DUALCHAS NADAIR na h-ALBA

Slighe Fodhraitidh
Pàirce Gnìomhachas Inbhir Pheofharain
Inbhir Pheofharain
IV15 9XB

Fòn: 01349 865333
Facs: 01349 865609
Làrach-Linn: www.snh.org.uk

SCOTTISH NATURAL HERITAGE

Dingwall Business Park
Fodderty Way
Dingwall
IV15 9XB

Telephone: 01349 865333
Fax: 01349 865609
Website: www.snh.org.uk

Mr Colin MacKenzie
Principal Planner
The Highland Council
Planning and Development Service
Glenurquhart Road
INVERNESS
IV3 5NX

Our ref: PF 279/07-08

31 March 2008

Dear Mr MacKenzie

ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT (SCOTLAND) ACT 2005: ALLANMORE-PITKERRALD (DRUMNADROCHIT) DEVELOPMENT BRIEF
SCREENING DETERMINATION

I refer to your screening consultation submitted on 7 March 2008 via the Scottish Executive SEA Gateway in respect of the above plan.

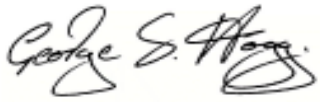
In accordance with Section 9(3) of the Environmental Assessment (Scotland) Act 2005, we have considered your screening report using the criteria set out in Schedule 2 for determining the likely significance of effects on the environment.

Our view in respect of each of these criteria is set out in Annex 1 attached. Accordingly, we agree that the above Plan is not likely to have significant environmental effects. Annex 1 also provides a list of information that it would be helpful for us to receive at the scoping stage.

Please note that this consultation response provides a view solely on the potential for the plan or programme to have significant environmental effects. We cannot comment on whether or not the plan or programme meets other criteria determining the need for SEA as set out in the Act.

Should you wish to discuss this screening determination, please do not hesitate to contact Tim Dawson on 01349 865333 or via our SEA Gateway at sea.gateway@snh.gov.uk

Yours sincerely



GEORGE HOGG
Area Manager
email: george.hogg@snh.gov.uk

Scottish Executive SEA Gateway:	sea.gateway@scotland.gsi.gov.uk
SNH SEA Gateway:	sea_gateway@snh.gov.uk
SEPA SEA Gateway:	sea.gateway@sepa.org.uk
HS SEA Gateway:	hssea.gateway@scotland.gsi.gov.uk

ANNEX 1

CRITERIA FOR DETERMINING THE LIKELY SIGNIFICANCE OF EFFECTS ON THE ENVIRONMENT

Schedule 2 Criteria	Section 8(1) determination - Are significant environmental effects likely ? *(Responsible Authority's assessment)*	SNH's Assessment under Section 9(3) Yes/No/ Unknown	SNH's Comments And Additional Information
1.The characteristics of plans and programmes, having regard , in particular to:			
(a) the degree to which the plan or programme sets a framework for projects and other activities, either with regard to the location, nature, size and operating conditions or by allocating resources;	YES The Allanmore-Pitkerrald Development Brief sets a framework for development and open space, related site works and phasing. It contains provisions that guide the location, nature and extent of development – notably some 200 homes - with appropriate design advice. It will provide a framework for *Feasibility Studies* in respect of access and utilities, land assembly and acquisition and developer / landowner contributions towards land management, public access, open space and a	Yes	We note that the brief will be framed within the adopted Inverness Local Plan.

	landscape structure. It advises where public funds may assist these objectives. It will change the character of the landscape and setting in this part of the village which presently comprises fields and wooded margins with limited, intermittent development.		
(b) the degree to which the plan or programme influences other plans and programmes including those in a hierarchy;	YES The Allanmore-Pitkerrald Development Brief is intended to assist implementation of the adopted Local Plan. Further to discussions locally, the Council has agreed to present the Brief in the context of a *Vision* for Drumnadrochit. This embraces proposals for a community action programme, and may influence action in respect of the A82 (T), upgrades in the waste-water treatment works, future community planting programmes and	Yes	We agree with the Responsible Authority's assessment but recommend that other strategies be considered including the Inverness and Nairn Local Biodiversity Action Plan, the Great Glen Way Development and Management Plan, the Core Path planning exercise and the work of the Partnership for Rural Inverness and Destination Loch Ness.

	other environmental enhancements.		
(c) the relevance of the plan or programme for the integration of environmental considerations in particular with a view to promoting sustainable development;	YES The Allanmore-Pitkerrald Development Brief will have relevance for the integration of environmental considerations in particular with a view to promoting sustainable development, notably in ensuring a fit of development with the village, extending the mixed-use housing stock, providing for recreation and public access routes, and providing a framework for on-going use and management of a landscape framework including residual agricultural land which may come out of existing use and the flood plain of the River Enrick. Sustainable development in this context is about the integrity and prospects of a highland village, in particular the	Yes	Protected species, particularly European Protected Species (otter, bats) as well as red squirrel, will need to be considered at the project stage. The potential effect of any proposed flood protection measures on the Urquhart Bay Woods Site of Special Scientific Interest / Special Area of Conservation will need to be considered at the project stage.

	need to bring forward land for development which relates well to the form, structure and needs of the community; and delivers appropriate environmental safeguards and management opportunities.		
(d) environmental problems relevant to the plan or programme;	YES. The Allanmore-Pitkerrald Development Brief may raise relevant environmental issues notably, the visual impact of development, albeit in a contained wooded setting and subject to a framework which avoids key features and sensitive edges; loss of habitat in the form of agricultural fields / grazings and the reintroduction of a framework of structural planting. There are implications for the loss of mature trees in the formation of access; but compensatory measures proposed.	Yes	The potential effects of habitat loss / disturbance on the protected species mentioned above will need to be considered at project stage. The potential effect of any proposed flood protection measures on the Urquhart Bay Woods Site of Special Scientific Interest / Special Area of Conservation will need to be considered at the project stage.

(e) the relevance of the plan or programme for the implementation of Community legislation on the environment (for example plans and programmes linked to waste management or water protection);	YES. The Allanmore-Pitkerrald Development Brief promotes development in accord with service / utility networks and their necessary upgrades, notably mains supply of water, waste water systems and access.	Yes in part	The plan may affect European Protected Species including otter and bats. These will need to be considered at the project stage. The potential effect of any proposed flood protection measures on the Urquhart Bay Woods Site of Special Scientific Interest / Special Area of Conservation will need to be considered at the project stage.
2. Characteristics of the effects and of the area likely to be affected, having regard, in particular, to -			
(a) the probability, duration, frequency and reversibility of the effects;	YES. The effects of the Allanmore-Pitkerrald Development Brief are that development is probable, is likely to take several years / phases to complete (the rate of development conditioned by statutory policy restricting village expansion to 25% in any ten year period), and would be irreversible. The land management regime promoted to protect the setting of development could be managed as part of a Community Trust initiative	Yes	We agree with the Responsible Authority's assessment. Projects within the plan have the potential to have irreversible impacts on the protected species mentioned above.

	and its use / character – notwithstanding the safeguards for “green” activities / landscape – could change according to local preferences. Options in this regard include, flood works / infrastructure, golf, allotments, community woodland, playing fields, conservation management etc.		
(b) the cumulative nature of the effects;	YES. The Allanmore-Pitkerrald Development Brief is likely to contribute towards cumulative impacts arising from phased and incremental development of some 200 homes over the long term, traffic related activity, pollution arising from growth of the village and of the incremental loss of field habitats and open character.	Yes	We agree with the Responsible Authority’s assessment.
(c) the transboundary nature of the effects *(in UK international*	NO	No	We don’t believe there will be any effects on other member states.

cases)			
(d) the risks to human health or the environment (for example due to accidents);	YES The Allanmore-Pitkerrald Development Brief is unlikely to present risks to human health or the environment – other than those normally associated with development at an appropriate site. It will improve connectivity across the village as a whole; takes account of access improvements and "safer" routes, and reserves land for essential "village-wide" flood works.	Unknown	We recommend that any new path routes be connected to the Great Glen Way and other existing path networks.
(e) the magnitude and spatial extent of the effects (geographical areas and size of the population likely to be affected);	NO The Allanmore-Pitkerrald Development Brief relates to a site in a village of 1500 population/600 houses, with a throughput of seasonal visitors. The site has potential for up to 200 additional homes at a location close to the school, surgery, village centre/shops/recycling and public transport links.	No	We agree with the Responsible Authority's assessment.

	The allocation of these lands as part of the Local Plan take account of the village settlement pattern – a linear arrangement of "streets" conjoined by generous landscape "buffers". This Brief is to promote as comfortable a fit as possible of new development within that wider tableau.		
(f) the value and vulnerability of the area likely to be affected due to:	YES The Allanmore-Pitkerrald Development Brief could affect the value and vulnerability of the area through the loss of habitat, but will create an attractive addition to a vibrant, growing community. It keeps development integrated in the setting, avoiding building on prominent frontage sites. Development will be intensive within the linear "footprint" set out in the Brief, but will proceed incrementally	Unknown	This could only be determined following surveys for the protected species at the project stage.

	over time. It will link public access networks, allow flood works/overspill and enable new habitats to be created.		
i. special natural characteristics or cultural heritage;			
ii. exceeded environmental quality standards or limit values; or			
iii. intensive land-use; and			
(g) the effects on areas or landscapes that have a recognised national, Community or international protection status.	YES The Allanmore-Pitkerrald Development Brief relates to a site within a village located within a designated area of Regional Landscape Significance (Highland Structure Plan 2001), and alongside a key national tourist route.	No	Our understanding is that the relevant area is the Loch Ness Area of Great Landscape Value (AGLV). Neither the development brief area nor the village itself lie within the AGLV. We are not aware of any other relevant landscape designations.

Other Issues / Comments

We have no additional comments at this stage.

Comments on information needed at the Scoping Stage

In making scoping requests, Responsible Authorities are encouraged to provide the following information:

1 Context

a **The Plan**

- Plan name, area covered, period covered, timescales for preparation
- Legal requirement for plan
- Plan purpose, subject and proposed objectives
- Relationship with other relevant Plans and Programmes

b **The Area**

- Summary of existing environmental problems in the area/sector covered by the plan or programme and relevant aspects of the current state of the environment
- Summary of likely future changes to environment without the plan
- Environmental characteristics of areas likely to be significantly affected by the plan or programme
- Relationship with existing environmental objectives relevant to the plan or programme. These may be European objectives set by Directives, national objectives set by legislation or policy or they may be local/regional objectives

2. Scope

a **Scope and Level of Detail**

- Summary of the environmental issues to be considered in the Environmental Report with justifications
- Summary of any environmental issues not to be considered in the Environmental Report with justifications
- Summary of the proposed level of detail of assessment – e.g. will the assessment focus on very detailed policies in the plan, or just strategic objectives?

b **Alternatives & Mitigation**

- Where possible, a summary of intended approach to assessing alternatives (e.g. type and scale of alternatives that may be assessed)
- Where possible, the proposed approach for identification of mitigation

3. Methods

a **Assessment Method**

- A brief summary of the proposed approach to the assessment which might include:
- Summary of existing work to date
- Proposed (draft) SEA objectives
- Proposed approach to assessment including use of SEA objectives
- Proposed (draft) indicators

4. Next Steps

a Consultation

- Proposed consultation period for the Environmental Report