EASR Application

Non-technical summary

Tummel Hydropower Scheme

CAR-L-1011485

sse Renewables

Introduction

The primary objective of the licence variation is to implement new and modified flow release measures and to operate a newly constructed fish pass at the Tummel Scheme, as part of the third cycle of the River Basin Management Plan (RBMP).

Summary of Site Controlled Activities Changes

As part of the third cycle of the River Basin Management Plan (RBMP), an agreement has been established between SEPA and SSER to implement or amend a minimum flow release (Q96, as specified in CAR-L-1011485 Tummel Licence Proposed Variation Details document) at the following location:

- Bhran Intake
- Cuaich Intake (Station Weir)
- Cuaich Dam
- Truim Measuring Weir
- Truim Intake (NN 63814 83490)
- Upper Edendon Intake
- Killichonan Intake called as A1 (20)
- Aulich Intake called as A1(21)
- Allt a' Chreagain Odhair Intake called as A7(1)

These measures are intended to support the ecological health of the Allt Bhran (WB 23641), Allt Cuaich (WB 23639), Killichonan Burn (WB 6623), and Allt a' Chreagain Odhair (WB 6620), including the Aulich Burn, which forms part of Allt a' Chreagain Odhair. The mitigation measures contribute to achieving the Good Ecological Potential of these water bodies.

Additionally, two fish hecks will be removed to enhance fish passage upstream of the River Cuaich and the River Allt Bhran.

The key changes introduced through this licence variation are:

1. Introduction of a New Hands-Off Flow (HOF) Condition

A new Hands-Off Flow (HOF) condition will be introduced at:

- Bhran Intake (NN 7755 8930)
- Cuaich Intake (Station Weir) (NN 6745 8678)

- Cuaich Dam (NN 6902 8729)
- Truim Intake (NN 63814 83490)
- Upper Edendon Intake (NN 7141 7929)
- Killichonan Intake called as A1 (20) (NN 5678 6120)
- Aulich Intake called as A1(21) (NN 5800 6235)
- Allt a' Chreagain Odhair Intake called as A7(1) (NN 6185 6290)

The new Hands-off Flow (HoF) is designed to ensure the release of Q96 flows, thereby supporting the environmental requirements of the downstream watercourse.

The Hands-off Flow (HoF) values were determined using QUBE hydrological modelling software (April 2025) and subsequently agreed upon by SEPA. The release locations were carefully assessed and approved by SEPA's RBMP Technical Working Group.

2. Removal of the River Truim Maintained Flow Condition

The 'Maintained Flow' requirement at Truim Measuring weir (NN 6371 8427) would be removed to reflect the new flow being released down the Allt Cuaich which subsequently then joins the River Truim. The flow on the River Truim will continue to be delivered at Truim Intake (NN 63814 83490).

This will enable more efficient water management across the Upper Spey catchments and the ability to operate consistently within the licensed conditions. This will also support the delivery of ecological improvements across the Upper Spey, particularly during extended periods of low flow. Additionally, it will enable SSER to accommodate Scottish Water's requests for additional flow releases.

The removal of the River Truim Maintained Flow Condition is tied to the provision of the introduction of the new HoF at Cuaich and Bhran HoF.

3. Introduction of a New Fish Pass at Bhran Intake

A new fish pass will be constructed at the Bhran Intake (NN 7755 8930) to enable fish to ascend above the impoundment and access upstream sections of the Allt Bhran, thereby improving habitat connectivity and supporting aquatic biodiversity. As part of the overall fish pass assessment, several reports were submitted to evaluate the potential need for smolt screens. Following a thorough review of the current technical conditions, SEPA and SSER Hydro specialists jointly concluded that smolt screens do not need to

be installed due to the characteristics of the Bhran to Cuaich tunnel and the proven smolt exit route via the existing facilities at Tromie dam.

As part of the new fish pass implementation, a carefully designed and agreed monitoring plan will be established to ensure optimal management of fish health and the water environment.

4. Amendments to Grid References

To improve the locational accuracy of the intakes listed above, we recommend updating the current references with more precise coordinates. This will help ensure completeness and accuracy within SEPA's regulatory database, supporting effective environmental management and decision-making.

The intakes for which location updates are proposed are:

- Bhran Intake (NN 7755 8930) change to (NN 77612 89346)
- Upper Edendon Intake (NN 7141 7929) change to (NN 71439 79226)
- Aulich Intake called as A1(21) (NN 5800 6235) changed to (NN 57986 62485)

5. Removal of monitoring site at at Dalnacardoch

We propose the removal of the flow monitoring station at Dalnacardoch Bridge (NN 7262 7003) on the River Garry, as specified in Condition 4.2.16. This monitoring was originally introduced under the AMMP to support environmental improvements and ensure a maintained flow of 1.0 m^3/s at Dalnamein.

Since the licence was issued in 2017, monitoring at Dalnacardoch has faced persistent challenges. High sediment levels have significantly impacted the accuracy of flow gauging, and spot gaugings near Hands-Off Flow (HOF) levels have shown large scatter, resulting in considerable uncertainty in rating development and overall rating quality.

Given these limitations, we recommend removing this site from the monitoring plan. The remaining stations at Dalnamein, which is the compliance point, and Clunes Lodge will continue to operate and provide robust data to support flow management and environmental oversight.

6. Removal of fish heck at Cuaich and Allt Bhran

SSER will also remove the existing fish barriers downstream of the Cuaich Intake and the Allt Bhran Intake to enable free fish migration through the river channel.

- Bhran Heck, identified as Fish Barrier ID 362, located at grid reference NN 76143 90400
- Cuaich Heck, identified as Fish Barrier ID 3220, located at grid reference NN 65472 87540

Closing Remark

As part of the proposed water management changes in the Upper Spey catchment, we already have a well-established stakeholder engagement process with local estates, Scottish Water, and NatureScot. These stakeholders are fully informed about the proposed changes and receive regular updates through our Stakeholder Engagement meetings.

All parties have expressed support for the changes and are looking forward to the environmental benefits that will result from the amended release flows.