling of A90 Balmedie-Tipperty which are being taken forward by Transport Scotland and are due to be completed in 2012.	This is a general policy statement, In addition, Nestrans does not have responsibility for the AWPR and A90 and therefore these are not schemes proposed by the RTS As a result this proposal can be **Screened Out**.	×
	vii) Strategic road improvements to mitigate the cumulative impact of development: • Parkway, Persley Bridge & Parkhill junction and capacity improvements; • Capacity improvements & upgrade AWPR Kingswells north junction; • Upgrade A944 junctions and safety limited capacity improvements on access to A93; • A956/A90 junction capacity improvements; and • River Dee link These improvements will be funded through the Strategic Transport Fund and in line with the SDPA supplementary planning guidance "Delivering Identified Projects through a Strategic Transport Fund" and will be designed with the needs of all road users in mind, including cyclists and pedestrians.	These projects are located in the northern, western or southern parts of the ACC area, or in Aberdeenshire just to the south of Aberdeen City. The general locations are not hydrologically linked to any Natura 2000 sites and no effects pathways could be discerned. In addition, no specific location for development or detail on what the development might be is mentioned in the policy. However, the Nestrans SEA Post-adoption statement (June 2014) indicated a *potential impact on the River Dee SAC from the RTS policy" " IC2 Road Improvements – addressing the cumulative impacts of development through a Strategic Transport Fund", specifically an action for a River Dee link* (Nestrans, 2014c). This proposal cannot be screened out. For further information see Table 6.5.	✓
IC3 Bus Improvements	i) Quality bus corridor improvements to services and facilities.	This is a general policy statement. As a result this proposal can be **Screened Out**.	×
	ii) Review and continue to deliver the Bus Action Plan to improve quality and reliability of services and set out proposals for extending bus priority measures.	This is a general policy statement. As a result this proposal can be **Screened Out**.	×

Connections Strategy	Proposals for Action	Screening Commentary	Outcome (Take forward to AA stage)
	iii) Explore the options for rapid transit in the longer term through the Bus Action Plan.	This is a general policy statement. Effects on a Natura 2000 site are conceivable, but it is not possible to ascertain what or where these effects might be, or when they may occur. As a result this proposal can be **Screened Out**.	x
	iv) Expand Park and Ride provision linked to the development of the AWPR and explore the potential for mini-hubs that can be served by existing bus provision.	This is a general policy statement. Effects on a Natura 2000 site are conceivable, but it is not possible to ascertain what or where these effects might be, or when they may occur. No specific location for development or detail on what the development might be is mentioned in the policy and therefore it is possible to conclude no LSE on a Natura 2000 site. As a result this proposal can be **Screened Out**.	x
	v) Improve information provision including expanding real-time information systems across Aberdeen City and Shire.	This is a general policy statement. As a result this proposal can be **Screened Out**.	x
	vi) Strategic bus priority and bus frequency improvements as well as additional bus services linking new development sites to the city centre and key employment destinations to mitigate the cumulative impact of development.	This is a general policy statement. As a result this proposal can be **Screened Out**.	x
IC4 Demand Responsive Transport	i) Support extension of 'Dial-a-Bus' and similar services to serve those unable to access conventional buses and to link with scheduled bus services.	This is a general policy statement. As a result this intervention can be **Screened Out**.	x
	ii) Support community transport providers and encourage development of services.	This is a general policy statement. As a result this intervention can be **Screened Out**.	x
	iii) Seek to ensure that taxis are provided in an efficient and effective way, which meets the needs of customers.	This is a general policy statement. As a result this intervention can be **Screened Out**.	x
IC5 Transport Interchange	i) Maximise the interchange potential of the bus and rail station developments, the links between Union Square and Union Street, facilities for pedestrians, cyclists and taxis and support enhancement of other interchange points in Aberdeen.	This is a general policy statement. In addition, there are no feasible effects pathways to the ecology receptors of Natura 2000 sites. As a result this intervention can be **Screened Out**.	x

Connections Strategy	Proposals for Action	Screening Commentary	Outcome (Take forward to AA stage)
	ii) Support further improvements to interchange facilities in Aberdeenshire towns catering for bus, rail (where appropriate), cycling, walking and taxis.	This is a general policy statement. Effects on a Natura 2000 site are conceivable, but it is not possible to ascertain what or where these effects might be, or when they may occur. No specific location for development or detail on what the development might be is mentioned in the policy and therefore it is possible to conclude no LSE on a Natura 2000 site. As a result this intervention can be **Screened Out**.	x
	iii) Work with operators to develop integrated and smart ticketing across services and operators in the north east.	This is a general policy statement. As a result this intervention can be **Screened Out**.	x
IC6 Walking and Cycling	i) Support investment in measures to increase safety and security of walking and in particular to facilitate interchange between different modes of transport.	This is a general policy statement. As a result this intervention can be **Screened Out**.	x
	ii) Urban realm improvements to improve the pedestrian environment, including the pedestrianisation of Union Street.	Outwith the pedestrianisation of Union Street ,this is a general policy statement. However, it is also considered that the pedestrianisation is not likely to result in any LSEs on a Natura 2000 site. As a result this intervention can be Screened Out.	x
	iii) Support the extension of low speed zones, particularly where it improves the environment for pedestrians and cyclists and increases safety for children.	This is a general policy statement. As a result this intervention can be **Screened Out**.	x
	iv) Continued development of a connected network of strategic cycle routes on key routes within Aberdeenshire, across the boundary into Aberdeen and on routes through the City to work towards the Cycling Action Plan for Scotland 10% vision for cycling and lock in the benefits of other infrastructure improvements, including the AWPR.	This is a general policy statement. Effects on a Natura 2000 site are conceivable, but it is not possible to ascertain what or where these effects might be, or when they may occur. No specific location for development or detail on what the development might be is mentioned in the policy and therefore it is possible to conclude no LSE on a Natura 2000 site. As a result this intervention can be **Screened Out**.	x
	v) Ensure that all new developments and transport infrastructure improvements take consideration of and make provisions for pedestrians and cyclists as an integral part of the design process.	This is a general policy statement. Effects on a Natura 2000 site are conceivable, but it is not possible to ascertain what or where these effects might be, or when they may occur. No specific location for development or detail on what the development might be is mentioned in the policy and therefore it is possible to conclude no LSE on a Natura 2000 site. As a result this proposal can be **Screened Out**.	x

Connections Strategy	Proposals for Action	Screening Commentary	Outcome (Take forward to AA stage)
IC7 Airport Surface Connections	i) Work with Aberdeen Airport in developing and monitoring a Surface Access Strategy to ensure high quality links to the airport by all modes.	This is a general policy statement. Effects on a Natura 2000 site are conceivable, but it is not possible to ascertain what or where these effects might be, or when they may occur. No specific location for development or detail on what the development might be is mentioned in the policy and therefore it is possible to conclude no LSE on a Natura 2000 site. As a result this proposal can be **Screened Out**.	x
	ii) Work with partners to develop links to the airport including the upgrade of Dyce railway station and improved access for public transport.	This is a general policy statement. Effects on a Natura 2000 site are conceivable, but it is not possible to ascertain what or where these effects might be, or when they may occur. However, from an upgrading of Dyce station no effects pathways on a Natura 2000 site can be discerned. As a result this proposal can be **Screened Out**.	x
	iii) Support high quality transport links to the airport using innovative and technological advances where appropriate.	This is a general policy statement. Effects on a Natura 2000 site are conceivable, but it is not possible to ascertain what or where these effects might be, or when they may occur. No specific location for development or detail on what the development might be is mentioned in the policy and therefore it is possible to conclude no LSE on a Natura 2000 site. As a result this proposal can be **Screened Out**.	x
IC8 Port Surface Connections	i) Support measures to improve access to port facilities.	This proposal seeks to work with ports and roads authorities to ensure adequate roads links to harbours. It is a general policy statement and does not seek to identify what or where these measures might be, or when they might occur. As a result this proposal can be **Screened Out**.	x
	ii) Facilitate improved interchange between Aberdeen ferry terminal and bus and rail stations.	It is a general policy statement and does not seek to identify what or where these measures might be, or when they might occur. As a result this proposal can be **Screened Out**.	x
IC9 Freight	i) Retain and develop modern intermodal freight terminals to serve the region and tackle the barriers to mode shift through the Freight Action Plan.	This is a general policy statement. Effects on a Natura 2000 site are conceivable, but it is not possible to ascertain what or where these effects might be, or when they may occur. No specific location for development or detail on what the development might be is mentioned in the policy and therefore it is possible to conclude no LSE on a Natura 2000 site. As a result this proposal can be Screened Out.	x
	ii) Investigate potential for measures to provide more reliable journey times for HGVs and identify a trial route for implementation of priority measures.	This is a general policy statement. As a result this proposal can be **Screened Out**.	x

Connections Strategy	Proposals for Action	Screening Commentary	Outcome (Take forward to AA stage)
IC10 Powered two-wheelers	i) Support measure to improve safety of motorcycles and other powered two-wheelers and provide appropriate parking facilities.	This is a general policy statement. As a result this proposal can be **Screened Out**.	x

Table 6.3 : Preliminary Screening of Strategic Policy Frameworks Proposals for Action

Connections Strategy	Proposals for Action	Screening Commentary	Outcome (Take forward to AA stage)
TB1 Promoting travel planning and travel awareness	i) Implementation and future development of Nestrans' Travel Planning Strategy	This is a general policy statement. As a result this proposal can be **Screened Out**.	x
	ii) Continue to provide support through the Sustainable Travel Grants Scheme.	This is a general policy statement. As a result this proposal can be **Screened Out**.	x
	iii) Encourage increased take-up of car-sharing and car club schemes.	This is a general policy statement. As a result this proposal can be **Screened Out**.	x
	iv) Continue to promote and strengthen the Getabout brand.	This is a general policy statement. As a result this proposal can be **Screened Out**.	x
TB2 Promoting active travel	i) Develop an active travel action plan with the aim of encouraging more people to walk and cycle more often.	This is a general policy statement. As a result this proposal can be **Screened Out**.	x
	ii) Work with NHS Grampian and Community Planning Partnerships to deliver the Health and Transport Action Plan and achieve objectives for a healthier population.	This is a general policy statement. As a result this proposal can be **Screened Out**.	x
TB3 Improving safety	i) Work with Councils, Emergency Services and others to promote road safety as part of a comprehensive approach covering Education, Engineering, Enforcement and Encouragement measures.	This is a general policy statement. As a result this proposal can be **Screened Out**.	x
	ii) Improve security for users of public transport services and interchanges.	This is a general policy statement. As a result this proposal can be **Screened Out**.	x
IE1 Changing choices through incentives and partnerships	i) Work with operators to identify possible fare incentives to encourage increased bus use, particularly where this enables access to employment or training.	This is a general policy statement. As a result this proposal can be **Screened Out**.	x
	ii) Through the LABOF continue to develop the Quality Partnership for Public Transport and the Bus Punctuality Improvement Partnership to achieve improvements in bus provision and increased levels of bus use.	This is a general policy statement. As a result this proposal can be **Screened Out**.	x

Connections Strategy	Proposals for Action	Screening Commentary	Outcome (Take forward to AA stage)
	iii) Support measures which encourage uptake of alternative fuels, particularly by public transport providers, to build on the north east's role as an energy hub.	This is a general policy statement. As a result this proposal can be **Screened Out**.	×
IE2 Using enforcement	i) Support enforcement of vehicle emissions standards to improve air quality in Aberdeen City Centre and towns across the north east.	This is a general policy statement. As a result this proposal can be **Screened Out**.	×
	ii) Support measures to enforce speed limits to improve road safety and reduce carbon emissions.	This is a general policy statement. As a result this proposal can be **Screened Out**.	×
	iii) Promote the establishment of a Casualty Reductions Partnership to support NESCAMP's activities and support the trial of average speed cameras.	This is a general policy statement. As a result this proposal can be **Screened Out**.	×
	iv) Support measures to enforce the operation of bus lanes to ensure the efficient movement of buses and taxis.	This is a general policy statement. As a result this proposal can be **Screened Out**.	×
IE3 Parking	i) Develop a Regional Parking Strategy to ensure a coherent approach to parking controls and standards across the north east.	This is a general policy statement. As a result this proposal can be **Screened Out**.	×
	ii) Support enforcement of parking restrictions, particularly where these exist to support strategic traffic movements, bus/ pedestrian priority and road safety.	This is a general policy statement. As a result this proposal can be **Screened Out**.	×
	iii) Investigate the potential for parking incentives to encourage use of small or multi-occupancy vehicles.	This is a general policy statement. As a result this proposal can be **Screened Out**.	×
CR1 Carbon Reduction, Noise and Air Quality	i) Support measures which encourage uptake of alternative fuels for public transport, private and public sector vehicles, to build on the north east's role as an energy hub and work towards the decarbonisation of transport and improvements in air quality.	This is a general policy statement. As a result this proposal can be **Screened Out**.	×
	ii) Support the development and trial of technological advances, such as hydrogen fuel and electric vehicles that will reduce carbon emissions from the transport network.	This is a general policy statement. As a result this proposal can be **Screened Out**.	×

Connections Strategy	Proposals for Action	Screening Commentary	Outcome (Take forward to AA stage)
	iii) Support demand management measures, including the re-allocation of road space to public transport, cyclists and pedestrians in order to lock in the benefits of other schemes, including the AWPR, and where it can be demonstrated that this will help the longer term efficient movement of traffic.	This is a general policy statement. As a result this proposal can be **Screened Out**.	x
E1 Engagement	i) Take an active and inclusive approach to engagement and consultation with communities, relevant sectors of the community and interest groups and stakeholders.	This is a general policy statement. As a result this proposal can be **Screened Out**.	x

6.2.4 Further Assessment of RTS Action IC2 i) and IC2 vii)

Under action IC2 i), which has been indicated in Table 6.2 as potentially resulting in LSEs, five road improvements are proposed and are described in Table 6.4 below. Not all may result in a significant effect on a Natura 2000 site.

For four of the five IC2 i) proposals no pathways that could result in significant effects on a Natura 2000 site were identified. These four proposals were therefore screened out from further assessment. For a fifth proposal, Access to Aberdeen from the south, it was not possible to eliminate the likelihood of a significant effect on a Natura 2000 site.

Table 6.4 : Proposed road improvements within the Nestrans RTS Action IC2 i)

IC2 i) Proposals	Description	Commentary
A90 Ellon to Peterhead	This comprises improvements of the A90 north of Aberdeen between Peterhead and Ellon.	Effects on a Natura 2000 site are conceivable, but it is not possible to ascertain what or where these effects might be, or when they may occur. No specific location for development or detail on what the development might be is mentioned in the policy and therefore it is possible to conclude no LSE on a Natura 2000 site. As a result this proposal can be Screened Out.
A96 west of Inverurie	This comprises improvements to the north and west of Aberdeen on the A96, to the west of Inverurie.	Effects on a Natura 2000 site are conceivable, but it is not possible to ascertain what or where these effects might be, or when they may occur. No specific location for development or detail on what the development might be is mentioned in the policy and therefore it is possible to conclude no LSE on a Natura 2000 site. As a result this proposal can be Screened Out.
Haudagain Junction	Haudagain Roundabout is the junction between several major roads in Aberdeen which is currently operating over its capacity (TS, 2015c). The proposal comprises a new link road.	This improvement occurs in the northern part of Aberdeen City. No effects pathways on Natura 2000 sites were identified during the DMRB Stage 2 and Stage 3 assessments (Jacobs, 2014b, in prep.). This proposal is also a commitment by the Scottish Government and is being delivered by TS. As a result this proposal can be Screened Out.
Access to Aberdeen from the south	This proposal concerns suitable options to improve the flow of traffic and reduce delays in the Bridge of Dee area of Aberdeen (Aberdeen City Council, undated). Initial work identified the long-term need for additional capacity across the River Dee.	This proposal occurs in the southern part of Aberdeen city and comprises a crossing of the River Dee SAC. Potential exists for likely significant effects on the designated site and therefore this proposal cannot be screened out.
Other junctions serving Aberdeenshire towns	This comprises improvements across Aberdeenshire.	Effects on a Natura 2000 site are conceivable, but it is not possible to ascertain what or where these effects might be, or when they may occur. No specific location for development or detail on what the development might be is mentioned in the policy and therefore it is possible to conclude no LSE on a Natura 2000 site. As a result this proposal can be Screened Out.

Under action IC2 vii), which has been indicated in Table 6.2 as potentially resulting in LSEs, five road improvements are proposed and are described in Table 6.5 below. Most of the proposed improvements include a variety of interventions as indicated and not all may result in a significant effect on a Natura 2000 site.

For four of the five IC2 vii) proposals no pathways that could result in significant effects on a Natura 2000 site were identified. These four sets of proposals were therefore screened out from further assessment. For a fifth proposal, the River Dee Link, it was not possible to eliminate the likelihood of a significant effect on a Natura 2000 site.

Table 6.5 : Proposed road improvements within the Nestrans RTS Action IC2 vii)

IC2 vii) Proposals	Description	Commentary
Parkway, Persley Bridge & Parkhill junction and capacity improvements.	Junction improvements along the Parkway in Aberdeen and additional capacity at Persley Bridge to Haudagain Roundabout. Upgrade sections of B997 Scotstown Road and capacity improvements through Parkhill into north end of Dyce Drive using appropriate design standards to accommodate forecast traffic volumes.	These improvements occur in the north and north western parts of Aberdeen City. There are no effects pathways to a Natura 2000 site and therefore it is possible to conclude no LSE. As a result this proposal can be Screened Out.
Capacity improvements & upgrade AWPR Kingswells north junction.	Capacity improvements at A96/Dyce Drive/Craibstone access junction. Upgrade route between Bucksburn and AWPR Kingswells North junction using appropriate design standards to accommodate forecast traffic volumes. Upgrade Kingswells North junction with South facing slips.	These improvements occur in the north and western parts of Aberdeen City. There are no effects pathways to a Natura 2000 site and therefore it is possible to conclude no LSE. As a result this proposal can be Screened Out.
Upgrade A944 junctions and safety/limited capacity improvements on access to A93.	Upgrade junctions at A944/B9119 on approach to Westhill & A944 Kingswells roundabout. Second access point from Home Farm to Kingswells bypass and from Countesswells to B9119. Safety/limited capacity improvements along Countesswells Road, Baillieswells Road & access to Cults from Countesswells.	These improvements occur in the northern part s of Aberdeen City. There are no effects pathways to a Natura 2000 site and therefore it is possible to conclude no LSE. As a result this proposal can be Screened Out.
A956/A90 junction capacity improvements.	Additional capacity and signal control at Souterhead roundabout. Local distributor connecting Loirston development with A90. Additional Fastlink interchange connecting Elsick with AWPR. Upgrade interchange at Newtonhill using appropriate design standards to accommodate forecasted traffic volumes.	These improvements occur in the southern part s of Aberdeen City and in Aberdeenshire south of Aberdeen. There are no effects pathways to a Natura 2000 site and therefore it is possible to conclude no LSE. As a result this proposal can be Screened Out.
River Dee Link[1]	Proposal in the southwest of Aberdeen City connecting the A93 North Deeside Road and the Inchgarth Road.	This improvement does not cross the River Dee SAC. However, there is the possibility that an effects pathway may exist as a result of road run-off and pollution entering the River Dee via road-drainage systems. Therefore this proposal cannot be screened out

6.2.4.1 RTS Action IC2 i) Access to Aberdeen from the south

A Scottish Transport Appraisal Guidance (STAG) pre-appraisal was commissioned by Nestrans and published in 2012 (Jacobs, 2012) to consider the issue of providing transport improvements in the Bridge of Dee area

[1] In some documents the River Dee Link has been described as the bridge over the River Dee. However, *Access to Aberdeen from the South* proposals have been addressed as the Bridge of Dee Study, the Stag 1 appraisal for which has been completed (Jacobs, 2014b).

(access to Aberdeen from the south). The pre-appraisal included an assessment of broad transport concepts which including enhanced or new river crossings. The pre-appraisal report identified as one of the Bridge of Dee project objectives the recognition of the importance of the River Dee SAC and to develop proposals to minimise overall environmental impacts to a level acceptable to the consenting authority. The option sifting process at this stage took account of a stakeholder workshop and subsequent consultations with, among others, SNH to determine the sifting outcome which would be taken forward to the STAG Part 1 stage.

Five concepts were taken through to the STAG Part 1 appraisal (Jacobs, 2014a) with three recommended to be taken forward to the STAG Part 2 Appraisal. These three concepts were:

- Concept 6: new upstream crossing with additional Non Motorised User (NMU) crossing adjacent to a reconfigured existing Bridge of Dee;
- Concept 6B: as Concept 6, with additional link from Garthdee Road/Inchgarth Road to A93 North Deeside Road; and
- Concept 7: new crossing adjacent to existing Bridge of Dee, which is reconfigured for NMU use only.

Two concepts were not forward for assessment at STAG Part 2:

- Concept 8 (Existing Bridge Widening); and
- Concept 9 (Existing Bridge Replacement) were not taken.

Concept 8 was removed for a number of reason including of its potential to affect the River Dee SAC.

The STAG Part 2 Appraisal will be a detailed assessment of the remaining concepts and is envisaged to be completed by March 2016 (Aberdeen City Council, 2015).

6.3 Mitigation

6.3.1 Introduction

After screening there may be proposals of a plan where it is not possible to eliminate the likelihood of a significant effect on a Natura 2000 site. For these aspects it is recommended that mitigation measures be considered so that the likelihood of the proposals having a significant effect on a Natura 2000 site can be eliminated (David Tyldesley and Associates, 2015). This comprises Stage 6 (see Diagram 1). The plan should then be re-screened after these mitigation measures are applied (Stage 7).

Any proposals of the RTS which cannot be mitigated for at this stage will then be taken forward to ascertain if the proposal could result in adverse effects on site integrity and the appropriate assessment Stages 8 and 9, undertaken (see Diagram 1).

6.3.2 Nestrans RTS Proposals which cannot be screened out

For two aspects of the Nestrans RTS, it was not possible to eliminate the likelihood of a significant effect on a Natura 2000 site. Those proposals were Access to Aberdeen from the South and the River Dee link (IC2 i) and vi) Road improvements).

6.3.3 Mitigation

Mitigation is proposed to ensure no adverse effects on the integrity of the River Dee SAC. The mitigation comprises adherence to best practice construction techniques and guidelines, and design. It also includes the development of a comprehensive plan to prevent changes to water quality through Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDS) which will be developed in liaison and agreed with SNH and Scottish Environment Protection Agency (SEPA).

Any new crossing of the River Dee will be required to conform to design principles, with regard to alignment and structural form, to ensure no adverse effects on the SAC. Any crossings will be designed and implemented in agreement with SEPA's guidelines on river crossings and good engineering (SEPA, 2010). This includes requirements that the design and implementation stages:

- ensure that conservation requirements for any designated site are met; and
- identify and protect important habitats and species.

In addition, the alignment and design of any new crossing will not alter any active watercourse processes (such as channel movement and material deposition), therefore ensuring the protection of any supporting habitat or functions of the SAC, including protecting lifecycle stages of the qualifying interests.

Species protection management plans will be required to be prepared, approved and implemented to safeguard the qualifying interests and the site itself. These plans must be approved prior to proposal submission.

Table 6.5 sets out the identified pathways for effects, the reason for LSEs, proposed mitigation and predicted residual effects.

6.3.4 Re-screening the Plan

Incorporation of a clear-span bridge and SuDS, and adherence to other mitigation including noise and pollution management plans, will remove LSE on the SAC.

Table 6.6 : Proposed Mitigation for Action IC2 i) and vii) (Access to Aberdeen from the south, River Dee Link) and the River Dee SAC

Effects Pathways and relevant RTS proposal	Reason for LSE	Mitigation	Residual Effect
Land-take IC2 i)	Land-take under the footprint of the proposal as a result of bridge piers, abutments and approach routes, leading to direct loss of the SAC area. This could cause changes to the distribution of species across the site and/or of their supporting habitats or processes. Direct change to the environment and habitats as a result of hydrological changes from in-channel structures and modifications of the flood-plain. This could cause changes to the distribution of species across the site and/or of their supporting habitats or processes.	It is proposed that the structure be a clear-span bridge, ensuring no piers or abutments are located within the river channel, or any terrestrial habitat within the SAC. Design and implementation of any crossing will be undertaken in accordance with *Engineering in the water environment: good practice guide - River Crossings* (SEPA, 2010). Structure alignment will avoid areas of importance to the qualifying species of the SAC. The structure will be designed to allow otters safe passage along the river banks, and allow the continuation of the riparian corridor. Species protection plans must be prepared, approved and implemented prior to proposal approval.	The incorporation of a clear-span design, adherence to published guidelines and species protection plans would remove LSE on the SAC.
Hydrological changes IC2 i)	Direct change to the environment and habitats as a result of hydrological changes from in-channel structures and modifications of the flood-plain. This could cause changes to the distribution of species across the site and/or of their supporting habitats or processes.	It is proposed that the structure be a clear-span bridge, ensuring no piers or abutments are located within the river channel, or that require the characteristics of the floodplain to be modified. Structure alignment and design will avoid active watercourse areas such as channel migration zones and depositional areas, and minimise the potential for localised bed and bank erosion (scour) or deposition. Any SuDS required will be designed to avoid changing the hydrology of the system. Species protection plans must be prepared, approved and implemented prior to proposal approval.	The incorporation of a clear-span design and SuDS, and adherence to published guidelines and species protection plans would remove LSE on the SAC.

Effects Pathways and relevant RTS proposal	Reason for LSE	Mitigation	Residual Effect
Pollution IC2 i) IC2 vii)	Alterations to the vulnerability/resilience of species and their supporting processes within the site as a result of water pollution (including sediment) from surface runoff either during construction or operation. Dust from construction activities may also result in pollution problems.	It is proposed that the structure be a clear-span bridge, ensuring no piers or abutments are located within the river channel. All construction activities will take place under the constraints of SEPA PPGs to ensure that there is no contamination of the river. SuDS will be constructed to intercept, treat and release all road drainage and runoff, also ensuring no contamination of the river. Proposals and the levels of treatment required for any discharge will be discussed in liaison with SEPA and SNH. Space and design requirements will be considered in designs options to maximise distances between SuDS locations and the River Dee. All construction activities will be undertaken within the constraints of a Pollution Management Plan (including dust) and pollution incident response plan which will be agreed by all stakeholders including SNH and SEPA. All site compounds, fuel/chemical/oil stores, earth bunds and soil and general storage areas located and managed to prevent run-off and erosion. Species protection plans must be prepared, approved and implemented prior to proposal approval.	Avoidance of incidents and the prevention of pollution reaching the River Dee via the appropriate practices and adherence to species protection plans will remove LSE on the SAC.
Disturbance IC2 i)	Significant disturbance to qualifying species.	It is proposed that the structure to be a clear-span bridge, ensuring no piers or abutments are located within the river channel, reducing the potential for noise and vibration effects within the watercourse. All construction activities will be undertaken within the constraints of a Noise/Vibration Management Plan which will be agreed by all stakeholders including SNH and SEPA. This will include limitations to any in-channel works required which will take into account the Atlantic salmon migrating period. Species protection plans must be prepared, approved and implemented prior to proposal approval.	Undertaking all works and operations within the constraints of an agreed Noise/Vibration Management Plan and adherence to species protection plans will remove LSE on the SAC preventing adverse effects on site integrity.

7. In-combination Assessment

The in-combination assessment considers those policies and proposals for action which either result in either minor residual effects or likely significant effects in-combination to identify potential cumulative impacts. The assessment also includes consideration of potential effects to Natura 2000 sites from policies and proposals from other plans or projects.

As no minor residual effects or likely significant effects (after mitigation) of the Nestrans RTS could be identified, no in-combination assessment has been undertaken.

8. Summary

An assessment of the policies and proposals for action within the Nestrans RTS was undertaken for their potential to result in LSEs leading to adverse effects on the integrity of Natura 2000 sites. Forty classified Natura 2000 sites and one potential SPA were identified.

The majority of the RTS policies and proposals for action were screened out either because they were general policy statements or because the particular proposal did not identify any locations for development or detail of what that development might be.

This assessment did identify the potential for LSE on the River Dee SAC as a result of the construction and operation of the Access to Aberdeen from the south proposal (IC2 i)) and the River Dee Link proposal (IC2 vii)). However, the mitigation measures set out in Table 6.5 have been proposed to ensure that there will be no residual effects on the conservation objectives or the integrity of the River Dee SAC.

However, it is recommended that at each stage of the design process of the Access to Aberdeen from the south and River Dee Link proposals, a project level HRA should be undertaken. These project level HRAs will incorporate the mitigation measures proposed which will require to be re-evaluated and discussed with SNH to ensure that the proposed measures are appropriate. The project level HRAs should incorporate the findings of consultation and field surveys, where appropriate, to inform a detailed assessment and mitigation strategy. The identified mitigation will then be incorporated into the final detailed design of the proposal to ensure the integrity of the River Dee SAC is maintained in the long-term.

9. References

Aberdeen City Council (2015). Bridge of Dee Study - STAG Part 2: Methodology and Programme. Webpage http://www.aberdeencity.gov.uk/transport_streets/roads_pavements/transport_projects/roa_brigodee_study_stag_part02.asp [Accessed 17/09/2015]

David Tyldesley and Associates (2015). Habitats Regulations Appraisal of Plans, Guidance for Plan-making Bodies in Scotland. Version 3.0, January 2015.

Jacobs (2012). Bridge of Dee Study. STAG report Volume 1 of 4: Pre-appraisal. April 2012.

Jacobs (2014a). Bridge of Dee Study, STAG Report Volume 2 of 4: Part 1 Appraisal. May 2014.

Jacobs (2014b). A90/A96 Haudagain Improvement, DMRB Stage 2 Scheme Assessment Report, Part 2: Environmental Assessment.

Jacobs (in preparation). A90/A96 Haudagain Improvement, DMRB Stage 3 Environmental Statement.

Joint Nature Conservation Committee (2015a). SPA Description, Ladder Hills. Webpage http://jncc.defra.gov.uk/page-1935-theme=default [Accessed 19/03/2015]

Joint Nature Conservation Committee (2015b). SPA Description, Loch of Skene. Webpage http://jncc.defra.gov.uk/page-1911-theme=default [Accessed 14/04/2015]

Nestrans (2008). Nestrans Regional Transport Strategy /2021. October 2008. http://www.nestrans.org.uk/regional-transport-strategy-and-supporting-documents.html [Accessed March 2015]

Nestrans (2014a). Nestrans Regional Transport Strategy Refresh. January 2014. http://www.nestrans.org.uk/regional-transport-strategy-refresh.html [Accessed March 2015]

Nestrans (2014b). Nestrans Regional Transport Strategy Refresh, Strategic Environmental Assessment. http://www.nestrans.org.uk/regional-transport-strategy-refresh.html [Accessed March 2015]

Nestrans (2014c). Nestrans Regional Transport Strategy Refresh, Strategic Environmental Assessment, Post-Adoption Statement. June 2014. http://www.nestrans.org.uk/regional-transport-strategy-refresh.html [Accessed March 2015]

Nestrans (2015). Nestrans. Website, available at http://www.nestrans.org.uk/home.html [Accessed March 2015]

Scottish Environment Protection Agency (2010). Engineering in the water environment: good practice guide - river crossings. Second edition, November 2010.

Scottish Natural Heritage (2012). Ladder Hills Site of Special Scientific Interest. Site Management Statement. 2 February 2012.

Transport Scotland (2015a). A96 dualling Inverness to Aberdeen. Webpage http://www.transportscotland.gov.uk/project/a96-dualling-inverness-aberdeen [Accessed 16/03/2015]

Transport Scotland (2015b). Aberdeen Western Peripheral Route / Balmedie to Tipperty. Webpage http://www.transportscotland.gov.uk/project/aberdeen-western-peripheral-route-balmedie-tipperty [Accessed 16/03/2015]

Transport Scotland (2015c). A90/A96 Haudagain Improvement. Webpage http://www.transportscotland.gov.uk/project/a90a96-haudagain-improvement [Accessed 18/05/2015]

Appendix A. Scottish Natural Heritage Consultation Response

Scottish Natural Heritage
Dualchas Nàdair na h-Alba
All of nature for all of Scotland
Nàdar air fad airson Alba air fad

FAO Dr John Fowbert
Jacobs
95 Bothwell Street
Glasgow, Scotland
G2 7HX
United Kingdom

(john.fowbert@jacobs.com)

25 August 2015

Our ref: CDM137612

Dear John

Nestrans Regional Transport Strategy - Habitat Regulations Appraisal

Thank you for consulting SNH on the draft Habitats Regulations Appraisal (HRA) record for the Nestrans Regional Transport Strategy (2014), forwarded via the SEA Gateway on the 22 July 2015.

We do not agree that Likely Significant Effects (LSE) on the River Dee SAC (even with the mitigation proposed) can be ruled out for two of the schemes in this plan, namely:

- Access to Aberdeen from the South (IC2i); and
- River Dee Link proposal (IC2vii).

This is because the report also concludes that subsequent project design stages may identify that a clear-span structure outwith the SAC may not be technically feasible. In addition (in line with HRA guidance), we do not consider that the proposed mitigation (e.g SUDS schemes and Pollution Management Plans) is straightforward to apply. We therefore advise that an appropriate assessment is required of these two schemes (to the extent that information in the plan allows) and that the HRA record is amended accordingly.

We further advise, however, that with the proposed mitigation set out in Table 6.6, it can be concluded that the schemes should not adversely affect the integrity of the SAC.

We agree with the recommendation that at each stage of the design process a project level HRA should be undertaken and have previously advised that there should be an appropriate assessment to help inform the option selection process.

If you have any queries, please contact Sheena Lamont on 01463 725155.

Yours sincerely

Scottish Natural Heritage, Inverdee House, Baxter Street, Aberdeen, AB11 9QA
Tel 01224 266500 - Fax 01224 895958 - www.snh.gov.uk

A780264

Scottish Natural Heritage
Dualchas Nàdair na h-Alba
All of nature for all of Scotland
Nàdar air fad airson Alba air fad

FAO Dr John Fowbert
Jacobs
95 Bothwell Street
Glasgow, Scotland
G2 7HX
United Kingdom

(john.fowbert@jacobs.com)

15 October 2015

Our ref: GEN138528

Dear John

Bridge of Dee Study - Nestrans Regional Transport Strategy - Habitat Regulations Appraisal

Thank you for sending SNH the revised Habitats Regulations Appraisal (HRA) record for the Bridge of Dee Study (Nestrans Regional Transport Strategy, 2014) on the 17 September 2015.

We can advise that the revised draft document addresses the concerns raised by SNH in our letter dated the 25 August 2015 (ref: CDM137612).

We further advise that with the proposed mitigation set out in Table 6.6, it can be concluded that the schemes should not adversely affect the integrity of the SAC.

We agree with the recommendation that at each stage of the design process a project level HRA should be undertaken and, as previously advised, there should be an appropriate assessment to help inform the option selection process.

If you have any queries, please contact Sheena Lamont on 01463 725155.

Yours sincerely

Ivan Clark

Planning Team Manager
SNH Battleby

Scottish Natural Heritage, Inverdee House, Baxter Street, Aberdeen, AB11 9QA
Tel 01224 266500 - Fax 01224 895958 - www.snh.gov.uk

A780264

Appendix B. Nestrans Regional Transport Strategy

Table B.1 : External Communications Strategy proposals for action

External Connections Strategy	Adopted RTS Action from (2008-2021)	Revised Action in Refresh	Update	Comments / What has changed
EC1 Rail links and services	i) Reducing journey times to Edinburgh and Glasgow, and further south.	Amended to: "Reduce rail journey times to Edinburgh and Glasgow (and further south) and Inverness."	The journey times of one or two journeys have been reduced however on the whole they remain the same. The Scottish Government's Infrastructure Investment Plan and Scottish Transport Projects Review (STPR) commit to reducing journey times between Aberdeen and the central belt by 20 minutes. Network Rail has submitted a draft GRIP3 report to Transport Scotland which investigates a preferred option for Aberdeen to Inverness line improvements.	Inverness included in the reduced journey times.
	ii) Improved train capacity, comfort and reliability.	No change.	Additional services (and additional carriages) have been introduced to address the most severe overcrowding problems, as highlighted by Nestrans through surveys and significantly increasing patronage figures. Overcrowding issues do however remain on a number of services, particularly at peak times. Nestrans capital budget has also been used to fund Access for All improvements at stations across the north east.	This remains a relevant action.
	iii) Support for High Speed Rail connections to London, which benefit the north east.	No change.	The UK Government has committed to the delivery of High Speed Rail and has confirmed the route of the line from London to the West Midlands and Leeds. There are clear benefits of HSR to Edinburgh and Glasgow however realistically it will not extend north beyond the central belt due to distance and population density. It is therefore essential to ensure that the north east benefits from HSR in other ways and Nestrans is making the case that this be through securing our existing access to London airports, including Heathrow, based on the assumption that HSR to the central belt will reduce the pressure on London airports from reduced demand from the central belt. The Scottish Government has published 'Fast Track Scotland – Making the Case for High Speed Rail Connections in Scotland'.	This remains a relevant action.

External Connections Strategy	Adopted RTS Action from (2008-2021)	Revised Action in Refresh	Update	Comments / What has changed
EC2 Strategic roads	i) Overcoming constraints on the network that have a direct impact on travel to/from the north east, such as the A90 through Dundee.	Amended to: "Overcoming constraints on the network that have a direct impact on travel to / from the north east, such as the A90 through Dundee and dualling the A96 to Inverness."	A number of junctions on the A90 between Perth and Aberdeen have been grade separated, including junctions at Findon and Portlethen, to facilitate development and improve safety. There are however still a number of constraints on this route, including the stretch of road through Dundee. The STPR identified the need for a Dundee Northern Relief Road. The dualling of the A96 to Inverness is also identified in the Scottish Government's Infrastructure Investment Plan.	This remains a relevant action however it is proposed to amend it to include reference to the A96.
EC3 Inter-regional bus and coach travel	i) Support further development of inter-regional bus and coach travel between the north east and other Scottish towns and cities and further afield.	No change.	There has been an increase in the number of inter-regional coach trips and the launch of the Citylink Gold service to Glasgow has seen an increase in service and quality on this route. There are now 39 departures each day to points south of Dundee, principally Glasgow or Edinburgh, but six times a day to London. There are also two departures per week to Poland.	This remains a relevant action.
	ii) Explore possible links to park and ride sites.	No change.	Planning permission has been granted for the park and ride site on the A96 and the application for the A90(S) site has been submitted. Bus operators have been consulted in the design process for the new park and ride sites and discussions are ongoing on how best to serve them.	This remains a relevant action.
EC4 Connections by sea	i) Closer joint working through the North East Ports Forum.	Amended to: "Closer joint working through the North East Freight Forum."	This forum no longer exists and its role has been subsumed into the North East Freight Forum which meets on a regular basis. The launch of the Freight Forum has seen significant improvements in joint working in this sector and a Freight Action Plan has been produced and is being implemented.	Change to North East Freight Forum title in light of North East Freight Action Plan.
	ii) Improved access and facilities at ports and interchange with passenger ferries.	No change.	The first phase of the Torry Quay redevelopment has been completed with upstream quays replaced by 300m of deepwater berthing and creation of additional room in the River Dee. Deepening and resurfacing of Commercial Quay East has been completed. Point Law peninsula further developed with additional bulk facilities and a single point of	This remains a relevant action.

External Connections Strategy	Adopted RTS Action from (2008-2021)	Revised Action in Refresh	Update	Comments / What has changed
	iii) Development of new freight and passenger facilities.	Amended to: "Continue to enhance freight and passenger facilities at north east ports."	access created. The Port authority at Peterhead has completed £33.5M plans for new 650ft quay at the Smith Embankment and a new 328ft breakwater at the Albert Quay. It was opened on time and within budget in October 2010. A grant of £7.57M has been announced from the European Fisheries Fund to deepen part of Fraserburgh Harbour to give access to more boats and improve local facilities. Significant improvement in access between Aberdeen Harbour and the bus and rail stations has been achieved through the development of the new bus station and Union Square. There is however still scope for improvements to access and facilities at both Aberdeen and other harbours.	It is proposed that this action is amended to reflect recent improvements, but recognise that there are still opportunities to further improve both freight and passenger facilities at the region's ports.
	New Action	A new action is added to: iv) Continue dialogue with the Scottish Government and Northern Isles ferry service operator to ensure continuing services from Aberdeen.	A new contract for Northern Isles ferry services will operate from July 2012. Daily services from Aberdeen to Lerwick (with connections via Kirkwall).	New Action.
EC5 Connections by air	i) Support expansion of direct destinations from Aberdeen and frequency of popular services.	No change.	The number of destinations served from Aberdeen has risen from 46 in 2007 to 50 in 2012. September 2012 also saw the launch of a new route to London City. Although new routes have been added in recent years, this remains a relevant action and is key to the economic success of the region.	This remains a relevant action.
	ii) Support runway extension to facilitate wider range of destinations and more efficient, modern aircraft.	No change.	The runway extension at Aberdeen Airport was completed in September 2011 and added 124m to the runway. Consultation on the Airport Masterplan is currently underway and it is anticipated that additional runway extensions may be required in the period from 2020 to 2040. Planning approval already exists for a further 176m extension.	This remains a relevant action.
	iii) Ensure protection of slots for Aberdeen services at key hubs such as London Heathrow.	No change.	This is being actively pursued through a number of channels, including Nestrans response to the recent aviation consultation issue as well as our input into the case for High Speed Rail (see above). Nestrans, along with Hitrans, has also commissioned an evidence note to determine the importance of access to London from the north of Scotland.	This remains a relevant action.

Table B.2 : Internal Communications Strategy proposals for action

Internal Connections Strategy	Adopted RTS Action from (2008-2021)	Revised Action in Refresh	Update	Comments / What has changed
IC1 Rail connections	i) Increased frequency of services between Inverurie-Aberdeen-Stonehaven through Aberdeen Crossrail and improved services to Inverness.	Amended to: "Seek to secure an increased frequency of services between Inverurie-Aberdeen-Stonehaven and improved services to Inverness."	A new station was opened at Laurencekirk in 2009. The term 'Crossrail' is no longer used, with the preferred strategy to push for the delivery of the elements of Crossrail incrementally rather than as one large package. Discussions have been ongoing with Transport Scotland regarding enhanced Aberdeen-Inverness Sunday services. An additional service now stops at Stonehaven and Laurencekirk on a Saturday morning and at Laurencekirk at 2105 Mon-Sat. It is the intention to explore opportunities to extend trains on the Inverness-Aberdeen line through to Montrose to improve local services, however awaiting publication of the GRIP3 report for Aberdeen-Inverness improvements before investigating this opportunity.	This action remains relevant although it is proposed that it is amended as indicated.
	ii) Proposed new station at Kintore and further development of the rail system to be set out in the Rail Action Plan.	Amended to include the following text after existing action: ", including improvements to the accessibility of existing stations."	The Rail Action Plan has now been developed and is being delivered. There have been significant increases in rail patronage at north east stations including 115% increase at Dyce and 171% increase at Inverurie between 2004/05 and 2010/11. Kintore station is being pursued as a priority and is identified as necessary to address the cumulative impacts of new development through the Strategic Transport Fund. The recently announced Scottish Government's New Stations Fund is also a potential source of contributory funding. Improvements to access at stations are also being made with Dyce Station awarded 'Access for All' funding from the Scottish Government.	This remains a relevant action however now that Kintore station is being progressed, the next priorities for rail development in the region should be identified through the rail action plan. This action plan will be reviewed in the context of the RTS re-fresh. It is however proposed that this action be amended to include improvements at existing stations.
	New Action	iii) Investigate, in line with the principles of STAG, the potential for further stations in the context of upgrades to the existing rail lines and assessing future demand for local rail services.	Linked to the action above, it is proposed that a separate action be added to investigate the potential for further stations in the context of line upgrades, enabled by through running of trains across Aberdeen .	This remains a relevant action.

Internal Connections Strategy	Adopted RTS Action from (2008-2021)	Revised Action in Refresh	Update	Comments / What has changed
	New Action	iv) Investigate, in line with the principles of STAG, the feasibility, costs and benefits of new railway lines to expand rail provision in the North East in the longer term.	During the consultation process, there was a strong desire for the RTS to consider options for re-opening old railway lines. As this is a long term strategy, it is felt appropriate to include an action that looks into the feasibility, likely costs and benefits of new railway lines.	This remains a relevant action.
IC2 Road improvements	i) Strategic road capacity improvements – tackle constraints on the A90 Ellon to Peterhead, A96 west of Inverurie, Haudagain junction, Access to Aberdeen from the south[2], and at other junctions serving Aberdeenshire towns.	No change.	A number of improvements have been delivered in this area including Wellington Rd dualling between Charleston Interchange and Souterhead roundabout, College St dualling, Market St corridor improvements, A90 grade separation at Findon, Wapping St gyratory alignment improvement and segregated left turn lane at King George VI Bridge into West Tullos Rd. The Scottish Government have also announced their intention to dual the A96 in the long term as part of their Infrastructure Investment Plan; Balmedie-Tipperty dualling has been approved and a preferred option has been agreed and commitment given to improve the Haudagain junction once the AWPR is in place. A preferred option has also been identified for Inveramsay Bridge on the A96 and ground investigation works commenced.	The action should consider and identify which routes/constraints are priorities for resolution whilst keeping open the option to explore the feasibility of longer term projects. Paragraph 5.3 of NESTRANS SEA Post-adoption statement (June 2014) which states, "*A potential impact on the River Dee SAC from the RTS policy* "IC2 Road Improvements – addressing the cumulative impacts of development through a Strategic Transport Fund", *specifically an action for a River Dee link, was identified.*" This also applies to IC2 i) Access to Aberdeen from the south.

[2] In line with the current STAG assessments being undertaken (Jacobs, 2014b), Access to Aberdeen from the south is presumed to be the Bridge of Dee Study.

Internal Connections Strategy	Adopted RTS Action from (2008-2021)	Revised Action in Refresh	Update	Comments / What has changed
	ii) Strategic road safety improvements – alignment and junction improvements on A90 South. Overtaking, junction and alignment improvements on A90 north and A96. Route Action on A92, A93, A944, A947.	No change.	A number of strategic road safety improvements have been delivered including: • A947 route action; • A944 Mossat to Westhill safety barriers; • anti-skid, signs and lines on A92, A944, A981, B997, A93, A97, A950; • A920 Riverside Rd/South Rd, Ellon traffic signals; • interactive signs on A980 Raemoir and Riverside Drive, Aberdeen; • a new merge lane at the northern Laurencekirk junction; • puffin, toucan and zebra crossings at various locations; • Guild St pedestrian safety – footway widening measures; and • King Street lighting improvements.	The action should consider and identify which routes/areas are priorities for resolution. Specific reference should be made to key priorities such as Laurencekirk junctions.
	iii) Car share lanes – trialling priority lanes for cars with multiple occupancy.	No change.	A study has been undertaken to look at a High Occupancy Vehicle lane on Stonehaven Road on the A90. This study concluded that the introduction of such initiatives will need to wait until the AWPR has been constructed in order to generate significant benefits.	This remains a relevant action.
	iv) Prioritised maintenance for strategic routes, with particular benefits for public transport and sustainable modes.	No change.	Significant funding has been put towards strategic maintenance including at A92 Bervie Bridge, Queen Elizabeth Bridge refurbishment and resurfacing on A92, A93, A944, A947, A952, A97, A98, A956 Wellington Rd and A956 Ellon Rd.	This remains a relevant action.
	v) Support Local Authorities in bringing forward LTS projects that contribute to strategic objectives.	No change.	The objectives of both Councils' LTSs are in line with the RTS and the Nestrans delivery plan developed and approved in partnership with the two Councils.	This remains a relevant action.

Internal Connections Strategy	Adopted RTS Action from (2008-2021)	Revised Action in Refresh	Update	Comments / What has changed
	vi) The above actions build on the AWPR and dualling of A90 Balmedie-Tipperty which are being taken forward by Transport Scotland and are due to be completed in 2012.	Not an action in refresh, rather a comment in IC2. Text amended to say: "These build on the AWPR and dualling of A90 Balmedie-Tipperty which are being taken forward by Transport Scotland and are due to be completed in 2018."	Due to legal challenge, the timescales for delivery of the AWPR and associated projects, including Balmedie-Tipperty have been delayed. The AWPR case was heard in the Supreme Court in July 2012.	This remains a relevant action however it is brought up-to-date to reflect the current situation.

Internal Connections Strategy	Adopted RTS Action from (2008-2021)	Revised Action in Refresh	Update	Comments / What has changed
	New Action	vii) Strategic road improvements to mitigate the cumulative impact of development: • Parkway, Persley Bridge & Parkhill junction and capacity improvements; • Capacity improvements & upgrade AWPR Kingswells north junction; • Upgrade A944 junctions and safety/ limited capacity improvements on access to A93; • A956/A90 junction capacity improvements; and • River Dee link[3]. These improvements will be funded through the Strategic Transport Fund and in line with the SDPA supplementary planning guidance "Delivering Identified Projects through a Strategic Transport Fund" and will be designed with the needs of all road users in mind, including cyclists and pedestrians.	To facilitate the development of the Local Development Plans for Aberdeen City and Aberdeenshire, Nestrans and the SDPA commissioned a study to examine the cumulative impact on the strategic transport network of the scale of development proposals in the Structure Plan. It took into consideration the range of schemes already committed and assessed the additional impact of new development on the transport network. This study identified a number of areas where congestion is predicted to significantly increase and where intervention on the strategic transport network is required. A package of interventions has been identified to mitigate these impacts. These are: • Parkway, Persley Bridge & Parkhill junction and capacity improvements; • Capacity improvements & upgrade AWPR Kingswells north junction; • Upgrade A944 junctions and safety/limited capacity improvements on access to A93; • A956/A90 junction capacity improvements; and • River Dee link. These actions predominantly contribute to the economy objective of the RTS particularly making the movement of people and goods more efficient and reliable and improving connectivity. They also provide opportunities to improve safety for all road users, including pedestrians and cyclists and reduce the impact on air quality by improving the flow of traffic. A number of public transport interventions were also identified as part of the package of mitigation measures and these are dealt with under separate RTS headings below.	See 5.3 of NESTRANS SEA Post-adoption statement (June 2014) which states, "*A potential impact on the River Dee SAC from the RTS policy* "IC2 Road Improvements – addressing the cumulative impacts of development through a Strategic Transport Fund", *specifically an action for a River Dee link, was identified*."

[3] In line with the current STAG assessments being undertaken where Access to Aberdeen from the south is presumed to be the Bridge of Dee Study(Jacobs, 2014b), the River Dee Link is presumed to be the link between the A93 North Deeside Road and the Inchgarth Road.

Internal Connections Strategy	Adopted RTS Action from (2008-2021)	Revised Action in Refresh	Update	Comments / What has changed
IC3 Bus Improvements	i) Quality bus corridor improvements to services and facilities.	No change.	The Quality Partnership between Nestrans, the local authorities and bus operators was re-freshed and signed by all partners in 2010. This sets an updated set of standards and targets which are monitored on an annual basis. A Bus Punctuality Improvement Partnership (BPIP) has also been established and corridor action plans established for Buchan/King Street and A96 corridors. Other bus quality partnership improvements delivered include: • Bus Quality Corridor improvements on main radial routes – A947, A96, A93, A944, A90(S) and A90(N); • Airlink service between Dyce railway station and the Airport launched in December 2008 and supported until commercially viable, bus stops and shelters installed along the route and timetables published;. • Night time transport zone set up in the city centre; • Aberdeen Royal Infirmary (ARI) bus interchange improvements; • Direct Jet service launched Aug 2010 from Aberdeen bus station to the Airport;. • Bus Route Development Grant improvements on Stonehaven and Banchory to Aberdeen services and No 5 service within Aberdeen; and • Route infrastructure improvements to support the introduction of hybrid vehicles on Stagecoach service 59.	This remains a relevant action.
	ii) Develop a Bus Action Plan to improve quality and reliability of services and set out proposals for extending bus priority measures.	Amended to: " Review and continue to deliver the Bus Action Plan to improve quality and reliability of services and set out proposals for extending bus priority measures."	A Bus Action Plan has been produced and is currently being delivered. This will be re-freshed in line with the re-fresh of the RTS and a review of the standards and targets. Bus priority measures have been delivered through the city council's Scoot system at signal controlled junctions, a new bus lane on King Street/Castle Street linking to Union Street, extension of the bus lane on Holburn Street on approach to Bridge of Dee and designation of a bus lane on Foresterhill Road through the ARI site have all been delivered. Decriminalisation of bus lane enforcement has also been approved and will be implemented in Aberdeen in 2012.	Amended.
	iii) Explore Rapid Transit options through the Bus Action Plan.	Amended to: "Explore the options for rapid transit in the longer term through the Bus Action Plan."	This has not been progressed to date and it is questioned whether bus rapid transit is relevant for the North East within the timeframe of the RTS given the scale of capital investment that would be involved. It does however remain an option that could be explored in the longer term, taking account of technological advances if appropriate.	Amended.

Internal Connections Strategy	Adopted RTS Action from (2008-2021)	Revised Action in Refresh	Update	Comments / What has changed
	iv) Expand Park and Ride provision linked to the development of the AWPR.	This remains a relevant action, however amended to: "Expand Park and Ride provision linked to the development of the AWPR and explore the potential for mini-hubs that can be served by existing bus provision."	Plans for two new park and ride sites on the A90(S) and A96 are being progressed with the site on the A96 already having planning permission and the A90(S) site currently going through the planning process. Park and Ride facilities at Bridge of Don and Kingswells continue to operate, although there is an ongoing review being carried out by ACC as to the permanent location and any opportunity to increase the existing provisions. A park and ride site at Ellon has been established and use of this site continues to grow year on year.	Amended.
	v) Improve information provision including expanding real-time information systems across Aberdeen City and Shire.	No change.	Both Councils have published and are now delivering bus information strategies. Significant improvements have been made to at-stop timetable information across the region through the Quality Partnership. Progress on real time information has been made with Aberdeenshire currently developing a system and the launch of the real time bus weblink. Technological advances are now seeing the introduction of QR codes and Near Field communications technology. On bus audio announcement equipment is also being installed on the Jet services and Deeside corridor vehicles.	This remains a relevant action.
	New Action	vi) Strategic bus priority and bus frequency improvements as well as additional bus services linking new development sites to the city centre and key employment destinations to mitigate the cumulative impact of development."	Strategic bus priority and bus frequency improvement measures have been identified through the cumulative impact assessment as required to mitigate the cumulative impact of the scale and location of development identified in the Structure Plan. These actions contribute to the range of RTS objectives particularly linking residential and employment areas, accessibility, mode shift and environmental objectives.	New action: These improvements will be supported through the Strategic Transport Fund and in line with the SDPA supplementary planning guidance "Delivering Identified Projects through a Strategic Transport Fund".
IC4 Demand Responsive Transport	i) Support extension of 'Dial-a-Bus' and similar services to serve those unable to access conventional buses and to link with scheduled bus services.	No change.	Support has been provided to a number of Demand Responsive Transport (DRT) services including assistance with the purchase of vehicles for services in the City and for the Buchan Dial-a-Bus service in Aberdeenshire.	This remains a relevant action.
	ii) Support community transport providers and encourage development of services.	No change.		This remains a relevant action.

Internal Connections Strategy	Adopted RTS Action from (2008-2021)	Revised Action in Refresh	Update	Comments / What has changed
	iii) Seek to ensure that taxis are provided in an efficient and effective way, which meets the needs of customers.	No change.	Sections of bus lane that have been introduced are accessible to taxis and private hire vehicles and other road capacity improvements have benefited taxis and private hire. The City Council has reviewed taxi provision in the city centre and established night time taxi ranks.	This remains a relevant action.
IC5 Transport Interchange	i) Maximising interchange potential of Guild Street development and link with Union Street and support enhancement of other interchange points in Aberdeen.	This remains a relevant action however it is updated to reflect the current situation and all modes. Amended to: "Maximise the interchange potential of the bus and rail station developments, the links between Union Square and Union Street, facilities for pedestrians, cyclists and taxis and support enhancement of other interchange points in Aberdeen."	Significant improvements have been made through the bus station and Union Square development and some improvements made to footpaths and crossings linking to Union Street with the bus / rail station and Union Square development. ACC is currently developing a City Centre Transport Masterplan which will deal with issues of interchange and connectivity.	This remains a relevant action.
	ii) Support further improvements to interchange facilities in Aberdeenshire towns, in particular building on developments at Inverurie, Peterhead and Banchory.	This remains a relevant action. Change proposed to bring the action up-to-date and reflect the current situation: "Support further improvements to interchange facilities in Aberdeenshire towns catering for bus, rail (where appropriate), cycling, walking and taxis."	A new bus station has been developed at Peterhead and Aberdeenshire Council has carried out a significant amount of work in identifying and improving interchanges in Aberdeenshire towns. This has included installation of journey planning kiosks and information provision at designated interchange points. There has however been a lack of progress at Inverurie due to land ownership issues, particularly in respect of the railway.	This remains a relevant action.

Internal Connections Strategy	Adopted RTS Action from (2008-2021)	Revised Action in Refresh	Update	Comments / What has changed
	iii) Work with operators to develop integrated ticketing across services and operators in the north east.	This action to be amended to reflect the opportunities for smart ticketing, either through smartcards or other emerging technologies: "Work with operators to develop integrated and smart ticketing across services and operators in the north east."	This is being progressed through a ticketing task group. A Fares & Ticketing Strategy was approved by Nestrans and the two Councils in 2012. One of the key actions contained within the strategy is the development of an integrated ticket and longer term aspirations to introduce smart ticketing.	This remains a relevant action.
IC6 Walking and Cycling	i) Support investment in measures to increase safety and security of walking and in particular to facilitate interchange between different modes of transport.	No change.	Since the publication of the RTS, Core Path Plans have been adopted in both Aberdeen City and Aberdeenshire and Nestrans has contributed funding towards the development and improvement of a number of these paths. This has included the funding of the West Cults Bridge on the Deeside Way which was opened in 2010.	This remains a relevant action.
	ii) Urban realm improvements to improve the pedestrian environment.	Changed to emphasise the strategic importance of pedestrianisation in City and town centres: "Urban realm improvements to improve the pedestrian environment, including the pedestrianisation of Union Street."	Puffin, toucan and zebra crossings have been created at a number of locations. Improvements have also been made to widen the pedestrian crossing enclosure on Guild St and to widen the pavement on Guild Street to cater for the increased pedestrian traffic accessing Union Square.	This remains a relevant action.
	iii) Support the extension of low speed zones, particularly where it improves the environment for pedestrians and cyclists and increases safety for children.	Changed to update and emphasise continuation.	Residential low-speed zones have been implemented in many parts of Aberdeen and Aberdeenshire, and ACC has introduced one of the most extensive 20mph zones in the country, covering the City Centre. Time restricted 20mph zones have also been created around every school in the region.	This remains a relevant action.

Internal Connections Strategy	Adopted RTS Action from (2008-2021)	Revised Action in Refresh	Update	Comments / What has changed
	iv) Continue development of cycle routes on key routes within Aberdeenshire, into Aberdeen and on routes through the City.	This remains a relevant action but strengthened on the issue of creating a network of routes and is amended to: "Continued development of a connected network of strategic cycle routes on key routes within Aberdeenshire, across the boundary into Aberdeen and on routes through the City to work towards the Cycling Action Plan for Scotland 10% vision for cycling and lock in the benefits of other infrastructure improvements, including the AWPR."	Significant work has been carried out to improve links for cyclists, including: • Construction of the Westhill-Kingswells-Aberdeen cycle route; • Kingswells – Bucksburn path upgrade; • Peterhead cycle demonstration town – various sections of cycleway; • Fraserburgh cycle network improvements; • Banff and MacDuff cycle network improvements; • Riverside Drive cycle route, Aberdeen; • West Cults Bridge on the Deeside Way; • NCN1 Donside Path upgrade from Seaton Park through Donside Paper Mills site; and • A96 Inverurie-Kintore-Blackburn-Aberdeen cycleway. Many of these schemes also have significant benefits for pedestrians.	This remains a relevant action.
	New Action	v) Ensure that all new developments and transport infrastructure improvements take consideration of and make provisions for pedestrians and cyclists as an integral part of the design process.	During consultation on the Main Issues Report a number of comments were raised in relation to cycling and the need to enhance and improve cycle infrastructure in order to work towards achieving the 10% target set by the Scottish Government. This action has therefore been added to ensure the needs of cyclists and pedestrians are considered in new developments.	New action.
IC7 Airport Surface Connections	i) Encourage enhanced bus services to Aberdeen Airport to be detailed in the Bus Action Plan and Delivery Plan.	This action be amended to cover enhanced access to the airport by all modes of transport. Amended to: "Work with Aberdeen Airport in developing and monitoring a Surface Access Strategy to ensure high quality links to the airport by all modes."	The launch of the Stagecoach Jet 727 service from Aberdeen bus station direct to the airport has achieved a significant improvement in public transport links to the airport. This combined with the service 80 shuttle bus service between Dyce station and the airport and the section of bus lane from the airport to Dyce Drive has significantly enhanced public transport accessibility. Access to the airport should be encouraged by all modes and Nestrans has part funded the installation of a cycle shelter and racks at the airport.	Amended.

Internal Connections Strategy	Adopted RTS Action from (2008-2021)	Revised Action in Refresh	Update	Comments / What has changed
	ii) Support a shuttle bus between Dyce station and the airport terminal.	Recognising the importance of Dyce as an international gateway it is proposed that this action be amended to: "Work with partners to develop links to the airport including the upgrade of Dyce railway station and improved access for public transport."	The service 80 Dyce shuttle bus was introduced in 2008 and initially subsidised by Nestrans and BAA. It is now operated by Stagecoach and subsidised by Nestrans in the hope that it can move towards being a commercial service in the near future. Further plans are being developed to improve facilities for buses at Dyce Station.	Amended.
	iii) In the longer term, explore the potential for Bus Rapid Transit or enhanced rail services to the airport, providing faster, more reliable journey times.	Amended to: "Support high quality transport links to the airport using innovative and technological advances where appropriate."	No progress has been made on this action to date. Bus rapid transit may be explored in the longer term however in terms of access to the airport it may be better to widen this action out to high quality transport links in general.	Amended.
IC8 Port Surface Connections	i) Support measures to improve access to port facilities.	No change.	Nestrans and Aberdeenshire Council are partners in a European InterReg project GreCor, looking to ensure good access between ports and their hinterlands.	This remains a relevant action.
	ii) Facilitate improved interchange between Aberdeen ferry terminal and bus and rail stations.	No change.	Significant improvements have been made for pedestrians accessing the ferry terminal from the bus and rail stations through the development of Union Square, however this remains a relevant action as Market Street still presents a significant barrier to smooth interchange and improvements to other aspects of interchange such as information provision and ticketing options could be made.	This remains a relevant action.
IC9 Freight	i) Support the development of modern intermodal freight terminals to provide future capacity for rail freight expansion.	"Retain and develop modern intermodal freight terminals to serve the region and tackle the barriers to mode shift through the Freight Action Plan."	A Freight Action Plan has been developed and is being implemented and a Freight Forum established to enable communication between industry and public bodies. A Freight Action Plan 2 is currently being developed. Rail freight gauge enhancements, Elgin to Mossend was completed in 2006 and rail freight facilities have opened at Raiths and Craiginches.	Update action to reflect current position and the Freight Action Plan.

Internal Connections Strategy	Adopted RTS Action from (2008-2021)	Revised Action in Refresh	Update	Comments / What has changed
	ii) Investigate potential for measures to provide more reliable journey times for HGVs and identify a trial route for implementation of priority measures.	No change.	The Freight Action Plan sets out a number of actions in this area and this is currently being reviewed. Freight maps have been produced for Aberdeen City and Aberdeenshire and signal alterations on Wellington Road have aided southbound HGV progression.	This remains a relevant action.
IC10 Powered two-wheelers	i) Support measures to improve safety of motorcycles and other powered two-wheelers and provide appropriate parking facilities.	No change.	Local authority and emergency service partners have conducted a high profile motorcycle safety scheme, Operation Zenith aimed at reducing powered two-wheeler casualties.	This remains a relevant action.

Table B.3 : Strategic Policy Framework proposals for action

Strategic Policy Framework	Adopted RTS Action from (2008-2021)	Revised Action in Refresh	Update	Comments / What has changed
TB1 Promoting travel planning and travel awareness	i) Implementation and future development of Nestrans' Travel Planning Strategy.	This remains a relevant action although it is recommended that the strategy be updated in line with a refresh of the other action plans. This refresh should remove the reference to TMOs and insert a statement that Nestrans will facilitate and encourage businesses to work together on area-wide travel plans.	A Travel Plan Strategy was developed in 2009 and significant effort has been focused on developing the Getabout brand and supporting the development of travel plans through the purchase of a Travel Plan Builder software, which is available to organisations across the north east. The RTS makes reference to the Dyce TMO which no longer exists and to the further development of TMOs generally. Rather than pursuing this model given that the Dyce TMO no longer exists, it is suggested that this be reworded to encouraging businesses to work cooperatively for common benefit.	This remains a relevant action with associated updates.
	ii) Continue to provide support through the Sustainable Travel Grants Scheme.	No change.	The Sustainable Travel Grant Scheme has provided a fund of £25,000 per year under which organisations and partners can bid for a 50% contribution up to £10,000 for projects that support travel by sustainable modes. Funding has been provided to a range of organisations including Grampian Police, NHS and private sector companies.	This remains a relevant action.
	iii) Encourage increased take-up of car-sharing.	Amended to: "Encourage increased take-up of car-sharing and car club schemes."	The number of participants in the Nestrans carshare scheme has increased significantly from 899 people in 2008 to 2,415 in 2012, saving over 4million miles in 2012. The launch of the Common Wheels Car Club in Aberdeen City and Laurencekirk in 2012 has also proven successful and aims to reduce the need for car ownership.	This remains a relevant action however it is proposed that it is updated to reflect the CarShare scheme.
	New Action	iv) Continue to promote and strengthen the Getabout brand.	With the establishment of the Getabout partnership and brand, it is felt appropriate to add in an action relating to the continued development and promotion of this brand through a wide range of events and activities to promote sustainable modes of transport.	New action.

Strategic Policy Framework	Adopted RTS Action from (2008-2021)	Revised Action in Refresh	Update	Comments / What has changed
TB2 Promoting active travel	i) Encourage more people to walk and cycle more often.	Amended to: "Develop an active travel action plan with the aim of encouraging more people to walk and cycle more often".	A range of bikes have been purchased for use at local events to encourage cycling in schools, communities and organisations. This reduces the cost of bringing commercial roadshows to the region and allows priority use by partners with rental by others. The monitoring report shows increases in the number of children cycling to school, the number of people walking and cycling to work and the number of cyclists on key routes. The Cycling Action Plan for Scotland has set a target of 10% of journeys to be undertaken by bicycle by 2020. This is a significant increase on current levels and consideration should be given to strengthening this action to achieve this target. Cycling and walking are the two key modes for which there is currently no detailed action plan within the RTS. To bring this in line with bus, rail and freight and to emphasise the importance of active travel modes, it is proposed that an active travel action plan be developed in partnership with the two councils and focuses on delivering improvements towards the national target for cycling.	Amended relevant action. The active travel action plan should include infrastructure measures in line with the actions contained within IC6 as part of a package of measures to support increases in cycling and walking.
	ii) Work with NHS Grampian and Community Planning Partnerships to promote the benefits of active travel and achieve objectives for a healthier population.	Amended to: "Work with NHS Grampian and Community Planning Partnerships to deliver the Health and Transport Action Plan and achieve objectives for a healthier population."	A Health & Transport Action Plan has been developed and an HTAP co-ordinator appointed. The delivery of this action plan is being progressed by a Steering Group with sub-groups for the three delivery themes – Promoting Active Travel, Improving Access to Healthcare and Transport & Public Health. It is proposed that this action is amended to reflect the wider aims of the Health and Transport Action Plan and is focussed more on improving the health of the population rather than active travel alone.	Amended relevant action.
TB3 Improving safety	i) Work with Councils, Emergency Services and others to promote road safety as part of a comprehensive approach covering Education, Engineering, Enforcement and Encouragement measures.	No change although the formation of new national forces for Police and Fire and Rescue may require a new approach to this area of work.	The North East Scotland Road Casualty Reduction Strategy was published in 2009 and was developed in partnership by Aberdeenshire Council, Aberdeen City Council, Moray Council, Grampian Fire & Rescue Service, Grampian Police, Transport Scotland and Nestrans.	This remains a relevant action.

Strategic Policy Framework	Adopted RTS Action from (2008-2021)	Revised Action in Refresh	Update	Comments / What has changed
	ii) Improve security for users of public transport services and interchanges.	No change.	Significant improvements have been made to safety and security at the bus/rail interchange in Aberdeen through the development of the bus station and Union Square. Peterhead bus station development has improved security and many buses have onboard security cameras. Seven of the region's eight railway stations have CCTV and customer help points. Passenger safety and security is a key consideration in all interchange improvements. Improvements to taxi rank provision during the day and also at night in the city centre, including taxi marshalls at night have improved security for users.	This remains a relevant action.
IE1 Changing choices through incentives and partnerships	i) Work with operators to identify possible fare incentives to encourage increased bus use, particularly where this enables access to employment or training.	No change.	Fares & ticketing is a key element of the Bus Action Plan and a draft fares and ticketing strategy has recently been approved by Nestrans and the two Councils. Nestrans has also lobbied the Scottish Government in relation to changes to the concessionary fares scheme for young people as a result of feedback through community engagement.	This remains a relevant action.
	ii) Through the LABOF continue to develop the Quality Partnership for Public Transport and consider introducing Punctuality Improvement Partnerships.	It is that this action is amended to: "Through the Local Authorities / Bus Operator Forum (LABOF) continue to develop the Quality Partnership for Public Transport and the Bus Punctuality Improvement Partnership to achieve improvements in bus provision and increased levels of bus use."	The quality partnership for public transport continues to be monitored and reviewed and was refreshed in 2010. The LABOF partners meet on a four weekly basis to discuss all elements of the agreement and delivery of the bus action plan. A Bus Punctuality Improvement Partnership was also launched in 2010 and action plans developed for the Buchan / King Street and A96 corridors. Monitoring of this continues on an annual basis.	Amended relevant action.

Strategic Policy Framework	Adopted RTS Action from (2008-2021)	Revised Action in Refresh	Update	Comments / What has changed
	iii) Support measures which encourage uptake of alternative fuels, particularly by public transport providers, to build on the north east's role as an energy hub.	It is proposed that this action be moved under a new carbon reduction heading (see CR1 below).	Given the adoption of the Climate Change (Scotland) Act 2009, it is felt that there should be greater emphasis on alternative fuels for private cars as well as public transport.	Action moved to CR1.
IE2 Using enforcement	i) Support enforcement of vehicle emissions standards to improve air quality in Aberdeen City Centre and towns across the north east.	No change.	Air Quality Management Areas have been established for Aberdeen City Centre and key strategic routes and an Action Plan developed to deliver improvements. Nestrans and ACC are involved in Interreg IV project –CARE North which is looking at creating a Low Emissions Zone (LEZ) in the City Centre. This study has proposed a detailed assessment of a bus or HGV focussed LEZ.	This remains a relevant action.
	ii) Support measures to enforce speed limits to improve road safety and reduce carbon emissions.	No change.	The local authorities and Grampian Police have formed a camera partnership, Nescamp to improve road safety through enforcement of speed restrictions.	This remains a relevant action.
	iii) Promote the establishment of a Casualty Reductions Partnership to support NESCAMP's activities and support the trial of average speed cameras.	Amend action to emphasise the prospect for joint working towards a shared vision of casualty reduction and cooperation among agencies towards achieving a safer transport system. Links to TB3i).	Although average speed cameras have been used effectively elsewhere in Scotland, they have not yet been used by Nescamp. The Casualty Reduction Strategy considered the benefits of forming a Casualty Reduction Partnership, but this has not been progressed.	Amended relevant action.
	New Action	iv) Support measures to enforce the operation of bus lanes to ensure the efficient movement of buses and taxis.	The Scottish Government have approved the decriminalisation of bus lane enforcement in Aberdeen, Edinburgh and Glasgow. Aberdeen City Council is in the process of implementing this new provision which it is anticipated will be in place by the end of 2012. Enforcement of bus lanes will be a key tool in facilitating the efficient movement of buses and taxis and in making bus travel a more attractive option.	New action.

Strategic Policy Framework	Adopted RTS Action from (2008-2021)	Revised Action in Refresh	Update	Comments / What has changed
IE3 Parking	i) Develop a Regional Parking Strategy to ensure a coherent approach to parking controls and standards across the north east.	Action updated to focus on the delivery of the regional parking strategy. Ensure a coherent approach to parking controls and standards across the north east through the delivery of the Regional Parking Strategy.	A Regional Parking Strategy has been developed. The role of the regional strategy is to set the policy framework under which actions can be delivered at a local level to meet the objectives of the parking strategy and those of the LTSs and RTS.	Updated relevant action.
	ii) Support enforcement of parking restrictions, particularly where these exist to support strategic traffic movements, bus / pedestrian priority and road safety.	No change.	Resulting from the decriminalisation of bus lane enforcement the City Council is investing in a network of bus lane enforcement cameras. Meetings have also been held with Grampian Police and the City Wardens team to discuss traffic management in the run up to Christmas to try and increase enforcement of parking restrictions and yellow box junctions as these cause significant problems.	This remains a relevant action.
	iii) Investigate the potential for parking incentives to encourage use of small or multi-occupancy vehicles.	No change.	This remains a relevant action and is currently being explored by the City Council as well as incentives for low emissions vehicles.	This remains a relevant action.
CR1 Carbon reduction & Air Quality	i) Support measures which encourage uptake of alternative fuels, particularly by public transport providers, to build on the north east's role as an energy hub.	Amended to: "Support measures which encourage uptake of alternative fuels for public transport, private and public sector vehicles, to build on the north east's role as an energy hub and work towards the decarbonisation of transport and improvements in air quality."	This action has been moved from the heading 'changing choices through incentives and partnerships' to a new carbon reduction & air quality heading in order to give this topic more emphasis in the re-freshed strategy. The Scottish Government's Green Bus Fund has seen new hybrid vehicles introduced on Stagecoach's service 59 in 2012 and a fund for Community Planning Partnerships has seen the introduction of electric vehicles for a joint post service between the public sector agencies. Hyundai have recently loaned Aberdeen Commonwheels car club two of its fuel cell vehicles ahead of the 2012 All Energy Conference and funding from the Scottish Government and Scottish Enterprise and Aberdeen City Council will see the introduction of a fleet of 10 hydrogen buses by 2014.	Amended relevant action.

Strategic Policy Framework	Adopted RTS Action from (2008-2021)	Revised Action in Refresh	Update	Comments / What has changed
	New Action	ii) Support the development and trial of technological advances, such as hydrogen fuel and electric vehicles that will reduce carbon emissions from the transport network.	Significant advances have and are being made in alternative fuel technologies such as hydrogen fuel, hybrid and fully electric vehicles with the introduction of the first hybrid buses in the North East in July 2012 on Stagecoach service 59 and the use of electric vans on a shared public sector mail run between Inverurie, Aberdeen and Peterhead. The RTS should support the development and trial of alternative fuels in order to increase their uptake.	New action. Action moved from IE1
	New Action	iii) Support demand management measures, including the re-allocation of road space to public transport, cyclists and pedestrians in order to lock in the benefits of other schemes and where it can be demonstrated that this will help the longer term efficient movement of traffic.	e Climate Change Delivery Plan identifies a number of transport measures that will contribute to the delivery of climate change targets, including demand management measures. The Locking in the Benefits Study looked at the opportunities to maximise the benefits of the AWPR for other modes and identifies a number of pedestrian, cycling and public transport improvements that would capitalise on the benefits achieved through the AWPR.	New action.
E1 Engagement	New Action	i) Take an active and inclusive approach to engagement and consultation with communities, relevant sectors of the community and interest groups and stakeholders.	Nestrans is now a formal Community Planning partner in Aberdeen City and Aberdeenshire and takes an active role in the Community Planning Partnerships with responsibilities for community engagement. The North East Transport Consultative Forum (NETCF) continues to operate and is used to inform and consult stakeholders on regional transport issues.	New action.

Appendix C. Assessment Matrices

Information on sites, qualifying features, condition and conservation objectives is taken from SNH Sitelink (http://gateway.snh.gov.uk/sitelink/). Additional information is taken from JNCC (UK Protected Sites, http://jncc.defra.gov.uk/default.aspx?page=4).

Natura 2000 Site:	**#1 Ballochbuie SAC (UK0030030, 8194) Area = 1881.73**	
Features	**Condition**	**Conservation Objectives**
Qualifying Habitats		
• Blanket bog* • Bog woodland* • Caledonian forest * • Dry heaths • Plants in crevices on acid rocks • Plants in crevices on base-rich rocks • Wet heathland with cross-leaved heath * priority species	• Unfavourable No change • Unfavourable No change • Unfavourable No change • Unfavourable No change • Favourable Maintained • Unfavourable No change • Favourable Maintained	To avoid deterioration of the qualifying habitats 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; and To ensure for the qualifying habitats that the following are maintained in the long term: • Extent of the habitat on site • Distribution of the habitat within site • Structure and function of the habitat • Processes supporting the habitat • Distribution of typical species of the habitat • Viability of typical species as components of the habitat • No significant disturbance of typical species of the habitat

Natura 2000 Site:	#1 Ballochbuie SAC (UK0030030, 8194) Area = 1881.73	
Qualifying Species		
• Otter	• Favourable Maintained	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 and the site makes an appropriate contribution to achieving favourable conservation status for each of the qualifying features; and To ensure for the qualifying species that the following are maintained in the long term: • Population of the species as a viable component of the site • Distribution of the species within site • Distribution and extent of habitats supporting the species • Structure, function and supporting processes of habitats supporting the species • No significant disturbance of the species
Pressures and vulnerability (information taken from JNCC Natura 2000 data form): The erection of fencing and deer management has encouraged regeneration of the forest. Under a proposed forestry management plan, consideration is being given to the removal of fences whilst maintaining forest regeneration. In the meantime, the fencing has been marked to reduce any impact on capercaillie and other birds. Consideration is being given to levels of muirburn on part of the site. In the vicinity of the Lion's Face, woodland regeneration is being managed through deer and rabbit control rather than additional fencing. A large part of the site is subject to a memorandum of understanding, the co-signatories of which are Balmoral Estate, Scottish Natural Heritage, the Forestry Authority and the Deer Commission for Scotland.		
Commentary: Ballochbuie SAC is coincident with Ballochbuie SPA.		
RTS Interventions: No RTS interventions could be identified where a likelihood of significant effects to the Natura 2000 site could be detected.		

Natura 2000 Site:	#2 Buchan Ness to Collieston SAC (UK0030101, 8214) Area = 207.52	
Features	**Condition**	**Conservation Objectives**
Qualifying Habitats		
• Vegetated sea cliffs	• Favourable Maintained	To avoid deterioration of the qualifying habitats 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; and To ensure for the qualifying habitats that the following are maintained in the long term: • Extent of the habitat on site • Distribution of the habitat within site • Structure and function of the habitat • Processes supporting the habitat • Distribution of typical species of the habitat • Viability of typical species as components of the habitat • No significant disturbance of typical species of the habitat
Qualifying Species		
n/a	n/a	n/a
Pressures and vulnerability (information taken from JNCC Natura 2000 data form): Parts of the site are managed for grazing; others have not been grazed for some time. The varied vegetation would be vulnerable to changes in the management of these cliff-top grasslands. A coastal path runs along the cliff-top and is in part well used by walkers and naturalists. Parts of the site are also used by climbers. Current levels of recreational activity are compatible with maintenance of the cliff vegetation.		
Commentary: The SAC is coincident with the Collieston to Whinnyfold Coast SSSI and Bullers of Buchan Coast SSSI.		
RTS Interventions: No RTS interventions could be identified where a likelihood of significant effects to a Natura 2000 site could be detected.		

Natura 2000 Site:	#3 Caenlochan SAC (UK0012821, 8216) Area = 5204.16	
Features	**Condition**	**Conservation Objectives**
Qualifying Habitats		
• Acidic scree • Alpine and subalpine heaths • Base-rich fens • Base-rich scree • Blanket bog • Dry heaths • Grasslands on soils rich in heavy metals • High-altitude plant communities associated with areas of water seepage • Montane acid grasslands • Mountain willow scrub • Plants in crevices on acid rocks • Plants in crevices on base-rich rocks • Species-rich grassland with mat-grass in upland areas • Tall herb communities	• Favourable Maintained • Unfavourable No change • Unfavourable No change • Favourable Maintained • Unfavourable No change • Unfavourable No change • Favourable Maintained • Unfavourable No change • Unfavourable No change • Unfavourable No change • Favourable Maintained • Favourable Maintained • Unfavourable No change • Favourable Maintained	To avoid deterioration of the qualifying habitats 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; and To ensure for the qualifying habitats that the following are maintained in the long term: • Extent of the habitat on site • Distribution of the habitat within site • Structure and function of the habitat • Processes supporting the habitat • Distribution of typical species of the habitat • Viability of typical species as components of the habitat • No significant disturbance of typical species of the habitat
Qualifying Species		
n/a	n/a	n/a
Pressures and vulnerability (information taken from JNCC Natura 2000 data form): The site is used for sport shooting of red deer and grouse, sheep farming, skiing and walking. Part of the site is managed under a Nature Reserve Agreement with SNH and a management plan. The Deer Commission for Scotland and SNH, along with the East Grampian Deer Management Group, are actively considering developing a deer management plan for part of the area. Recreational use is monitored by the Angus Glens Ranger Service.		
Commentary: The Caenlochan and Garbh Choire SSSIs are coincident with the Caenlochan SAC.		
RTS Interventions: No RTS interventions could be identified where a likelihood of significant effects to the Natura 2000 site could be detected.		

Natura 2000 Site:	#4 Cairngorms SAC (UK0016412, 8217) Area = 57685.02 ha	
Features	**Condition**	**Conservation Objectives**
Qualifying Habitats		
• Acid peat-stained lakes and ponds • Acidic scree • Alpine and subalpine heaths • Blanket bog • Bog woodland • Caledonian forest • Clear-water lakes or lochs with aquatic vegetation and poor to moderate nutrient levels • Dry grasslands and scrublands on chalk or limestone • Dry heaths • Hard-water springs depositing lime • High-altitude plant communities associated with areas of water seepage • Juniper on heaths or calcareous grasslands • Montane acid grasslands • Mountain willow scrub • Plants in crevices on acid rocks • Plants in crevices on base-rich rocks • Species-rich grassland with mat-grass in upland areas • Tall herb communities • Very wet mires often identified by an unstable 'quaking' surface • Wet heathland with cross-leaved heath	• Favourable Maintained • Favourable Maintained • Unfavourable No change • Unfavourable No change • Favourable Maintained • Unfavourable Declining • Favourable Maintained • Unfavourable No change • Unfavourable No change • Favourable Maintained • Unfavourable No change • Favourable Maintained • Unfavourable Recovering • Unfavourable No change • Favourable Maintained • Unfavourable No change • Unfavourable No change • Favourable Maintained • Favourable Maintained • Unfavourable No change	To avoid deterioration of the qualifying habitats 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; and To ensure for the qualifying habitats that the following are maintained in the long term: • Extent of the habitat on site • Distribution of the habitat within site • Structure and function of the habitat • Processes supporting the habitat • Distribution of typical species of the habitat • Viability of typical species as components of the habitat • No significant disturbance of typical species of the habitat

Natura 2000 Site:	#4 Cairngorms SAC (UK0016412, 8217) Area = 57685.02 ha	
Qualifying Species		
• Green shield-moss (*Buxbaumia viridis*) • Otter (*Lutra lutra*)	• Favourable Maintained • Favourable Maintained	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 and the site makes an appropriate contribution to achieving favourable conservation status for each of the qualifying features; and To ensure for the qualifying species that the following are maintained in the long term: • Population of the species as a viable component of the site • Distribution of the species within site • Distribution and extent of habitats supporting the species • Structure, function and supporting processes of habitats supporting the species • No significant disturbance of the species
Pressures and vulnerability (information taken from JNCC Natura 2000 data form): This very extensive site contains three National Nature Reserves, covering both montane and woodland habitats, and falls within a National Park. Non-governmental conservation bodies own large areas of land within the site and manage them for nature conservation. Forest Enterprise own small parts of the site and have felled non-native trees on and adjacent to some of these areas. Most of the rest of the site is managed primarily for game or forestry. Red deer numbers have been reduced over parts of the site to levels that will allow recovery of Caledonian forest and associated habitats. The management plan will address the issues affecting the management of this multi-interest site and will include a combination of strategies for visitor management.		
Commentary:		
RTS Interventions: No RTS interventions could be identified where a likelihood of significant effects to the Natura 2000 site could be detected.		

Natura 2000 Site:	#5 Coyles of Muick SAC (UK0030122, 8231) Area = 135.16 ha	
Features	**Condition**	**Conservation Objectives**
Qualifying Habitats		
• Grasslands on soils rich in heavy metals	• Favourable Maintained	To avoid deterioration of the qualifying habitats (listed below) 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; and To ensure for the qualifying habitats that the following are maintained in the long term: • Extent of the habitat on site • Distribution of the habitat within site • Structure and function of the habitat • Processes supporting the habitat • Distribution of typical species of the habitat • Viability of typical species as components of the habitat • No significant disturbance of typical species of the habitat
Qualifying Species		
n/a	n/a	n/a
Pressures and vulnerability (information taken from JNCC Natura 2000 data form): Muirburn is practised towards the northern and western margins of the site and at current levels is compatible with maintenance of the site's interests. Colonisation by Scots pine and the establishment of scrub associated with the adjacent forest is being monitored by SNH and any necessary management options will be considered as appropriate.		
Commentary: The majority of the site is covered by the Coyles of Muick SSSI.		
RTS Interventions: No RTS interventions could be identified where a likelihood of significant effects to the Natura 2000 site could be detected.		

Natura 2000 Site:	#6 Dinnet Oakwood SAC (UK0030134, 8240) Area = 19.73 ha	
Features	**Condition**	**Conservation Objectives**
Qualifying Habitats		
• Western acidic oak woodland	• Favourable Maintained	To avoid deterioration of the qualifying habitats 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; and To ensure for the qualifying habitats that the following are maintained in the long term: • Extent of the habitat on site • Distribution of the habitat within site • Structure and function of the habitat • Processes supporting the habitat • Distribution of typical species of the habitat • Viability of typical species as components of the habitat • No significant disturbance of typical species of the habitat
Qualifying Species		
n/a	n/a	n/a
Pressures and vulnerability (information taken from JNCC Natura 2000 data form): Since the wood was declared a National Nature Reserve in 1966, nature conservation has been the primary objective of management. Non-native plantings and invasive shrubs (Rhododendron) have been successfully cleared. There is general public access to the site but the current low levels of use are not thought to be damaging to the woodland.		
Commentary: The site is coincident with the Dinnet Oakwood SSSI and part is designated a NNR (Dinnet Oakwood NNR).		
RTS Interventions: No RTS interventions could be identified where a likelihood of significant effects to the Natura 2000 site could be detected.		

Natura 2000 Site:	#7 Garron Point SAC (UK0030356, 8671) Area = 15.58 ha	
Features	**Condition**	**Conservation Objectives**
Qualifying Habitats		
n/a	n/a	n/a
Qualifying Species		
• Narrow-mouthed whorl snail (*Vertigo angustior*)	• Favourable Maintained	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 and the site makes an appropriate contribution to achieving favourable conservation status for each of the qualifying features; and To ensure for the qualifying species that the following are maintained in the long term: • Population of the species as a viable component of the site • Distribution of the species within site • Distribution and extent of habitats supporting the species • Structure, function and supporting processes of habitats supporting the species • No significant disturbance of the species
Pressures and vulnerability (information taken from JNCC Natura 2000 data form): The site is a popular destination for geologists visiting the Highland Boundary Fault and is also used by the local community for informal recreation, particularly at Skatie Shore. Disturbance (including burning of driftwood and disposable barbecues) mainly takes place away from the snail colonies, which could be vulnerable to changes in the pattern of use by the public. It may be appropriate to erect additional signage requesting visitors to avoid these activities in sensitive areas. The colonies might also be vulnerable to changes in patterns of grazing, currently limited to rabbits and roe deer. The introduction of livestock could have benefits for the site, providing this does not lead to erosion. If stock are introduced, management prescriptions will be put in place to ensure that erosion does not take place. Parts of the site might be vulnerable to certain forms of marine oil pollution, where oil is blown on shore. In the longer term, parts of the site are vulnerable to rising sea level.		
Commentary: The site lies within the Garron Point SSSI.		
RTS Interventions: No RTS interventions could be identified where a likelihood of significant effects to the Natura 2000 site could be detected.		

Natura 2000 Site:	#8 Glen Tanar SAC (UK0012756, 8266) Area = 4180.09 ha	
Features	**Condition**	**Conservation Objectives**
Qualifying Habitats		
• Blanket bog* • Caledonian forest* • Dry heaths • Wet heathland with cross-leaved heath * priority species	• Favourable Maintained • Favourable Maintained • Favourable Maintained • Favourable Maintained	To avoid deterioration of the qualifying habitats 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; and To ensure for the qualifying habitats that the following are maintained in the long term: • Extent of the habitat on site • Distribution of the habitat within site • Structure and function of the habitat • Processes supporting the habitat • Distribution of typical species of the habitat • Viability of typical species as components of the habitat • No significant disturbance of typical species of the habitat
Qualifying Species		
• Otter (*Lutra lutra*)	• Favourable Maintained	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 and the site makes an appropriate contribution to achieving favourable conservation status for each of the qualifying features; and To ensure for the qualifying species that the following are maintained in the long term: • Population of the species as a viable component of the site • Distribution of the species within site • Distribution and extent of habitats supporting the species • Structure, function and supporting processes of habitats supporting the species • No significant disturbance of the species

Natura 2000 Site:	#8 Glen Tanar SAC (UK0012756, 8266) Area = 4180.09 ha
Pressures and vulnerability (information taken from JNCC Natura 2000 data form): The site is a National Nature Reserve. Since a shield fence was established in the late 1930s, a reduction in grazing levels has resulted in an expansion of woodland regeneration. The shield deer fence has been marked to reduce strikes by woodland grouse and about 11 km of fence has recently been removed. Parts of the forest are managed without intervention (the Strict Reserve Zone). Outside this zone, forest management is increasingly relying on low-intensity silvicultural methods, such as selective and small-scale felling coups. Education of the visiting public is carried out to minimise the risk of accidental fire, and plans and provisions to combat fire are made through the nature reserve agreement. Parts of the site continue to be managed as grouse moor by rotational muirburn.	
Commentary: The site is coincident with Glen Tanar Special Protection Area (SPA), SSSI and NNR.	
RTS Interventions: No RTS interventions could be identified where a likelihood of significant effects to the Natura 2000 site could be detected.	

Natura 2000 Site:	#9 Green Hill of Strathdon SAC (UK0030159, 8268) Area = 640.77 ha	
Features	**Condition**	**Conservation Objectives**
Qualifying Habitats		
• Dry heaths • Grasslands on soils rich in heavy metals • Juniper on heaths or calcareous grasslands	• Favourable Maintained • Favourable Maintained • Favourable Maintained	To avoid deterioration of the qualifying habitats 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; and To ensure for the qualifying habitats that the following are maintained in the long term: • Extent of the habitat on site • Distribution of the habitat within site • Structure and function of the habitat • Processes supporting the habitat • Distribution of typical species of the habitat • Viability of typical species as components of the habitat • No significant disturbance of typical species of the habitat
Qualifying Species		
n/a	n/a	n/a
Pressures and vulnerability (information taken from JNCC Natura 2000 data form): The site has traditionally been used for a combination of rough grazing (mainly sheep) and to a lesser extent, grouse moor. The latter is managed by muirburn. Overgrazing was a concern in the past but in recent years grazing levels have been reduced on one part of the site to allow heather to recover. Scots pine is locally regenerating in the south-east of the site and any necessary management options will be considered as appropriate.		
Commentary: The site is coincident with the Green Hill of Strathdon SSSI.		
RTS Interventions: No RTS interventions could be identified where a likelihood of significant effects to the Natura 2000 site could be detected.		

Natura 2000 Site:	#10 Hill of Towanreef SAC (UK0012576, 8271) Area = 1885.92 ha	
Features	**Condition**	**Conservation Objectives**
Qualifying Habitats		
• Alpine and subalpine heaths • Blanket bog* • Dry heaths • Grasslands on soils rich in heavy metals • Juniper on heaths or calcareous grasslands * priority habitat	• Favourable Maintained • Unfavourable Declining • Unfavourable Declining • Favourable Maintained • Favourable Maintained	To avoid deterioration of the qualifying habitats 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; and To ensure for the qualifying habitats that the following are maintained in the long term: • Extent of the habitat on site • Distribution of the habitat within site • Structure and function of the habitat • Processes supporting the habitat • Distribution of typical species of the habitat • Viability of typical species as components of the habitat • No significant disturbance of typical species of the habitat
Qualifying Species		
• Marsh saxifrage (*Saxifraga hirculus*)	• Favourable Maintained	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 and the site makes an appropriate contribution to achieving favourable conservation status for each of the qualifying features; and To ensure for the qualifying species that the following are maintained in the long term: • Population of the species as a viable component of the site • Distribution of the species within site • Distribution and extent of habitats supporting the species • Structure, function and supporting processes of habitats supporting the species • No significant disturbance of the species

Natura 2000 Site:	#10 Hill of Towanreef SAC (UK0012576, 8271) Area = 1885.92 ha
Pressures and vulnerability (information taken from JNCC Natura 2000 data form): The site is managed for a combination of grouse moor and rough grazing. Peat-cutting formerly took place at lower altitudes but has now ceased. Muirburn has locally extended onto blanket bog, apparently resulting in loss of Sphagnum cover. In recent years both muirburn and grazing have declined in some parts of the site. Consideration will be given to appropriate management strategies through liaison with landowners. One part of the site is frequently visited by walkers but this is not damaging to the site's interests.	
Commentary: The site is coincident with the Hill of Towanreef SSSI.	
RTS Interventions: No RTS interventions could be identified where a likelihood of significant effects to the Natura 2000 site could be detected.	

Natura 2000 Site:	#11 Ladder Hills SAC (UK0030179, 8286) Area = 4357.94 ha	
Features	**Condition**	**Conservation Objectives**
Qualifying Habitats		
• Alpine and subalpine heaths • Blanket bog* • Dry heaths * priority habitat	• Favourable Maintained • Favourable Maintained • Unfavourable Declining	To avoid deterioration of the qualifying habitats (listed below) 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; and To ensure for the qualifying habitats that the following are maintained in the long term: • Extent of the habitat on site • Distribution of the habitat within site • Structure and function of the habitat • Processes supporting the habitat • Distribution of typical species of the habitat • Viability of typical species as components of the habitat • No significant disturbance of typical species of the habitat
Qualifying Species		
n/a	n/a	n/a
Pressures and vulnerability (information taken from JNCC Natura 2000 data form): The site is managed for a combination of grouse moor and rough grazing. Large parts of the site continue to be managed as grouse moor by rotational muirburn. Small-scale peat-cutting still takes place at one locality, but the current level of activity is not considered to have a significant impact on the site's interests. A decline in shepherding in some parts of the site may have resulted in localised overgrazing. Appropriate management is encouraged by SNH in liaison with owners.		
Commentary: The site is coincident with the Ladder Hills SSSI.		
RTS Interventions: No RTS interventions could be identified where a likelihood of significant effects to the Natura 2000 site could be detected.		

Natura 2000 Site:	#12 Morrone Birkwood SAC (UK0012894, 8328) Area = 318.4 ha	
Features	**Condition**	**Conservation Objectives**
Qualifying Habitats		
• Alpine and subalpine heaths • Base-rich fens • Dry grasslands and scrublands on chalk or limestone • Hard-water springs depositing lime* • High-altitude plant communities associated with areas of water seepage* • Juniper on heaths or calcareous grasslands * priority habitat	• Favourable Maintained • Favourable Maintained • Favourable Maintained • Favourable Maintained • Favourable Maintained • Unfavourable No change	To avoid deterioration of the qualifying habitats 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; and To ensure for the qualifying habitats that the following are maintained in the long term: • Extent of the habitat on site • Distribution of the habitat within site • Structure and function of the habitat • Processes supporting the habitat • Distribution of typical species of the habitat • Viability of typical species as components of the habitat • No significant disturbance of typical species of the habitat
Qualifying Species		
• Geyer's whorl snail (*Vertigo geyeri*)	• Favourable Maintained	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 and the site makes an appropriate contribution to achieving favourable conservation status for each of the qualifying features; and To ensure for the qualifying species that the following are maintained in the long term: • Population of the species as a viable component of the site • Distribution of the species within site • Distribution and extent of habitats supporting the species • Structure, function and supporting processes of habitats supporting the species • No significant disturbance of the species

Natura 2000 Site:	#12 Morrone Birkwood SAC (UK0012894, 8328) Area = 318.4 ha
Pressures and vulnerability (information taken from JNCC Natura 2000 data form): In the past, Morrone Birkwood was subject to high levels of deer grazing and browsing. Since its declaration as a National Nature Reserve, some natural regeneration of the woodland has been achieved by fencing to exclude the deer. The site is well-used by walkers, and natural history groups and the visiting public are educated about the potential damaging effects of accidental fire.	
Commentary:	
RTS Interventions: No RTS interventions could be identified where a likelihood of significant effects to the Natura 2000 site could be detected.	

Natura 2000 Site:	#13 Mortlach Moss SAC (UK0030216, 8329) Area = 12.02	
Features	**Condition**	**Conservation Objectives**
Qualifying Habitats		
• Base-rich fens	• Favourable Maintained	To avoid deterioration of the qualifying habitats 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; and To ensure for the qualifying habitats that the following are maintained in the long term: • Extent of the habitat on site • Distribution of the habitat within site • Structure and function of the habitat • Processes supporting the habitat • Distribution of typical species of the habitat • Viability of typical species as components of the habitat • No significant disturbance of typical species of the habitat
Qualifying Species		
n/a	n/a	n/a
Pressures and vulnerability (information taken from JNCC Natura 2000 data form): Forest Enterprise (FE) have undertaken some felling of self-sown pine and other conifers that have colonised from adjacent plantations. FE work to an agreed management plan when undertaking forestry operations in the catchment.		
Commentary: The site is coincident with the Mortlach Moss SSSI.		
RTS Interventions: No RTS interventions could be identified where a likelihood of significant effects to the Natura 2000 site could be detected.		

Natura 2000 Site:	#14 Morven and Mullachdubh SAC (UK0019958, 8330) Area = 916.76 ha	
Features	**Condition**	**Conservation Objectives**
Qualifying Habitats		
• Juniper on heaths or calcareous grasslands	• Favourable Maintained	To avoid deterioration of the qualifying habitats 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; and To ensure for the qualifying habitats that the following are maintained in the long term: • Extent of the habitat on site • Distribution of the habitat within site • Structure and function of the habitat • Processes supporting the habitat • Distribution of typical species of the habitat • Viability of typical species as components of the habitat • No significant disturbance of typical species of the habitat
Qualifying Species		
n/a	n/a	n/a
Pressures and vulnerability (information taken from JNCC Natura 2000 data form): Morven, an outlying summit of the eastern Highlands, has extensive juniper scrub on the middle and lower slopes. The use of the land for summer grazing by sheep and cattle and by a large number of mountain hares is compatible with the site interest, as demonstrated by gradual expansion of the juniper scrub.		
Commentary: The site falls within the Morven and Mullachdubh SSSI.		
RTS Interventions: No RTS interventions could be identified where a likelihood of significant effects to the Natura 2000 site could be detected.		

Natura 2000 Site:	#15 Muir of Dinnet SAC (UK0019959, 8334) Area = 415.76 ha	
Features	**Condition**	**Conservation Objectives**
Qualifying Habitats		
• Clear-water lakes or lochs with aquatic vegetation and poor to moderate nutrient levels • Degraded raised bog • Dry heaths • Very wet mires often identified by an unstable 'quaking' surface	• Favourable Maintained • Favourable Maintained • Unfavourable Declining • Unfavourable Declining	To avoid deterioration of the qualifying habitats 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; and To ensure for the qualifying habitats that the following are maintained in the long term: • Extent of the habitat on site • Distribution of the habitat within site • Structure and function of the habitat • Processes supporting the habitat • Distribution of typical species of the habitat • Viability of typical species as components of the habitat • No significant disturbance of typical species of the habitat
Qualifying Species		
• Otter (*Lutra lutra*)	• Favourable Declining	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 and the site makes an appropriate contribution to achieving favourable conservation status for each of the qualifying features; and To ensure for the qualifying species that the following are maintained in the long term: • Population of the species as a viable component of the site • Distribution of the species within site • Distribution and extent of habitats supporting the species • Structure, function and supporting processes of habitats supporting the species • No significant disturbance of the species

Natura 2000 Site:	#15 Muir of Dinnet SAC (UK0019959, 8334) Area = 415.76 ha
Pressures and vulnerability (information taken from JNCC Natura 2000 data form): The site is largely within a National Nature Reserve which is managed in accordance with an agreed management plan. Management is being undertaken to maintain the open moorland and prevent further colonisation from adjacent woodland. Ditch and drain-blocking is being undertaken to promote peat growth. The eutrophication of Loch Davan is being addressed through wider catchment planning. Some of the moorland parts of the site are frequently visited by walkers and naturalists. There is a visitor centre adjacent to the site, within the NNR. Current levels of recreational use are compatible with the site's interests.	
Commentary: The SAC comprises five parcels. It overlaps with the Muir of Dinnet SPA, SSSI and NNR, and also overlaps with the River Dee SAC.	
RTS Interventions: No RTS interventions could be identified where a likelihood of significant effects to the Natura 2000 site could be detected.	

Natura 2000 Site:	#16 Red Moss of Netherley SAC (UK0030315, 4601) Area = 92.53 ha	
Features	**Condition**	**Conservation Objectives**
Qualifying Habitats		
• Active raised bog* • Degraded raised bog * priority habitat	• Unfavourable No change • Unfavourable No change	To avoid deterioration of the qualifying habitats 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; and To ensure for the qualifying habitats that the following are maintained in the long term: • Extent of the habitat on site • Distribution of the habitat within site • Structure and function of the habitat • Processes supporting the habitat • Distribution of typical species of the habitat • Viability of typical species as components of the habitat • No significant disturbance of typical species of the habitat
Qualifying Species		
n/a	n/a	n/a
Pressures and vulnerability (information taken from JNCC Natura 2000 data form): The bog was drained and extensively cut-over in the past, resulting in a lowered water table, local loss of bog vegetation and encroachment of open mire by scrub. Additional activities that may have caused damage to the site in the past include muirburn, grazing by livestock and prospecting for minerals (diatomite), but these are no longer a threat. A few major drains remain along the site's margins and in a more central part of it, and although these are no longer maintained, they are still active. An ongoing problem on parts of the site is scrub encroachment. A large part of the site (47 ha) was recently purchased by the Scottish Wildlife Trust, which is developing a management plan for the site to include restorative management such as ditch-blocking. It is expected that restoration work will also include scrub clearance. A detailed hydrological study, jointly funded by SWT and Scottish Natural Heritage, will commence in autumn 2002 and will inform plans for restoration management. The site has been identified as appropriate to receive funding for management under the proposed SNH *Natural Care* Grampian Lowland Bog Scheme		
Commentary: The site is coincident with the Red Moss of Netherley SSSI.		
RTS Interventions: No RTS interventions could be identified where a likelihood of significant effects to the Natura 2000 site could be detected.		

Natura 2000 Site:	#17 Reidside Moss SAC (UK0019767, 8351) Area = 87.17 ha	
Features	**Condition**	**Conservation Objectives**
Qualifying Habitats		
• Active raised bog* • Degraded raised bog * priority habitat	• Unfavourable Recovering • Unfavourable Recovering	To avoid deterioration of the qualifying habitats 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; and To ensure for the qualifying habitats that the following are maintained in the long term: • Extent of the habitat on site • Distribution of the habitat within site • Structure and function of the habitat • Processes supporting the habitat • Distribution of typical species of the habitat • Viability of typical species as components of the habitat • No significant disturbance of typical species of the habitat
Qualifying Species		
n/a	n/a	n/a
Pressures and vulnerability (information taken from JNCC Natura 2000 data form): There is a management agreement covering part of the site that controls afforestation, grazing and cultivation. Assessment of the impact of existing drains and woodland encroachment will allow any necessary management options to be considered.		
Commentary: The site is coincident with the Reidside Moss SSSI.		
RTS Interventions: No RTS interventions could be identified where a likelihood of significant effects to the Natura 2000 site could be detected.		

Natura 2000 Site:	#18 River Dee SAC (UK0030251, 8357) Area = 2446.82 ha, Length = 571.2 km	
Features	**Condition**	**Conservation Objectives**
Qualifying Habitats		
n/a	n/a	n/a
Qualifying Species		
• Atlantic salmon (*Salmo salar*) • Freshwater pearl mussel (*Margaritifera margaritifera*) • Otter (*Lutra lutra*)	• Favourable Maintained • Unfavourable No change • Favourable Maintained	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 and the site makes an appropriate contribution to achieving favourable conservation status for each of the qualifying features; and To ensure for the qualifying species that the following are maintained in the long term: • Population of the species as a viable component of the site • Distribution of the species within site • Distribution and extent of habitats supporting the species • Structure, function and supporting processes of habitats supporting the species • No significant disturbance of the species

Natura 2000 Site:	#18 River Dee SAC (UK0030251, 8357) Area = 2446.82 ha, Length = 571.2 km	
Pressures and vulnerability (information taken from JNCC Natura 2000 data form): The long term well-being of the river and its catchment will be promoted through the development of an Integrated Catchment Management Plan undertaken in partnership with others. Guidance on best practice for river engineering works has been prepared to ensure that such activities are compatible with the conservation of the species of interest in the SAC. Recreational use has not resulted in any significant disturbance to the features of interest.		
Commentary: The site overlaps with a number of other designated sites including the Potarch and Quithel Wood SSSIs, Glen Tanar SSSI, SAC, SPA and NNR, Cairngorms Massif SPA, Cairngorms SSSI, SAC, SPA and NNR, Muir of Dinnet SSSI and NNR, Eastern Cairngorms SSSI, Glen Ey Gorge SSSI. The River Dee supports a functional population of freshwater pearl mussel recorded from a location approximately 30 km from the river source to approximately 6-7 km upstream from its mouth. Juveniles make up approximately 30% of the recorded population, among the highest proportions recorded in Scotland. This indicates that the population is recruiting strongly and is one of the most important in the UK. The river also supports a high-quality Atlantic salmon population, and a significant proportion of the Scottish salmon resource. In recent years it has contributed about 4 or 5% of all salmon caught in Scotland. Otter is found throughout Dee catchment, from its mouth at Aberdeen to many of the high-altitude lochs. The river system contains extensive areas of suitable habitat for otter feeding, resting and breeding, including watercourses with a high fish biomass and islands and marshy areas for resting. This is a strong, high quality population, representative of north-east Scotland.		
RTS Interventions: IC2 Road improvements – i) Access to Aberdeen from the south. This access will create a new crossing structure over the SAC, within the Aberdeen City area. – vii) River Dee link. This will create a new link road to the north of the River Dee.		
Works/activities	**Reason for LSE**	**Conservation Objectives Potentially Affected**
Engineering works may result in land-take for bridge piers, abutments and approach routes, leading to direct loss of the SAC area. This loss may be within or outwith the river channel.	This could cause changes to the distribution of species across the site, through direct habitat loss (e.g. freshwater pearl mussel habitat, otter holts). It could also result in loss or change to the habitats or processes supporting the species.	• Population of the species as a viable component of the site (freshwater pearl mussel, otter) • Distribution of the species within site (freshwater pearl mussel, otter) • Distribution and extent of habitats supporting the species (Atlantic salmon, freshwater pearl mussel, otter) • Structure, function and supporting processes of habitats supporting the species (Atlantic salmon, freshwater pearl mussel, otter)
In-channel structures could result in hydrological changes.	This could cause direct change to the environment and habitats, including changes to sediment release and deposition.	• Population of the species (freshwater pearl mussel) as a viable component of the site • Distribution of the species (freshwater pearl mussel) within site

Natura 2000 Site:	#18 River Dee SAC (UK0030251, 8357) Area = 2446.82 ha, Length = 571.2 km	
Pollution from construction works and road-runoff during operation, including sedimentation.	Alterations to the vulnerability/resilience of species and their supporting processes within the site. Also mortality of species.	• Population of the species as a viable component of the site (Atlantic salmon, freshwater pearl mussel, otter) • Distribution of the species within site (freshwater pearl mussel, otter) • Distribution and extent of habitats supporting the species (Atlantic salmon, freshwater pearl mussel, otter) • Structure, function and supporting processes of habitats supporting the species (Atlantic salmon, freshwater pearl mussel, otter)
Disturbance, from noise, vibration and lighting (during construction) and from lighting (during operation).	Direct disturbance of species. Creation of barriers to species movement (Atlantic salmon, otter).	• Distribution of the species within site (Atlantic salmon, otter) • No significant disturbance of the species (Atlantic salmon, otter)
Mitigation: • Incorporation of a clear-span design. • Design and implementation undertaken in accordance with *Engineering in the water environment: good practice guide - River Crossings* (SEPA, 2010). • Crossing alignment will avoid areas of importance to the qualifying species of the SAC and active watercourse zones. • Crossing will be designed to allow otters safe passage along the river banks, and the continuation of the riparian corridor. • Incorporation of SuDS; proposals and levels of treatment required for any discharge to be discussed in liaison with SEPA and SNH. • Avoidance of pollution incidents and the prevention of pollution reaching the River Dee though good practices and management plans. • All works to be undertaken under a noise/vibration management plan. • Incorporation of sensitive lighting schemes. • Provision of species protection plans which must be prepared, approved and implemented prior to proposal approval.		

Natura 2000 Site:	#19 Sands of Forvie SAC (UK0013042, 8373) Area = 734.05	
Features	**Condition**	**Conservation Objectives**
Qualifying Habitats		
• Humid dune slacks • Lime-deficient dune heathland with crowberry* • Shifting dunes • Shifting dunes with marram * priority habitat	• Favourable Maintained • Favourable Maintained • Favourable Maintained • Favourable Maintained	To avoid deterioration of the qualifying habitats 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; and To ensure for the qualifying habitats that the following are maintained in the long term: • Extent of the habitat on site • Distribution of the habitat within site • Structure and function of the habitat • Processes supporting the habitat • Distribution of typical species of the habitat • Viability of typical species as components of the habitat • No significant disturbance of typical species of the habitat
Qualifying Species		
n/a	n/a	n/a
Pressures and vulnerability (information taken from JNCC Natura 2000 data form): The SAC falls within the Sands of Forvie and Ythan Estuary SSSI, Ythan Estuary, Sands of Forvie and Meikle Loch SPA and Forvie NNR.		
Commentary: The Sands of Forvie SAC lies within a sand dune system. This is highly active and mobile along the fringe but the older dunes have stabilised and largely support heathland and grassland. The land is a National Nature Reserve managed to an agreed management plan. Very little active management is required to maintain the habitats of interest. The Reserve has a visitor centre and is popular for recreational activities. Staff based on the Reserve undertake wardening duties.		
RTS Interventions: No RTS interventions could be identified where a likelihood of significant effects to the Natura 2000 site could be detected.		

Natura 2000 Site:	#20 The Maim SAC (UK0030348, 8625) Area = 484.58 ha	
Features	**Condition**	**Conservation Objectives**
Qualifying Habitats		
• Dry heaths	• Unfavourable No change	To avoid deterioration of the qualifying habitats 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; and To ensure for the qualifying habitats that the following are maintained in the long term: • Extent of the habitat on site • Distribution of the habitat within site • Structure and function of the habitat • Processes supporting the habitat • Distribution of typical species of the habitat • Viability of typical species as components of the habitat • No significant disturbance of typical species of the habitat
Qualifying Species		
n/a	n/a	n/a
Pressures and vulnerability (information taken from JNCC Natura 2000 data form): The Maim is an area of heather moorland near Crathie, on Deeside. It is managed as a grouse moor by rotational muirburn and is also used to graze sheep. Current levels of both muirburn and grazing appear to be favourable for the qualifying interest of the site. Localised tree regeneration is controlled by muirburn and cutting. The site is used for informal access but this is not at a level that causes concern.		
Commentary:		
RTS Interventions: No RTS interventions could be identified where a likelihood of significant effects to the Natura 2000 site could be detected.		

Natura 2000 Site:	#21 Turclossie Moss SAC (UK0019800, 8402) Area = 62.77 ha	
Features	**Condition**	**Conservation Objectives**
Qualifying Habitats		
• Active raised bog* • Degraded raised bog * priority habitat	• Unfavourable No change • Unfavourable No change	To avoid deterioration of the qualifying habitats 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; and To ensure for the qualifying habitats that the following are maintained in the long term: • Extent of the habitat on site • Distribution of the habitat within site • Structure and function of the habitat • Processes supporting the habitat • Distribution of typical species of the habitat • Viability of typical species as components of the habitat • No significant disturbance of typical species of the habitat
Qualifying Species		
n/a	n/a	n/a
Pressures and vulnerability (information taken from JNCC Natura 2000 data form): Turclossie Moss is a remnant of a much larger peatland. The bog is surrounded by cut-over bogs on all sides resulting in a lowered water table. At present there are no damaging activities being carried out on the site. A hydrological study will inform the restoration management of this site.		
Commentary: The site is coincident with the Turclossie Moss SSSI.		
RTS Interventions: No RTS interventions could be identified where a likelihood of significant effects to the Natura 2000 site could be detected.		

Natura 2000 Site:	#22 Ballochbuie SPA (UK9002781, 8467) Area = 1881.73 ha	
Features	**Condition**	**Conservation Objectives**
Qualifying Habitats		
n/a	n/a	n/a
Qualifying Species		
• Capercaillie (*Tetrao urogallus*), breeding • Scottish crossbill (*Loxia scotica*), breeding	• Unfavourable Declining • *No information*	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 and the site makes an appropriate contribution to achieving favourable conservation status for each of the qualifying features; and To ensure for the qualifying species that the following are maintained in the long term: • Population of the species as a viable component of the site • Distribution of the species within site • Distribution and extent of habitats supporting the species • Structure, function and supporting processes of habitats supporting the species • No significant disturbance of the species
Pressures and vulnerability (information taken from JNCC Natura 2000 data form): The erection of fencing and deer management has encouraged regeneration of the forest. However, fencing is a threat to capercaillie and other birds. Regeneration is being monitored and deer management is under review with a view to removing the fencing whilst maintaining the forest regeneration. In the meantime the fencing is being marked to reduce any impact on birds. Much of the moorland above the forest is managed as a grouse moor and burning is carried out in accordance with a muirburn management plan. A large part of the site is subject to a Memorandum of Understanding, the co-signatories of which are Balmoral Estate, Scottish Natural Heritage, the Forestry Authority and the Deer Commission for Scotland.		
Commentary: The site is coincident with the Ballochbuie SPA and overlaps with the River Dee SAC. The site includes the Creag Clunie & the Lion's Face SSSI.		
RTS Interventions: No RTS interventions could be identified where a likelihood of significant effects to the Natura 2000 site could be detected.		

Natura 2000 Site:	#23 Buchan Ness to Collieston Coast SPA (UK9002491, 8473) Area = 5400.94	
Features	**Condition**	**Conservation Objectives**
Qualifying Habitats		
n/a	n/a	n/a
Qualifying Species		
• Fulmar (*Fulmarus glacialis*), breeding** • Guillemot (*Uria aalge*), breeding** • Herring gull (*Larus argentatus*), breeding** • Kittiwake (*Rissa tridactyla*), breeding** • Seabird assemblage, breeding • Shag (*Phalacrocorax aristotelis*), breeding** ** Assemblage qualifier only	• Unfavourable Declining • Favourable Declining • Unfavourable No change • Unfavourable No change • Unfavourable No change • Unfavourable No change	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 and the site makes an appropriate contribution to achieving favourable conservation status for each of the qualifying features; and To ensure for the qualifying species that the following are maintained in the long term: • Population of the species as a viable component of the site • Distribution of the species within site • Distribution and extent of habitats supporting the species • Structure, function and supporting processes of habitats supporting the species • No significant disturbance of the species
Pressures and vulnerability (information taken from JNCC Natura 2000 data form): There are no significant threats to the interest at present. The Scottish Wildlife Trust Longhaven Reserve covers part of the site. The cliffs are used by the general public for recreation, mainly along the waymarked coastal path. Some of the cliffs are used for rock-climbing. SNH is engaged in a programme of monitoring seabird populations, and is working with the local authority, and owners and occupiers, to agree a programme of path improvements and site interpretation.		
Commentary: The SPA is located on the coast of Aberdeenshire. It is a 15km stretch of south-east facing cliff formed of granite, quartzite and other rocks running to the south of Peterhead, interrupted only by the sandy beach of Cruden Bay. The seabirds feed outside the SPA in the nearby waters, as well as more distantly.		
RTS Interventions: No RTS interventions could be identified where a likelihood of significant effects to the Natura 2000 site could be detected.		

Natura 2000 Site:	#24 Caenlochan SPA (UK9004011, 8474) Area = 5975.28	
Features	**Condition**	**Conservation Objectives**
Qualifying Habitats		
n/a	n/a	n/a
Qualifying Species		
• Dotterel (*Charadrius morinellus*), breeding • Golden eagle (*Aquila chrysaetos*), breeding	• Favourable Maintained • Favourable Maintained	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 and the site makes an appropriate contribution to achieving favourable conservation status for each of the qualifying features; and To ensure for the qualifying species that the following are maintained in the long term: • Population of the species as a viable component of the site • Distribution of the species within site • Distribution and extent of habitats supporting the species • Structure, function and supporting processes of habitats supporting the species • No significant disturbance of the species
Pressures and vulnerability (information taken from JNCC Natura 2000 data form): Part of this large site, important for upland bird species, is a National Nature Reserve managed under an agreed management plan. The impact of grazing by red deer and sheep and of human recreational access over the whole area is currently being assessed and this will inform the development of a management plan for the entire site. The ski company owning the ski centre adjacent to the site has worked with the local planning authority and Scottish Natural Heritage to manage the skiing operations so as to minimise damage to the wildlife on the site. Any proposals for new skiing developments would require approval by the local planning authority. Wider countryside measures are in place which also have a role in maintaining the population levels for which the site was classified.		
Commentary: Caenlochan is a large area of montane plateau and is centred on Glas Maol (1,068m) at the head of Caenlochan Glen. It forms part of a network of suitable sites for nesting Dotterel, with birds moving between them at various stages of the breeding season. The site overlaps with Caenlochan SAC and River Dee SAC.		
RTS Interventions: No RTS interventions could be identified where a likelihood of significant effects to the Natura 2000 site could be detected.		

Natura 2000 Site:	#25 Cairngorms SPA (UK9002241, 8475) Area = 50903.74	
Features	**Condition**	**Conservation Objectives**
Qualifying Habitats		
n/a	n/a	n/a
Qualifying Species		
• Capercaillie (*Tetrao urogallus*), breeding • Dotterel (*Charadrius morinellus*), breeding • Golden eagle (*Aquila chrysaetos*), breeding • Merlin (*Falco columbarius*), breeding • Osprey (*Pandion haliaetus*), breeding • Peregrine (*Falco peregrinus*), breeding • Scottish crossbill (*Loxia scotica*), breeding	• Favourable Maintained • Unfavourable Declining • Favourable Maintained • *No information* • Favourable Maintained • Favourable Maintained • No information	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 and the site makes an appropriate contribution to achieving favourable conservation status for each of the qualifying features; and To ensure for the qualifying species that the following are maintained in the long term: • Population of the species as a viable component of the site • Distribution of the species within site • Distribution and extent of habitats supporting the species • Structure, function and supporting processes of habitats supporting the species • No significant disturbance of the species
Pressures and vulnerability (information taken from JNCC Natura 2000 data form): This is a very extensive site where pressures vary with location. In the core area there are three National Nature Reserves covering the montane and woodland habitats and their associated specialised bird species, and the site is contained within the Cairngorms National Park. In addition, non-governmental conservation bodies own and manage large tracts of land for nature conservation. Most of the remaining area is managed for sports shooting or forestry. Locally high deer numbers have previously prevented tree regeneration but initiatives are now in hand to remedy this. This is a popular area for a number of outdoor pursuits including hill walking, skiing, mountain biking and bird watching. The large number of visitors can cause damage to the more vulnerable areas and a combination of strategies for visitor management and ongoing repair and maintenance to footpaths is being used to address this issue. Wider countryside measures are in place which also have a role in maintaining the population levels for which the site was classified.		
Commentary: The site overlaps with Cairngorms SAC, River Dee SAC and River Spey SAC.		
RTS Interventions: No RTS interventions could be identified where a likelihood of significant effects to the Natura 2000 site could be detected.		

Natura 2000 Site:	#26 Cairngorms Massif SPA (UK9020308, 10234) Area = 187504.06 ha	
Features	**Condition**	**Conservation Objectives**
Qualifying Habitats		
n/a	n/a	n/a
Qualifying Species		
• Golden eagle (*Aquila chrysaetos*), breeding	• *No information*	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 and the site makes an appropriate contribution to achieving favourable conservation status for each of the qualifying features; and To ensure for the qualifying species that the following are maintained in the long term: • Population of the species as a viable component of the site • Distribution of the species within site • Distribution and extent of habitats supporting the species • Structure, function and supporting processes of habitats supporting the species • No significant disturbance of the species

Natura 2000 Site:	#26 Cairngorms Massif SPA (UK9020308, 10234) Area = 187504.06 ha

Pressures and vulnerability (information taken from JNCC Natura 2000 data form):

Golden eagle survival overwinter is influenced by carrion availability whilst availability of live prey has an influence on breeding success. Traditional grouse moor management has maintained suitable habitats for golden eagle for many years. However management can also result in reduction in the populations of live prey such as mountain hares, loss of nesting trees, or reduce habitat diversity e.g. through drainage of bogs or other wetlands.

SNH maintains liaison with interested parties to ensure that the golden eagle interest is maintained appropriately. Locally, high deer numbers have previously prevented tree regeneration and damaged upland and moorland habitat, but initiatives including Section 7 Agreements; Joint Working Programme Sites; voluntary population reduction by a number of estates; Scotland Rural Development Programme funding for woodland management are underway.

The site overlaps with the Cairngorms National Park and encompasses 3 existing Special Protection Areas. There are also several National Nature Reserves covering montane, moorland and woodland habitats in addition to which (non-governmental) conservation bodies own and manage large tracts of the land for nature conservation purposes. Much of this site was therefore already under management specifically for nature conservation purposes and much of the remainder is managed for forestry and shooting sports.

Other potential threats include inappropriate afforestation of more open hill areas, creation of new hill tracks and wind farm construction. Such threats would be addressed through planning processes and liaison with the relevant parties to ensure that the requirements of the EC Birds and Habitats Directives continue to be met.

This is a popular area for a number of outdoor pursuits including hill walking, skiing, mountain biking and bird watching, which can cause unintentional disturbance to golden eagles. Visitors can cause damage to the more vulnerable areas and a combination of strategies for visitor management and ongoing repair and maintenance to footpaths is being used to address this issue.

Commentary:

The site overlaps with the following SACs;
Ballochbuie, Beinn a' Ghlo, Caenlochan, Cairngorms, Coyles of Muick, Glen, Tanar, River Dee, River South Esk, River Spey and River Tay.

The site also overlaps with the following SPAs;
Abernethy Forest, Ballochbuie, Caenlochan, Cairngorms, Forest of Clunie, Glen Tanar and Lochnagar.

RTS Interventions:

No RTS interventions could be identified where a likelihood of significant effects to the Natura 2000 site could be detected.

Natura 2000 Site:	#27 Fowlsheugh SPA (UK9002271, 8505) Area = 1303.54	
Features	**Condition**	**Conservation Objectives**
Qualifying Habitats		
n/a	n/a	n/a
Qualifying Species		
• Fulmar (*Fulmarus glacialis*), breeding** • Guillemot (*Uria aalge*), breeding • Herring gull (*Larus argentatus*), breeding** • Kittiwake (*Rissa tridactyla*), breeding • Razorbill (*Alca torda*), breeding** • Seabird assemblage, breeding ** Assemblage qualifier only	• Favourable Maintained • Favourable Maintained • Unfavourable Declining • Favourable Maintained • Favourable Maintained • Favourable Maintained	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 and the site makes an appropriate contribution to achieving favourable conservation status for each of the qualifying features; and To ensure for the qualifying species that the following are maintained in the long term: • Population of the species as a viable component of the site • Distribution of the species within site • Distribution and extent of habitats supporting the species • Structure, function and supporting processes of habitats supporting the species • No significant disturbance of the species
Pressures and vulnerability (information taken from JNCC Natura 2000 data form): There are no significant threats to the interest at present. The site is managed as a nature reserve by the present owners, the RSPB, who have upgraded the public footpath which runs along the clifftop for the benefit of visitors to the colony, and provided information boards.		
Commentary: Fowlsheugh is located on the east coast of Aberdeenshire and comprises sheer cliffs, between 30-60 m high, which are cut mostly in basalt and conglomerate of Old Red Sandstone age. The cliffs support major numbers of breeding seabirds which feed outside the SPA in nearby waters, as well as more distantly in the North Sea.		
RTS Interventions: No RTS interventions could be identified where a likelihood of significant effects to the Natura 2000 site could be detected.		

Natura 2000 Site:	#28 Glen Tanar SPA (UK9002771, 8508) Area = 4180.09 ha	
Features	**Condition**	**Conservation Objectives**
Qualifying Habitats		
n/a	n/a	n/a
Qualifying Species		
• Capercaillie (*Tetrao urogallus*), breeding • Hen harrier (*Circus cyaneus*), breeding • Osprey (*Pandion haliaetus*), breeding • Scottish crossbill (*Loxia scotica*), breeding	• Unfavourable Declining • Favourable Maintained • Favourable Maintained • *No information*	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 and the site makes an appropriate contribution to achieving favourable conservation status for each of the qualifying features; and To ensure for the qualifying species that the following are maintained in the long term: • Population of the species as a viable component of the site • Distribution of the species within site • Distribution and extent of habitats supporting the species • Structure, function and supporting processes of habitats supporting the species • No significant disturbance of the species
Pressures and vulnerability (information taken from JNCC Natura 2000 data form): In order to reduce fence strikes by woodland grouse, areas of redundant fence have been removed. Parts of the deer fence have also been marked. Some open moorland will be retained for moorland birds and for sporting interests and also as a fire control/protection mechanism for the woodland. Disturbance to osprey breeding sites is reduced through the ranger service. Long-term monitoring of the woodland grouse populations has been undertaken by the landowner and this informs decisions on the sustainability of shooting. This site is managed as a National Nature Reserve under agreement with the owners.		
Commentary: Glen Tanar is located in central Aberdeenshire. It is a large area of native pinewood with some heather moorland. The site overlaps with Glen Tanar SAC and River Dee SAC.		
RTS Interventions: No RTS interventions could be identified where a likelihood of significant effects to the Natura 2000 site could be detected.		

Natura 2000 Site:	#29 Loch of Skene SPA (UK9002261, 8536) Area = 120.89 ha	
Features	**Condition**	**Conservation Objectives**
Qualifying Habitats		
n/a	n/a	n/a
Qualifying Species		
• Greylag goose (*Anser anser*), non-breeding	• Unfavourable Declining	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 and the site makes an appropriate contribution to achieving favourable conservation status for each of the qualifying features; and To ensure for the qualifying species that the following are maintained in the long term: • Population of the species as a viable component of the site • Distribution of the species within site • Distribution and extent of habitats supporting the species • Structure, function and supporting processes of habitats supporting the species • No significant disturbance of the species
Pressures and vulnerability (information taken from JNCC Natura 2000 data form): This loch is used for sailing (up to 30 boats in the summer) and for sport fishing and the margins are occasionally used for wildfowling but these current levels of use are not thought to cause significant disturbance to the SPA interest. Inputs of nutrients associated with sewage works and agricultural sources (diffuse and point) have led over the last 20 years to hypertrophication which causes algal blooms. These algal blooms affect the aquatic flora and fauna and may reduce food availability to the SPA interest. Sewage management in the loch catchment is being updated and SNH is encouraging the incorporation of best management practices into residential developments. The suitability of the agricultural land within the catchment for SOAEFD Countryside Premium or other schemes is also being considered. Monitoring will focus on the numbers of breeding and visiting birds and the nutrient status of the loch, as monitored by the Wildfowl and Wetlands Trust and SEPA. Further nutrient loading studies may be required.		
Commentary: Loch of Skene is located about 15km west of Aberdeen in Scotland. It is a shallow (<2m deep) eutrophic lowland loch surrounded by fringing reedbeds and birch-willow carr. Both swans and geese feed away from the SPA on surrounding agricultural land during the day. The site also qualifies for supporting populations of European importance of whooper swan (*Cygnus cygnus*) (JNCC, 2015b) (2001 review).		
RTS Interventions: No RTS interventions could be identified where a likelihood of significant effects to the Natura 2000 site could be detected.		

Natura 2000 Site:	#30 Loch of Strathbeg SPA (UK9002211, 8537) Area = 615.94	
Features	**Condition**	**Conservation Objectives**
Qualifying Habitats		
n/a	n/a	n/a
Qualifying Species		
• Greylag goose (*Anser anser*), non-breeding • Pink-footed goose (*Anser brachyrhynchus*), non-breeding • Sandwich tern (*Sterna sandvicensis*), breeding • Svalbard Barnacle goose (*Branta leucopsis*), non-breeding • Teal (*Anas crecca*), non-breeding** • Waterfowl assemblage, non-breeding • Whooper swan (*Cygnus cygnus*), non-breeding ** Assemblage qualifier only	• Unfavourable No change • Favourable Maintained • Unfavourable Declining • Favourable Maintained • Favourable Maintained • Favourable Maintained • Favourable Maintained	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 and the site makes an appropriate contribution to achieving favourable conservation status for each of the qualifying features; and To ensure for the qualifying species that the following are maintained in the long term: • Population of the species as a viable component of the site • Distribution of the species within site • Distribution and extent of habitats supporting the species • Structure, function and supporting processes of habitats supporting the species • No significant disturbance of the species
Pressures and vulnerability (information taken from JNCC Natura 2000 data form): Almost the entire site is managed by the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (RSPB) for nature conservation, primarily for the SPA interest. SNH have piloted a Loch of Strathbeg Goose Management Scheme to alleviate the conflict between the geese which roost on the loch and the surrounding farms where they feed. The results of this scheme were encouraging and are a pointer for future management of the geese which roost on this site. Wildfowling no longer takes place on the loch but shooting from adjacent land of birds leaving the roost is a source of disturbance. This disturbance is regulated by RSPB's purchase of some of the shooting rights and by licensing.		
Commentary: The Loch of Strathbeg is located in Aberdeenshire, inland from Rattray Head. It is a shallow, naturally eutrophic loch with adjoining reedbeds, freshwater marshes, and alder and willow carr. The SPA provides wintering habitat for a number of important wetland bird species, particularly wildfowl, and is also an important staging area for migratory wildfowl. In summer, coastal parts of the site are an important breeding area for sandwich tern.		
RTS Interventions: No RTS interventions could be identified where a likelihood of significant effects to the Natura 2000 site could be detected.		

Natura 2000 Site:	#31 Lochnagar SPA (UK9002281, 8542) Area = 1431.28 ha	
Features	**Condition**	**Conservation Objectives**
Qualifying Habitats		
n/a	n/a	n/a
Qualifying Species		
• Dotterel (*Charadrius morinellus*), breeding	• Favourable Maintained	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 and the site makes an appropriate contribution to achieving favourable conservation status for each of the qualifying features; and To ensure for the qualifying species that the following are maintained in the long term: • Population of the species as a viable component of the site • Distribution of the species within site • Distribution and extent of habitats supporting the species • Structure, function and supporting processes of habitats supporting the species • No significant disturbance of the species
Pressures and vulnerability (information taken from JNCC Natura 2000 data form): There are no threats to the site at present. Dotterel habitat can be eroded by deer overgrazing or by large numbers of hill walkers and Scottish Natural Heritage will continue to monitor the condition of the dotterel habitat to determine if these activities become a threat to the interest.		
Commentary: Lochnagar is a large montane plateau south-east of Braemar in the eastern part of the Grampian Mountains. Run-off drains into the River Dee to the north and to the River South Esk to the south.		
RTS Interventions: No RTS interventions could be identified where a likelihood of significant effects to the Natura 2000 site could be detected.		

Natura 2000 Site:	#32 Muir of Dinnet SPA (UK9002791, 8552) Area = 157.6 ha	
Features	**Condition**	**Conservation Objectives**
Qualifying Habitats		
n/a	n/a	n/a
Qualifying Species		
• Greylag goose (*Anser anser*), non-breeding • Waterfowl assemblage, non-breeding	• Unfavourable Declining • Unfavourable Declining	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 and the site makes an appropriate contribution to achieving favourable conservation status for each of the qualifying features; and To ensure for the qualifying species that the following are maintained in the long term: • Population of the species as a viable component of the site • Distribution of the species within site • Distribution and extent of habitats supporting the species • Structure, function and supporting processes of habitats supporting the species • No significant disturbance of the species
Pressures and vulnerability (information taken from JNCC Natura 2000 data form): There are no threats to the interest at present. The site falls within the Muir of Dinnet National Nature Reserve managed for its nature conservation interest by Scottish Natural Heritage under agreement with the owners. Byelaws are in force to prevent visitors to the reserve from carrying out damaging activities.		
Commentary: The Muir of Dinnet is located in the central Dee Valley about 8km east of Ballater. It is a large mosaic of heath woodland and mire, with open water in two sizeable lochs. The site overlaps with Muir of Dinnet SAC and River Dee SAC.		
RTS Interventions: No RTS interventions could be identified where a likelihood of significant effects to the Natura 2000 site could be detected.		

Natura 2000 Site:	#33 Tips of Corsemaul and Tom Mor SPA (UK9002811, 8584) Area = 83.71 ha	
Features	**Condition**	**Conservation Objectives**
Qualifying Habitats		
n/a	n/a	n/a
Qualifying Species		
• Common gull (*Larus canus*), breeding	• Unfavourable No change	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 and the site makes an appropriate contribution to achieving favourable conservation status for each of the qualifying features; and To ensure for the qualifying species that the following are maintained in the long term: • Population of the species as a viable component of the site • Distribution of the species within site • Distribution and extent of habitats supporting the species • Structure, function and supporting processes of habitats supporting the species • No significant disturbance of the species
Pressures and vulnerability (information taken from JNCC Natura 2000 data form): The site is managed as a grouse moor and as rough grazing for sheep. To prevent deterioration in the suitability of the habitat for nesting common gulls, there are plans to investigate the relationship between common gull nesting densities and nest distribution, the densities of predators such as crows and foxes, and the intensity and pattern of moorland management including rotational muirburn.		
Commentary: The site covers two areas of hill ground straddling the border between Moray and Aberdeenshire in north-east Scotland. It supports heather moorland which, on the hilltops, has been converted to grassland, owing to nutrient enrichment from gull droppings.		
RTS Interventions: No RTS interventions could be identified where a likelihood of significant effects to the Natura 2000 site could be detected.		

Natura 2000 Site:	#34 Troup, Pennan and Lion's Heads SPA (UK9002471, 8587) Area = 3367.21 ha	
Features	**Condition**	**Conservation Objectives**
Qualifying Habitats		
n/a	n/a	n/a
Qualifying Species		
• Fulmar (*Fulmarus glacialis*), breeding** • Guillemot (*Uria aalge*), breeding • Herring gull (*Larus argentatus*), breeding** • Kittiwake (*Rissa tridactyla*), breeding** • Razorbill (*Alca torda*), breeding** • Seabird assemblage, breeding ** Assemblage qualifier only	• Unfavourable Declining • Unfavourable Declining • Unfavourable No change • Unfavourable No change • Unfavourable Declining • Unfavourable Declining	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 and the site makes an appropriate contribution to achieving favourable conservation status for each of the qualifying features; and To ensure for the qualifying species that the following are maintained in the long term: • Population of the species as a viable component of the site • Distribution of the species within site • Distribution and extent of habitats supporting the species • Structure, function and supporting processes of habitats supporting the species • No significant disturbance of the species
Pressures and vulnerability (information taken from JNCC Natura 2000 data form): There are no significant threats to the interest at present. SNH is engaged in a programme of monitoring seabird populations, and is working with the local authority, and owners and occupiers, to agree an access policy for the site.		
Commentary: The SPA is a 9km stretch of sea-cliffs along the Banff and Buchan coast of Aberdeenshire. The site also includes adjacent areas of grassland and heath, and several small sand or shingle beaches.		
RTS Interventions: No RTS interventions could be identified where a likelihood of significant effects to the Natura 2000 site could be detected.		

Natura 2000 Site:	#35 Ythan Estuary, Sands of Forvie and Meikle Loch SPA (UK9002221, 8592) Area = 1016.24 ha	
Features	**Condition**	**Conservation Objectives**
Qualifying Habitats		
n/a	n/a	n/a
Qualifying Species		
• Common tern (*Sterna hirundo*), breeding • Eider (*Somateria mollissima*), non-breeding** • Lapwing (*Vanellus vanellus*), non-breeding** • Little tern (*Sternula albifrons*), breeding • Pink-footed goose (*Anser brachyrhynchus*), non-breeding • Redshank (*Tringa totanus*), non-breeding** • Sandwich tern (*Sterna sandvicensis*), breeding • Waterfowl assemblage, non-breeding ** Assemblage qualifier only	• Unfavourable No change • Favourable Declining • Favourable Maintained • Favourable Maintained • Favourable Maintained • Favourable Maintained • Favourable Maintained • Favourable Maintained	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 and the site makes an appropriate contribution to achieving favourable conservation status for each of the qualifying features; and To ensure for the qualifying species that the following are maintained in the long term: • Population of the species as a viable component of the site • Distribution of the species within site • Distribution and extent of habitats supporting the species • Structure, function and supporting processes of habitats supporting the species • No significant disturbance of the species
Pressures and vulnerability (information taken from JNCC Natura 2000 data form): The site forms the Forvie National Nature Reserve which is managed for its nature conservation interest under an agreed management plan. The reserve agreement restricts management activities such as burning which would damage sensitive habitats and species. Byelaws are in force to prevent visitors to the reserve from carrying out damaging activities and disturbance to tern colonies. In recent years, terns have bred in much lower numbers owing to predation and the periodic overtopping of the favoured shingle beds by sand. Fox control measures are in place to reduce predation and it is expected that the tern population will increase in response. Small numbers of geese are shot by wildfowlers but at present there is no evidence that this shooting is detrimental to the interest. There is growing concern about the effects of eutrophication on the estuary and its flora and fauna. The continuing build-up of algal mats has apparently lead to a reduction in the populations of invertebrates which are the prey of waterfowl such as redshank and shelduck.		
Commentary: The site is located north of Aberdeen. The site comprises the long, narrow estuary of the River Ythan and Meikle Loch, with an extensive area of sand dunes with the Forveran Links on the west bank and the Sands of Forvie dune system on the east bank.		
RTS Interventions: No RTS interventions could be identified where a likelihood of significant effects to the Natura 2000 site could be detected.		

Natura 2000 Site:	#36 Cairngorm Lochs Ramsar (UK13002, 8411) Area = 172.99 ha	
Features	**Condition**	**Conservation Objectives**
Qualifying Habitats		
• Oligotrophic loch	• Favourable Maintained	Ramsar Contracting Parties commit to work towards the wise use of all the wetlands defined as "the maintenance of their ecological character, achieved through the implementation of ecosystem approaches, within the context of sustainable development".
Qualifying Species		
n/a	n/a	n/a
Pressures and vulnerability (information taken from JNCC Natura 2000 data form): No factors have been identified that adversely affect the site's ecological character.		
Commentary: The Cairngorm Lochs Ramsar site consists of Lochs Etchachan, Uaine, Coire an Lochain, Avon and Einich which are amongst the highest standing waters in the UK. All five lochs are extremely oligotrophic. All have an arctic-alpine nature and support specialised populations of plankton.		
RTS Interventions: No RTS interventions could be identified where a likelihood of significant effects to a Natura 2000 site could be detected.		

Natura 2000 Site:	#37 Loch of Skene Ramsar (UK13040, 8442) Area = 120.9 ha	
Features	**Condition**	**Conservation Objectives**
Qualifying Habitats		
n/a	n/a	n/a
Qualifying Species		
• Greylag goose (*Anser anser*), non-breeding	• Unfavourable Declining	Ramsar Contracting Parties commit to work towards the wise use of all the wetlands defined as "the maintenance of their ecological character, achieved through the implementation of ecosystem approaches, within the context of sustainable development".
Pressures and vulnerability (information taken from JNCC Natura 2000 data form): No factors have been identified that adversely affect the site's ecological character.		
Commentary: Loch of Skene is a eutrophic lowland loch.		
RTS Interventions: No RTS interventions could be identified where a likelihood of significant effects to a Natura 2000 site could be detected.		

Natura 2000 Site:	#38 Loch of Strathbeg Ramsar (UK13041, 8443) Area = 615.94 ha	
Features	**Condition**	**Conservation Objectives**
Qualifying Habitats		
• Eutrophic loch	• Unfavourable No change	Ramsar Contracting Parties commit to work towards the wise use of all the wetlands defined as "the maintenance of their ecological character, achieved through the implementation of ecosystem approaches, within the context of sustainable development".
Qualifying Species		
• Greylag goose (*Anser anser*), non-breeding • Pink-footed goose (*Anser brachyrhynchus*), non-breeding • Waterfowl assemblage, non-breeding • Whooper swan (*Cygnus cygnus*), non-breeding	• Unfavourable No change • Favourable Maintained • Favourable Maintained • Favourable Maintained	Ramsar Contracting Parties commit to work towards the wise use of all the wetlands defined as "the maintenance of their ecological character, achieved through the implementation of ecosystem approaches, within the context of sustainable development".
Pressures and vulnerability (information taken from JNCC Natura 2000 data form): No factors have been identified that adversely affect the site's ecological character.		
Commentary: The Loch of Strathbeg is a shallow naturally eutrophic loch with adjoining reedbeds, freshwater marshes, and alder and willow carr. The loch constitutes the largest dune slack pool in Britain.		
RTS Interventions: No RTS interventions could be identified where a likelihood of significant effects to a Natura 2000 site could be detected.		

Natura 2000 Site:	#39 Muir of Dinnet Ramsar (UK13049, 8448) Area = 157.6 ha	
Features	**Condition**	**Conservation Objectives**
Qualifying Habitats		
n/a	n/a	n/a
Qualifying Species		
• Greylag goose (Anser anser), non-breeding	• Unfavourable No change	Ramsar Contracting Parties commit to work towards the wise use of all the wetlands defined as “the maintenance of their ecological character, achieved through the implementation of ecosystem approaches, within the context of sustainable development”.
Pressures and vulnerability (information taken from JNCC Natura 2000 data form): No factors have been identified that adversely affect the site’s ecological character.		
Commentary: The site comprises two neighbouring lochs.		
RTS Interventions: No RTS interventions could be identified where a likelihood of significant effects to a Natura 2000 site could be detected.		

Natura 2000 Site:	#40 Ythan Estuary and Meikle Loch Ramsar (Uk13061, 8460) Area = 314.17 ha	
Features	**Condition**	**Conservation Objectives**
Qualifying Habitats		
n/a	n/a	n/a
Qualifying Species		
• Pink-footed goose (*Anser brachyrhynchus*), non-breeding • Sandwich tern (*Sterna sandvicensis*), breeding • Waterfowl assemblage, non-breeding	• Favourable Maintained • Favourable Maintained • Favourable Maintained	Ramsar Contracting Parties commit to work towards the wise use of all the wetlands defined as "the maintenance of their ecological character, achieved through the implementation of ecosystem approaches, within the context of sustainable development".
Pressures and vulnerability (information taken from JNCC Natura 2000 data form): No factors have been identified that adversely affect the site's ecological character.		
Commentary: This site comprises the long, narrow estuary of the River Ythan and the eutrophic Meikle Loch. Extensive mudflats in the upper reaches of the estuary are replaced by coarser gravels with mussel beds closer to the sea. Meikle Loch is a eutrophic loch supporting limited aquatic vegetation.		
RTS Interventions: No RTS interventions could be identified where a likelihood of significant effects to a Natura 2000 site could be detected.		

Natura 2000 Site:	#41 Ladder Hills pSPA (UK9002951) Area = *to be confirmed*	
Features	**Condition**	**Conservation Objectives**
Qualifying Habitats		
n/a	n/a	n/a
Qualifying Species		
• Hen harrier (*Circus cyaneus*), breeding	• *No information*	*No information, but would be expected to be the same as for species in other SPAs.*
Pressures and vulnerability (information taken from JNCC Natura 2000 data form): The pSPA is in the area of the Ladder Hills SSSI. Factors affecting the SSSI include recreational use, and potential impacts from atmospheric pollution and global warming. Little recreational activity takes place within the SSSI, since the Lecht ski area is excluded from the SSSI, cross country skiing is only occasional and hill walking is not as popular as in the Cairngorms. The main route in the SSSI is probably to the summits to the west of the Lecht road, which has led to localised damage to the alpine heath. Atmospheric pollution may impact on the lichens and decrease their abundance and alter species composition. Certain bog mosses are known to respond to high nitrogen inputs which may affect the composition within the blanket bog. Global warming impacts are most likely to affect species sensitive to changes in temperature and rainfall (SNH, 2012).		
Commentary: The Ladder Hills SSSI upland habitats support a rich fauna including a number of rare species (SNH, 2012). The breeding bird assemblage includes several species listed on Annex 1 of the EC Wild Birds Directive. Hen harrier used to breed on the site. In the late 1990s the site held more than 1% of the total British breeding population of hen harrier and on that basis was proposed as a SPA under the Birds Directive. Merlin and golden plover also breed on the site and golden eagle, peregrine and short-eared owl hunt over the area. In addition, several migratory species breed on the site including dunlin, curlew, common sandpiper, snipe, common gull, wheatear and ring ouzel. The raven is also found and osprey, teal, dotterel, dipper and twite have been recorded (SNH, 2012). Hen harrier is no longer recognised as a notified feature. Previously, monitoring in 1999 recorded its condition as Favourable, maintained. This was based on the national survey of hen harrier in 1998 which recorded ten breeding sites within the SSSI (5 year mean of 5.6) (SNH, 2012).		
RTS Interventions: No RTS interventions could be identified where a likelihood of significant effects to a Natura 2000 site could be detected.		