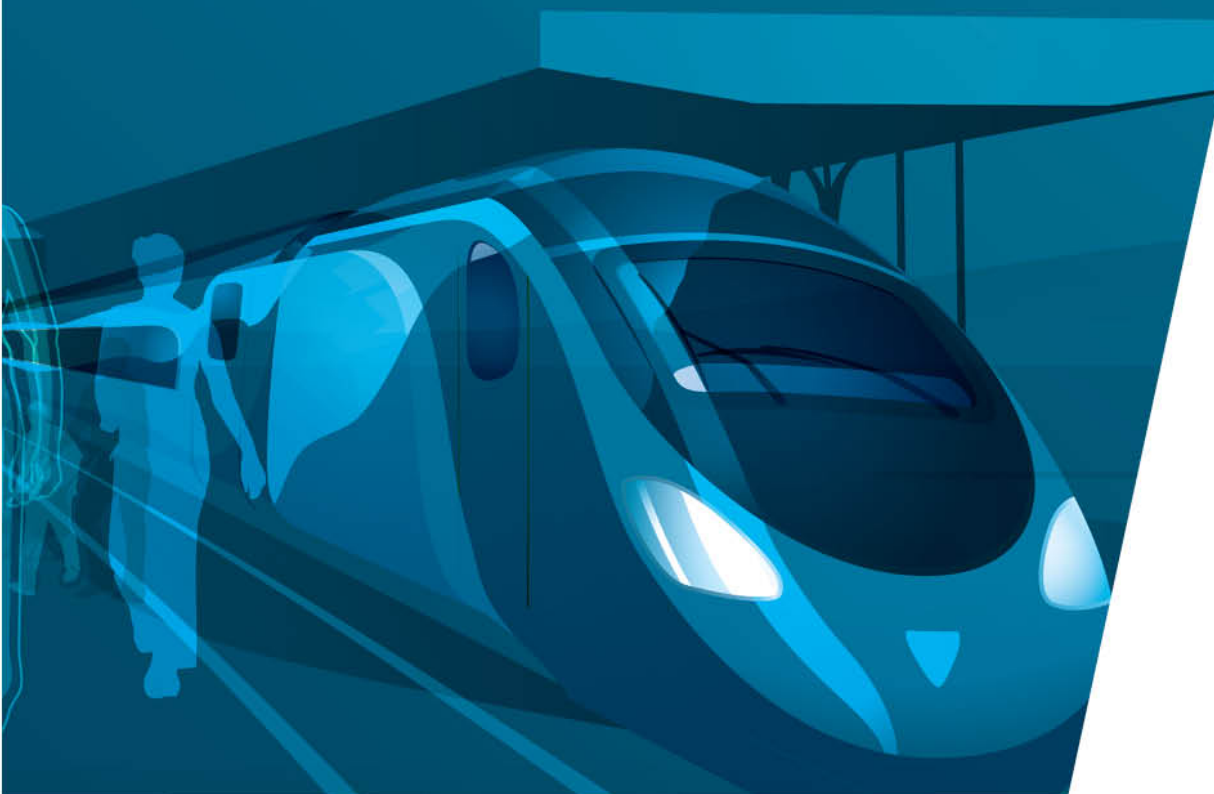


# *Supporting Statement*

*Benavie Swing Bridge*

*Construction of new inspection pontoon under and adjacent to Banavie Swing Bridge, alterations and repairs to swing bridge piers.*



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# 1 Introduction

- 1.1 This Statement has been prepared by Network Rail in support of an application for Scheduled Ancient Monument Consent (SAM) for works associated with the installation of a new access platform on the Caledonian Canal. The bridge is Category B listed and the Scheduled Ancient Monument (SAM) reference is SM6491.
- 1.2 The new access platform will not be physically attached to the Swing Bridge structure, but it will be within its curtilage and 'on' the Canal. This Statement, along with the accompanying Drawings set out the proposals and the justification for granting consent.
- 1.3 Scheduled Ancient Monument Consent is required for works within the Canal and its protected extents. The proposed access platform will be within the existing fenders located within the Canal (and these are owned and maintained by Network Rail under the original Railway Authorising Act).
- 1.5 The wider project is associated with condition-led repairs to the bridge and general bridge maintenance with like-for-like materials. The bridge steel work repairs comprise;
  - Repairs to the transfer beam and the transverse t-sections
  - The cross girder bottom flanges and stiffeners,
  - Repairing notches in the vertical trusses.
  - Corrosion on the structure and this will be addressed by removing and renewing paint work (to match that of the nearby Neptune's Staircase). HES have confirmed that SAMC is not required for these repair works.
- 1.6 Maintenance and repair works are required to the bridge's sub structure (piers). The concrete substructure of the bridge is timber 'framed' or faced, and some of these timbers may be removed, and some will reinstated or replaced if unsound. The SAM application includes the repair works to the bridge piers.
- 1.7 In addition two small lay-down/works areas are required near the site. Work sites are generally permitted development under The Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) (Scotland) Order 201, Part 4, Class 14. HES have confirmed that SAMC is not required for the laydown areas.
- 1.8 A suite of drawings is provided to illustrate the works to the piers and the proposal for a permanent inspection platform. The pontoon comprises 150m<sup>2</sup>.

## Existing

- DR-CB-001 Existing general arrangement bridge closed Sheet 1 of 2
- DR-CB-002 Existing General Arrangement Bridge Open Sheet 2 of 2
- DR-CB-005 Topographical survey
- Site location plan – area SAMC sought outlined in red

### Pier repairs

- DR-CB-020 Substructure Condition survey

### Permanent inspection platform (pontoon)

- SK20266-UA007016-UT41-D –Rev 01 – pontoon platform

## 2 Site Context

### Location

- 2.1 The Banavie Bridge is a Category B listed structure: *1901. Simpson and Wilson, steel bow truss Swing Bridge crossing Caledonian Canal carrying West Highland railway track coordinates: 211203, 776814.*
- 2.2 The Bridge is located on the Caledonian Canal, a Scheduled Ancient Monument. The SAM reference is: SM6491 and it is described as; *The monument comprises that stretch of inland waterway known as the Caledonian Canal running east and north-east from the locks and basin at Corpach, on Loch Linnhe, to the south (or bottom) end of the flight of locks at Banavie (otherwise known as Neptune's Staircase).* The SAM extents include 30 meters from the water's edge.
- 2.3 The line comprises a single non-electrified track used by both freight and passenger traffic.

### Development details

- 2.4 The substructure (piers) will be assessed and if necessary, elements repaired replaced or reinstated (as is the case with the facing timbers). This will require works within the Canal for which the project team area discussing the methodology and necessary approvals with both the Canals Trust and with SEPA.
- 2.5 The main alteration is the bridge inspection access, where a fixed pontoon is proposed. When closed, the bridge spans the Canal creating a single track bridge. When open, the bridge swings into an area to the side of the Canal (SW), which is protected by existing steel fenders. At present the bridge is inspected when in an 'open' position via an existing fixed narrow timber, steel and aluminium walkway system (as seen in the photos provided in this report). The narrow walkway only really allows inspection of the bridge's core, not the entire bridge span.
- 2.6 The existing walkway (shown in DR-CB-002 and 5) does not provide safe access to the entire underside of the bridge. A new platform will enable access to approximately 90% of the underside of the structure to enable maintenance of the structure itself, and the upkeep of the mechanical and electrical equipment which makes the bridge 'swing'.
- 2.7 A fixed inspection platform (pontoon) is proposed to the immediate south of the bridge to allow full inspection access when in the 'open' position. A low safety fence is required alongside the Canal to prevent access onto the pontoon.
- 2.9 Scheduled monument consent is required for any works that would demolish, destroy, damage, remove, repair, alter or add to the monument. SHEP acknowledges that work on scheduled monuments also has to take account of

other requirements, for example those covering health & safety and access.



*Photograph 1: bridge in closed position – showing existing walkway*



*Photograph 2: location of proposed pontton*



**Photograph 3: area to SW where bridge swings when in an 'open' position**

## 3 Policy Context

- 3.1 The policy considerations for Scheduled Ancient Monument consent are provided below;

### Scottish Planning Policy

- 3.2 Scottish Planning Policy (SPP) was published in February 2010 and provides a statement of Scottish Government policy on land use planning. Paragraph 118 states that “development which will have an adverse effect on a scheduled monument or the integrity of its setting should not be permitted unless there are exceptional circumstances”.

### Scottish Historic Environment Policy

- 3.3 SHEP was published in 2011 and sets out Scottish Ministers' policy for the historic environment. Paragraph 1.8 states that *“the protection of the historic environment is not about preventing change... change in this dynamic environment should be managed intelligently and with understanding to achieve the best outcome for the historic environment and for the people of Scotland. Such decisions often have to recognise economic realities”*.
- 3.4 SHEP acknowledges that work on scheduled monuments also has to take account of other requirements, for example those covering health & safety, and access.



*Photograph 4: bridge in its 'open' position*



*Photograph 5: example of pontoon in use*

## Local Planning Policy

- 3.5 The Highland-wide Local Development Plan (HwLDP) was adopted on 5 April 2012. In it, heritage matters are addressed in Policy 57;

### *Policy 57 Natural, Built and Cultural Heritage*

*21.2.1 All development proposals will be assessed taking into account the level of importance and type of heritage features, the form and scale of the development, and any impact on the feature and its setting, in the context of the policy framework detailed in Appendix 2.*

*The following criteria will also apply:*

- 1. For features of local/regional importance we will allow developments if it can be satisfactorily demonstrated that they will not have an unacceptable impact on the natural environment, amenity and heritage resource.*
- 3.6 The adopted Highland Historic Environment Strategy 2013 guidance also sets out its broad objective to preserve and maintain heritage items and Scheduled Monuments.

## Policy Context Conclusion

- 3.7 The development of new transport modes across the Caledonian Canal created innovative junctions; well represented here by the swing bridge and its support structures. It should be noted that the adjacent road swing bridge also has a platform to enable inspections. (to the left in the photo below).



**Photograph 6: Railway Swing Bridge – looking to the SE**

- 3.8 Network Rail has a legal obligation to address safety issues but it is also keen to ensure that good design acts to prevent accidents and risks. The new platform is required to assist in the maintenance of the swing bridge whilst providing higher levels of staff safety.

- 3.9 The bridge is operationally required to maintain services on the Mallaig line – an important tourist and local passenger service. The proposals for the Banavie Swing Bridge are also the minimum functionally required to maintain these local and regional transport links and can be easily removed if required. The proposal thus fully complies with strategic and local planning aims and objectives requiring both the retention of our historic heritage and of transport infrastructure as an important social and economic link.

## 4 Assessment

- 4.1 The following section considers the proposal to alter the structure by adding a permanent access way system and its associated works.
- 4.2 The new access will enable staff regularly and safely inspect the whole swing bridge. It will enable more programmed maintenance, as the entire underside can be quickly surveyed and remedial action taken using the broader working surface. It will largely remove the need for any additional access measures.
- 4.3 The limited extent of the existing access way presents unacceptable health and safety risks, and is not suitable for future maintenance requirements. The bridge requires permanent maintenance, and Network Rail needs a permanent access system for operational safety.
- 4.4 If safer and more effective access is not provided, future maintenance may require bespoke access each time; which come at a high cost and operational inconvenience. These works will create a permanent safe access system for bridge maintenance – which will enable works to retain and upkeep the listed structure.
- 4.5 Whilst the platform is intended to be permanent it can be removed if it becomes redundant.
- 4.6 HES have been consulted about the proposal and feedback from Nicola Hall is also attached.
- 4.7 SNH has been consulted about the proposal and has no comments to make.

### Scale of the impact of the proposals

- 4.8 The overall appearance of the SAM will not be adversely affected by the proposed change. The proposed access pontoon builds on the bridge's existing open arrangements with some minimal interventions required to achieve new levels of safety. The design is minimalist and appropriate to the railway environment. Whilst it will be left in place following these scheduled maintenance works, the inspection platform is capable of removal, but once installed will facilitate maintenance and allow ongoing monitoring of the condition and safety of the structure. The subsurface repairs to the bridge piers are needed to ensure that the swing bridge operates safely and the bridge remains fully functional.
- 4.9 Network Rail as the public rail infrastructure provider endeavours to secure best value from its spending and is also the second largest owner of listed buildings in the UK. This application is the optimum method of achieving permanent safe access under the bridge whilst avoiding removing or altering any of the key structural and architectural elements.

## 5 Conclusion

- 5.1 As stated above, development proposals that affect scheduled ancient monuments should ensure that they are the minimum necessary and appropriate to the character of the structure.
- 5.2 Justification has been provided that supports this application for Scheduled Ancient Monument consent and, for the reasons outlined above, it is requested that this consent be granted.

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