

Evelix milestone

By BILL McALLISTER

Bridge work now under way

THE first concrete will be poured this week erecting a bridge over the River Evelix in Sutherland which is a key forerunner of the Dornoch Firth crossing.

Work on the £13 million bridge linking Sutherland and Easter Ross by a route 20 miles shorter than the current A9 — dramatically telescoping Highland travel — cannot begin until the approach roads are completed.

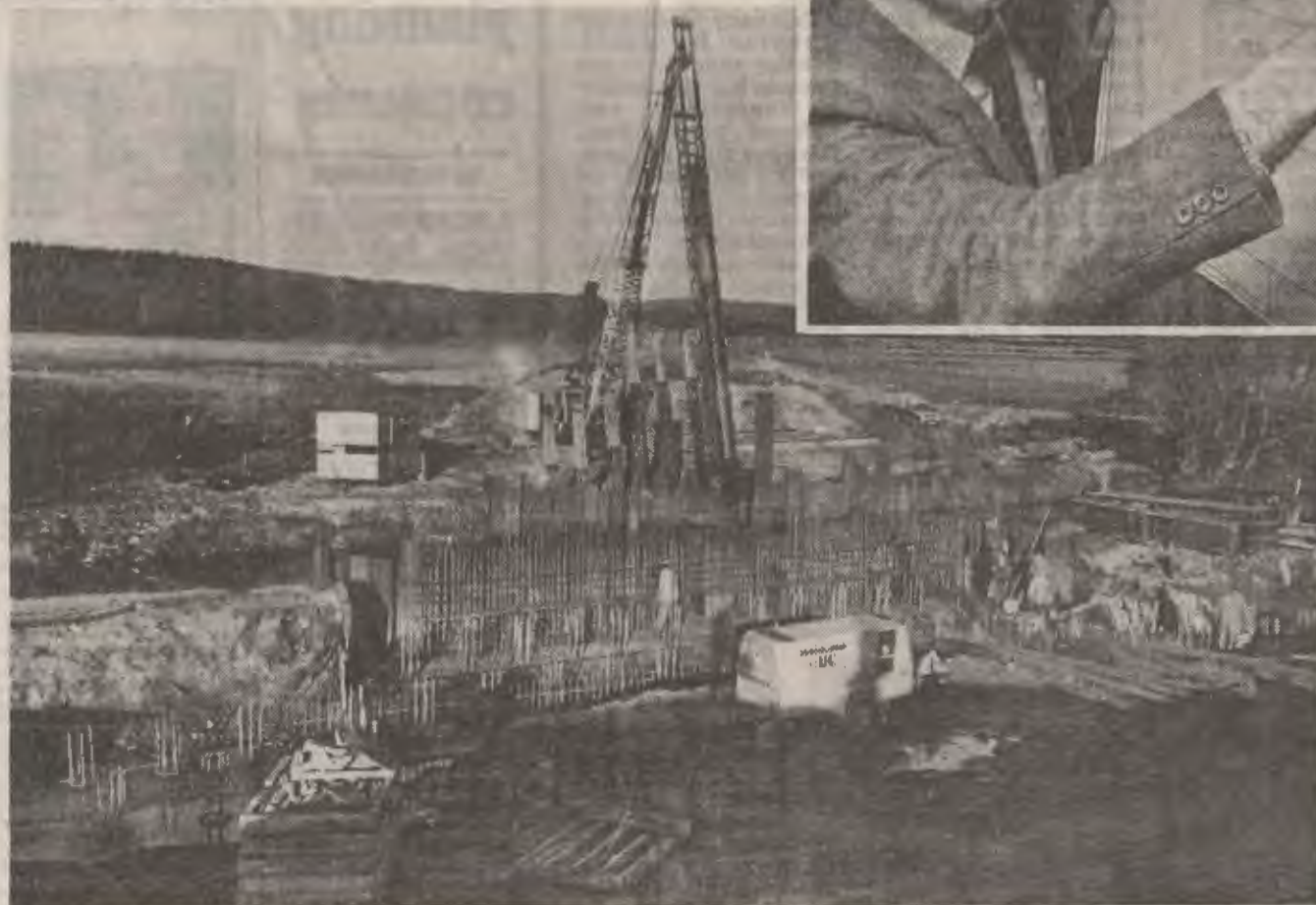
The route of the £2,600,000 million contract on the north side for a junction at Clashmore and four kilometres of new carriageway to the water's edge runs through land at Ard-na-Cailc, which has been designated a site of special scientific interest by the Nature Conservancy Council.

That means that site traffic and heavy plant cannot roll across any land other than the designated new route, so vehicles employed in constructing the historic crossing of the firth can only trundle along the finished approach roads.

SPECTACULAR

But the mild winter has helped the contractors, Miller Construction, to make rapid progress on the north route, which is due for completion in September.

This week's start on the crossing of the Evelix will be the major milestone in the contract. Steel piling has been erected to keep the river banks intact as the bridge site is well below the water line.



The route leaves the present A9 north of Clashmore and carves its way through a belt of pine trees. The north embankment approach ramp to the Dornoch Bridge is being created by Millers out of no less than 100,000 cubic metres of fill.

The north embankment is on Cuthill Sands, and motorists can look

forward to a spectacular new view, as Dornoch can be seen from it, and the Strule hills. Across the Firth, 800 yards away at the crossing line, at Melkile Ferry, the south approach roads are being constructed by Morrisons.

Miller's site agent, Mr Rory Taylor, Drumnadrochit, who is supervising the work of 60 men

on the Clashmore stretch, said: "We're delighted with progress. The fact that we're cutting across a site of special scientific interest hasn't caused us any problems. The piling of the river has been a delicate operation but it has gone very well and we're now ready to pour the concrete."

The job marks a

comeback by Miller to the Highlands. They used to be major contractors and employers in the North, but have been out of the area for 10 years.

Now, however, the Edinburgh-based firm have decided to make a big new bid for Highland road works. Their other comeback contract is a 2.5 kilometre facelift

between Moy Bridge and Contin, due to be completed in early summer.

DECISION

A company spokesman confirmed: "Having re-established a presence in the region, it is our intention to remain one of the recognised contractors in the area, and every effort will be made to secure an ongoing workload."

ABOVE: Where the present A9 turns into a new Dornoch Firth approach carriageway — site agent Mr Rory Taylor indicates where the new road line starts, just north of the village of Clashmore.

Pictures by
DAVID MURRAY

LEFT: Steel piling rises from below the level of the River Evelix, keeping the water from breaking through, ready for the first concrete pour on the new bridge this week.

They are not, however, one of the four groups on the short list for the Dornoch Firth bridge — a decision on which is only weeks away.

The progress being made on the north side has triggered off a spree of property selling on the route to be by-passed, with guest-houses, in particular, sprouting "for sale" signs.