

## Highland wide Local Development Plan - Main Issues Report Consultation Summary and Actions Sheet

Reference Number:	<b>HWLDP-MIR-83</b>
Organisation/Individual:	Laid Grazings Committee (Kenneth MacKenzie)

### Action:

Immediate Response Required	
Meeting required with Respondent	
Issue for Area Local Development Plan	
Further Information Required	
Other (Please Specify)	

*If no box ticked - issues raised will be dealt with in preparation of the Proposed Plan.*

### Issues Raised in Response:

Purpose of Main Issues Report		Previously used Land	
NPF2 for Scotland		Wild Land	
Vision for the Highlands		Water Environment	
Inverness and A96		Renewable Energy	
The A96 Corridor		Flooding	
Phasing of Development		Waste Management	
Developer Contributions		Air Quality	
East Inverness		Sustainable Design	
Nairn		Business and Industrial Land	
Tornagrain		Accessibility and Transport	
Smaller Settlements in A96		Agricultural Land	
Caithness and North Sutherland		Subdivision of Existing Crofts	
Easter Ross and Nigg		Allocation of Inbye Land	
Development of Local Centres		New Crofting Township	
Wider Countryside and Fragile Areas		Small Scale New Crofts	
Population and Housing	x	Coastal Development	
Housing in the Countryside		Forestry and Woodland	x
Affordable Housing		Minerals	x
Planning for an Ageing Population	x	Open Space and Physical Activity	
Gypsies/Travellers		Access to the Outdoors	
Retailing		Comments on Consultation Process (+ve)	
Developer Contributions		Comments on Consultation Process (-ve)	
Natural, Built and Cultural Heritage			

### Key:

Background	Spatial Strategy	Policy Options	Consultation
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### Notes:

General comments that attracting people to the Highlands should be a top priority – as such, services must be improved, including those for ageing populations  
 More emphasis on tourism in the plan is needed  
 General comments on coastal development, forestry and minerals

Action Sheet Completed by:	GW
Date:	8/12/09

H.C. PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT SERVICE		
05 NOV 2009		
PASS TO	INITIALS	DATE
DM		
MM		
FILE REF:		

Director of Planning  
The Highland Council  
Glenurquhart Road  
Inverness IV3 5BR

Laid Grazings Committee  
Burnside  
92 Laid  
Loch Eriboll  
Sutherland IV27 4UN

2<sup>nd</sup> November 2009

Dear Mr Black,

Laid Grazings Committee has read the Highland wide Local Development Plan (many thanks for the extra copies sent) and has asked me to make the following comments.

These are made in the context of a small village which has more than tripled its resident households (from admittedly a very small base) in the last 15 years. During this time 5 new houses have been built and planning permission is being obtained for another 7. A further 7 houses have been completely refurbished. Some 12 small businesses now exist in Laid whereas there was only 1 before and 9 crofts are now being worked compared with 1 before.

So our general comment is that top priority should be given to attracting people to the Highlands. Once folk are here, they will create businesses - and the Highlands are SMALL BUSINESS COUNTRY, something which is not sufficiently emphasized in our opinion. On the contrary, there is throughout the Development Plan an underlying assumption that "development" must be created then the people will follow. We would suggest the opposite.

But to attract people, especially to rural and fragile areas like ours, local services must be improved - and there is not enough emphasis on this. During the last 15 years our services here - which are in any case minimal now amounting to dustbin collection every week and library every three weeks (cut from every two weeks some five years ago) have declined - and yet we pay the same council tax as folk in Inverness (and very much more than folk in other parts of the country).

Something must be done to improve local services to places like Laid and to reduce the high burden of council tax and the Plan is singularly lacking in any such proposals.

If the lack of services continues, then so will the population decline in rural areas. You and the Scottish Executive have recently shown how this can be addressed for broadband and the same attention should be given to matters like roads, fire protection, transport.

Here the continuing suppression of the post bus service is nothing less than a scandal for the Highlands. The post bus, by definition, used to call at every household in rural areas and was a small, reliable and much appreciated service. Why was it allowed to be wiped out? The Plan talks of the "Local Transport Strategy" and "integrated transport". This already existed with the post bus network which should be brought back.

Again on the provision of local services we applaud the planning for an ageing population and the mention of care in the home. Care in the home is the key but also provision of local facilities when

people can no longer be supported at home. In this parish too many people are taken off to spend their last days far from their local communities and this is wrong.

Also we applaud the mention of rural filling stations, vital for local economies and for tourists.

There is not nearly enough emphasis on tourism in the Plan. This is already a major part of the Highland economy and the potential for expansion is unlimited if we get the tourism set-up right. You rightly highlight the "natural, built and cultural heritage" but this is mainly ignored by tourists because they do not know it is there and just pass on by. In Laid we have the best preserved free standing Wheel House in Scotland which thousands of tourists pass by each year without knowing it is there - and that the walk up to it is one of the best there could be. We have managed to raise funds ourselves for a brochure to direct tourists to the Wheel House but more funds should be available for this sort of publicity.

There is a small area just opposite Laid on Loch Eriboll, right beside the main road, on which there are no fewer than four hut circles and a ruined broch. But nobody ever visits them because they are just not known. This is a pity and another example of the neglect of our heritage - apart from missing the enhancement of the tourist experience. And there are many similar examples of neglect of our many historic sites.

Again in the tourist context we welcome the chapter on "Wild Land". The sort of environment and quality of life in such areas as ours cannot be replaced and must be defended at all costs. The environment in the Highlands is our most precious asset. But again services to the Wild Lands must be improved.

On Coastal Development we welcome the Option on fish farming and suggest that much more emphasis be given to encouraging an industry where the pure waters of our lochs should offer many opportunities for new ideas leading to more jobs. Fishing has traditionally gone hand in hand with crofting in coastal areas and could become the predominant partner if new fish farming possibilities are fully exploited.

Similarly we feel that every encouragement should be given to forestry, especially native woodlands, which is lacking in many parts of the Highlands. This would not only enhance the environment by restoring native species but again create jobs.

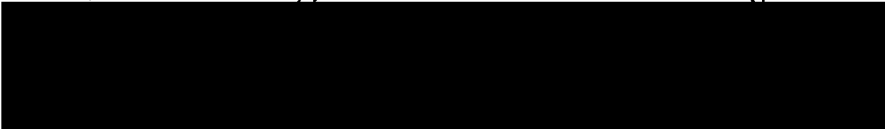
In this respect our submission to the Scottish Forestry Strategy pointed out that it was too timid in encouraging more afforestation in places like Sutherland and in that respect, we would not agree with your endorsement of the Strategy but argue for more experimentation and investment in marginal areas to bring back the native trees.

On Minerals, we welcome the more pragmatic approach and would definitely not support the alternative to the Preferred Option.

To sum up we find many things to support in the Development Plan but feel that insufficient emphasis is given to:

- small business
- improving local services to small communities
- tourism linked with improving knowledge of our historic sites
- care of the elderly in their communities
- forestry
- developing new aquaculture opportunities

Yours sincerely,

  
Kenneth MacKenzie Hillcoat LAID GHRAZINGS CLERK

cc Cllrs Farlow, Munro, Rowantree  
MSPs Gibson, Grant, Munro  
Lord Thurso MP