

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

Reference Number:	HWLDP-MIR-153
Organisation/Individual:	Mrs E Holland

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

Key:

Background	Spatial Strategy	Policy Options	Consultation
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Notes:

Purpose of development should be clarified and consistent
 Freight potential of Caledonian canal cannot be looked at in isolation
 Growth is needed in Northwest
 No further developments along the A96 until infrastructure is in place
 Nairn should be what the residents want it to be
 Tornagrain not sustainable and close to the airport
 Better balance of development across Highland
 housing should be looked at with job availability
 Infrastructure should be to the cost of the developer
 Disputing between proposals in MIR and National Policy
 Some definitions in glossary need clarification

Respondent included diagram entitled "Blue Print for the Destruction of a Rural Community"

Action Sheet Completed by:	SH
Date:	9/12/09

H.C. PLANNING AND
Rosevalley House
Cawdor, Nairn IV12 5XT
PUBLIC SERVICE

09 NOV 2009

PASS TO	INITIALS	DATE
		4 November 2009

FILE REF:

Highland Council Planning Dept
Main Issues Report Response

Dear Sirs,

Response to Main Issues Report

This report is of vital importance to everyone living in Highland Region and it is imperative that it be given the widest circulation and fullest discussion throughout the region. Before responding to individual sections of the report, I wish to place on record my grave concerns about three general points:

(i) The consultation procedure

The consultation period afforded is inadequate. Planners have been working for several years on some sections of the report (which is incomplete in many fundamental respects); yet the public are expected to ingest it and offer comment within 10 weeks.

The distribution of the report has been inept and entirely inadequate in the following respects, among others:

For an electorate of approximately 150,000 a print run of 1,500 has been made. Highland Council was willing to carry out a mailshot on 'Homecoming Year' to every home in the region but decided - on cost grounds - not to advise individual households of this important public consultation.

There has been in a single newspaper on a single occasion one half-page advertisement to inform the public in the whole of Highland Region about this consultation.

There has been no circulation to voluntary bodies (eg Highland Senior Citizens Network, Talking Newspapers for the blind, etc) which include items of this nature in their widely distributed newsletters.

At some locations advertised as holding copies, supplies ran out weeks before the end of the consultation period or have not been on display

but shut away in drawers. Community councils were supplied with a single copy. I could go on.

These actions represent, at best, serious errors of judgement on the part of senior planning staff and have clearly deprived many members of the public of the opportunity to respond.

(ii) The content of the document:

The document does not conform to the requirement of Planning Circular 1, February 2009, that main issues reports should contain "one or more sets of reasonable alternative proposals". This is highly irregular. I would submit that it is not "sufficiently clear and precise" to enable the public to make "meaningful comments";. There are important omissions of fact to which I will refer as I go through the sections. For example, in the case of the A96 Corridor there is clear bias in favour of the preferred option in that the negative elements of this proposal are simply not addressed; people living outwith the area might be unaware that the proposal envisages loss of some 250 hectares of the best agricultural land in Highland.

(iii) The authors' perceptions of the purpose of development (which alter throughout the document).

I will refer to these in my comments on the relevant sections. I am also concerned about some of the definitions given in the glossary which differ from the normally understood meaning, e.g. hinterland, sustainable..

In view of the above, I feel the only proper course would be to revise the Main Issues Report and make copies readily available to all council tax payers in the region. However, using the inadequate information supplied, I would make the following responses taken in the same order as sections laid out in the report.

1. Purpose of the MIR

Before putting policies in place it is essential to know what the purpose of development is. The imbalances and inconsistencies of approach recorded in this document suggest that "development" means different things in different areas and, indeed, in the case of the A96 corridor, that development (housing and industrial) is of itself an end regardless of any resultant negative social or spatial consequences to which it may give rise. In other areas where depopulation is of increasing concern, vague generalities have been advanced in relation to solving what is a longstanding and admittedly difficult problem. Development should be seen not as an end in itself but as a tool to improve the

quality of life of communities. "Quality of life" in turn should be determined by full consultation with local people at an early stage in any planning exercise; this approach would result in better practical use of funds, more satisfied communities, and in all probability a shorter timescale. Or the extent of development agreed to be necessary. Different areas have different priorities in achieving improved quality of life; it is not for Highland Council to impose preconceived priorities upon them.

I welcome the intention to provide consistency in planning regulations across the region. In drawing up the new policies full regard must be had to currently increasing global problems: rising sea levels, world-wide food and water shortages, rapid depletion of non-renewable energy sources, and the unpredictable effects of climate change. The UK Building Standards Authority is currently revising regulations in light of these factors with particular attention to the use of truly renewable energy sources. Until the new regulations have been codified, it would be prudent to make any interim planning consents subject to a condition that they must comply with any regulations coming into force before construction commences. It is possible that such regulations could increase developer costs; these costs should lie with the developer and not be passed in whole or in part on to the taxpayer.

Too often conditions attached to consents are flouted, and there is then no follow-up action by the Planning Department; non-compliance should have serious consequences. If it did, I believe the planners' workload could be eased in the long term. Too often consents are given without adequate consideration of possible detrimental effects on the immediate neighbourhood. There is, for example, the bizarre case of White Ness where development was permitted by Highland Council within the perimeter of a MOD firing range. Once agreed policies are in place they should be adhered to. If major changes are thought necessary these should be open to public examination and comment.

In this regard, I am deeply concerned about an apparent shift in Highland's policy on safeguarding of good quality agricultural land. The policy, as I understood, was that such land would be protected from development unless an overwhelming need was proved; this has now progressed to 'unless we fancy doing it' with no proof of need required. In the development proposals for the A96 corridor there is no proven need for housing development on the scale proposed (and certainly no shred of proof of where the residents could find jobs) whilst the negative effects of such proposals on the present economic and social life of the community are entirely ignored.

While accepting the intent of the last two paragraphs in this section, I feel the wholly inadequate distribution of the Main Issues Report throughout Highland Region renders them meaningless. When asking friends whether they have submitted a response to the consultation process, I have all too often had the

reply "What consultation?" Certainly, had I not been a member of APT and living in an area with an active community council, I would not have known of it.

2. NPF2 for Scotland and the Highlands

What is the genesis of the A96 Corridor Development Plan's inclusion in NPF2? It has never been subject to proper public consultation.

Potential for freight on the Caledonian Canal: this cannot be dealt with in isolation. It must be addressed in conjunction with potential projects adjacent to it, e.g. the already long delayed, and urgently needed, road crossing of the canal; possible abstraction from Loch Ness.

Rail lines: I would suggest links to Glasgow are also important. .

3. The Vision for the Highlands

"By 2030, the Highlands will be one of Europe's leading regions. We will have created sustainable communities, balancing population growth and economic development across the area, and have built a fairer and healthier Highlands." What is the basis for this assertion? One may agree with the sentiment, but there is no hope of achieving it without a sea-change in the policies Highland Council and HIE have been pursuing over the past few years. These policies have been accompanied by continuing depopulation in the North and West, increasing traffic problems (particularly in the A96 Corridor area), withdrawal of services to Inverness from further afield, cutbacks in social services, and increased infrastructure problems - again very evident in the A96 Corridor. It is time to re-evaluate the policies which have brought us to this pass. Looking at the definition of "sustainable" in the Glossary, I find it difficult to believe that we will have sustainable communities all over Highland in the next 15 years.

In the following paragraph on objectives it is stated that "The possible options for delivering these objectives form part of this Main Issues Report." I have been unable to find the "one or more sets of reasonable alternative proposals" required by Planning Circular 1 of February 2009 anywhere in this document and my letter of 5 October 2009 to Highland Council requesting clarification on this point has gone unacknowledged. On page 24 of the MIR in regard to Caithness and North Sutherland one reads, "The Council has not identified any reasonable alternatives to the Preferred Option on this issue." The same statement is reiterated on page 29. These statements are not in conformity with Section 17(2) of the Town and Country Planning (Scotland) Act 2006.

With regard to "sustainable Highland communities", in the glossary "sustainable" is defined as "something that will last because it has tackled its current and longer-term environmental, social and economic effects and does not rely on non-renewable resources". Development plans submitted to date, while often claiming to be sustainable, give no undertaking that they will "not rely on non-renewable resources". Indeed, they tend to be reliant on transporting water (from as yet unidentified sources) and waste over long distances, thus increasing our carbon footprint and inflicting on other communities burdens which the developments themselves will create. This is a matter which requires close attention when considering planning applications and one where at present inconsistency seems to be the hallmark of decision making.

Turning to "5. A Competitive, Sustainable and Adaptable Highland Economy", these are admirable sentiments but there is no indication of how they are to be achieved. I am concerned about the last point - "To ensure that the planning guidance for mineral development, coastal developments, forestry, agriculture and croft land is clear and consistent and that key resources are protected" - and the last two words - "where appropriate." If key resources need protection, they need protection and the words "where appropriate" suggest a get out option for the Council not unlike the watering down of the protection for agricultural land.

"A Healthier Highlands"

The proposed development of the A96 Corridor will destroy existing places that contribute to increasing healthy lifestyles, opportunities for quality open space provision and access to enjoy the outdoors" for local residents. Citizens of Inverness and tourists from further afield alike. What would contribute to a healthier Highlands would be, in cooperation with the NHS, restoration of local medical facilities at Broadford and Belford. A round trip of 200 miles or more, either for treatment or to visit a sick relative, can be extremely demanding.

Better opportunities for all/ A fairer Highlands

Again a commendable aim but unlikely to be achieved by the proposals in this report. Perhaps an initial attempt at fairness would be to give every home in Highland equal access to the report and time to submit their response.

4. Where should growth go?

Where it is most needed and wanted - in the North and West with their ongoing problem of depopulation. If this is not reversed, it will result in reduction in social, medical and educational facilities, which in turn will hasten further depopulation.

Over-development of the type witnessed in the A96 Corridor in recent years also brings problems: traffic congestion, overloaded infrastructure, imbalance of school and other social provision.

What is required is balanced development across Highland Region as a whole. Development is not (except in the eyes of the developers) an end in itself. It should go forward to an extent that is optimum - not maximum - for the community where it is taking place, on sites which are preferably brownfield (although these are less likely to be available in more sparsely populated areas) and certainly not on good quality agricultural land. In other parts of Scotland, with a higher percentage of arable land than in Highland, this is taken as read, and in some areas not even retiring farmers are permitted to build on their own land.

Inverness and the A96 Corridor

This is an attempted marriage of two wholly disparate areas. The first sentence - "The continued growth and development of Inverness and the surrounding area is essential so that the Highlands can continue to prosper" - is an assertion made in isolation and without support. It can equally be said in light of experience in recent years that excessive longterm growth in this area will damage the Highlands overall and, in particular, give rise to increasing problems in the development-starved North and West.

Inverness

I would accept the general tenor of the preferred option for the city itself but do have reservations on some aspects. Rather than extending its problems into the surrounding countryside, brownfield sites within the city should be the first areas to be developed. Any further development required should take place adjacent to the present built-up areas of the city, avoiding good quality agricultural land, and not extend into the A96 Corridor. I disagree fundamentally with the proposal to site a new campus for UHI to the east of the city on good arable land and feel that such a step would be detrimental to the economic health of the city. I will return to this under A96 Corridor.

The problem which has been ongoing for decades is provision of a road crossing over the canal. This should be given first priority; its completion would make the city an integrated whole, improving access to the West Highlands and affording easier access to development potential to the west of the city. Destruction of remaining old buildings should be halted; gut and rebuild their interiors but restore their imposing facades. Please, no more out-of-town supermarkets - revive the city centre, and develop brownfield sites tastefully and in keeping with the older buildings.

The A96 Corridor

The entire opening statement on page 10 is disingenuous. It brings to mind a "public consultation" meeting held in Croy in July 2005. There planners asserted that it was quite impossible to develop other than to the east of Inverness; within weeks the planning application for Milton of Leys was approved. Inverness has only years of indecision to thank for the lack of a canal crossing and the problems this creates should be remedied as soon as possible, thus enhancing westward development prospects and transport facilities. A number of steep slopes have already been covered in housing on the east of Inverness. Human beings have been able successfully to build on slopes and cross rivers for millenia and there are plenty of examples throughout Scotland. While flatter well drained land is more congenial and profitable to developers, it is equally more productive in farming terms. What is the basis for affording priority to developers?

The section continues, "Opportunities to the north are limited by the Moray Firth and the capacity of its crossing by the Kessock Bridge." The constraining factor across the River Ness is not the bridge but the roundabouts leading to it. Improvements in the present road system could improve access to development land to the north of Inverness.

In the generalised description that follows of land to the east of Inverness one vital aspect is omitted: the nature and quality of the land. This is highly productive agricultural land (a mix of classes 2,3.1 and 3.2). This area of coastal plain stretching into Moray has been regarded for centuries as some of the finest arable land in Scotland. To seek to develop it for housing and industry at a time when there are global concerns about inadequate food sources seems at best perverse.

Under "Corridor Wide Issues" it is stated: "Our view is that the development principles behind the A96 Corridor Framework, particularly in terms of providing a wide choice of development land to meet future housing requirements remain valid. This may be the authors' view but it is based on assumptions which many do not share as to population growth and low worth of a tourism and agriculture based economy one which incidentally is bearing up rather better than industry-based economies in the present recession.

As to its support in NPF2, I have already expressed my concern as to how the A96 Corridor Framework came to appear in that document without having been put out to proper public consultation.

It is further stated, "There has however been some opposition to these plans for

growth, and this consultation allows people the opportunity to set out or restate their views on where development for the future should go" This is a somewhat dismissive and, indeed, misleading statement. When the A9 Corridor Framework was put out to public consultation in summer 2005 it attracted some 60 responses of which about 20 (mainly from developers) supported the proposal. The 14 000 or so objections contained many cogent and closely reasoned grounds for concern; but no significant changes were made and the proposal put forward now remains largely unchanged. This places in doubt the serious intention of Highland Council to heed the views of residents throughout the corridor..

Phasing of development

This presents an ever-changing scenario. At a public meeting in Croy on 28 October the representative of Transport Scotland stated that there were no funds and no timescale for major road and rail developments until after the completion of the new Forth Bridge (estimated 2016). No source has yet been established for the massively increased water supply required for this proposed scale of development. Currently Highland exports much of its waste to Peterhead, which is not a sustainable option.

I am concerned by the statement that, "A lot of discussion has been held with agencies responsible for this infrastructure and it remains important that the improvements are put in place as *development progresses*." (my italics) This contradicts the clear statements repeated at public meetings by council officers that development will not take place until the necessary infrastructure is in place. This appears to be an attempt at development by stealth, and the following paragraph reinforces this suspicion: "In order to ensure that development of the A96 Corridor can take place in a managed way, further work is being undertaken to confirm at what point these improvements to the A96 Corridor are required. This work includes an update to a transport model, so that the results can be included in the Proposed Plan. This will help determine what *parts* of the developments identified in the Framework can progress *before* the big improvements such as the A96-A91hk, the upgrade of the A96 and the Nairn by-pass are put in place." (again my italics) This is totally at odds with council officers' confirmation that infrastructure must precede development. The fact that such work is in progress *before* the results of this consultation are known is disquieting; it implies that Highland Council is pursuing a predetermined course regardless of public opinion. Already the current infrastructure in the Croy and Galcantray areas cannot bear the burden of further development in terms of surface water drainage; at present there is no further capacity in waste water facilities for any more development in and around the Croy area. The extent of housing development in Nairn in recent years has led to major traffic congestion problems on the A96.. No further development should take place in the A96 Corridor until these problems are eliminated. Cherry-picking of bits and pieces of infrastructure to be strengthened to suit individual developments is a costly way of addressing this problem and fraught with difficulties in regard to developer contribution.

In this section comprising 6 pages two short paragraphs then follow under "Any other options to this Preferred Option?". Planning Circular 16 February 2009 requires provision of "one or more sets of reasonable alternative proposals" and these two paragraphs do not constitute such provision.

The first paragraph is not even an alternative approach it states exactly what council officers have already publicly affirmed is the position, to allow no further development in the A96 Corridor until major infrastructure improvements are put in place". The second paragraph is already largely subsumed in the Easter Ross and Nigg option.

I do not support the Council's preferred option.

My preferred option would be that if a need for development is proven and if such development would not adversely affect the depopulated areas of Highland, should take place not in the centre of the corridor but (a) at either end of the corridor or (b) apportioned between the hinterlands of existing settlements. The present soundly based economy of the area would be disrupted by the insertion of a large urban development in its midst. **I wish to provide a brief addendum on this matter shortly.

Developer Contributions in the A96 Corridor

Highland Council remain committed to ensuring that a developer contributions protocol exists for the A96 Corridor," But how is the protocol arrived at and what does it contain?

What reassurance would the public have that it would be adhered to? Transparency is clearly required here. Protocols already in place have been altered in the past few years, and always in the same direction: developers pay a decreased percentage of infrastructure costs and the public pays an increased percentage. Such alterations appear to go forward without public scrutiny. It is the duty of the Council to protect the interests of the public they serve; this seems an odd way of going about it.

I do not agree with the preferred option unless draft protocols are subject to public scrutiny and, if required, subsequent alteration before being finalised.

I feel that developers should bear the full cost of any infrastructure their scheme requires. If anything less were to be agreed, then the amounts (not just the percentages) to be paid by the public and developers should be in the public domain and subject to scrutiny before development proceeds.

Area Specific Issues - East Inverness

What is the basis for the assertion that "East Inverness is the most important area for the future expansion of the City"?

In view of Transport Scotland's recent statement on funding and timescales, the A96-A9 link is on indefinite hold. To proceed with development without first addressing major transport problems would be foolhardy. What public support has been established for "the delivery of the campus site at Beechwood"? Where are the funds for this project to come from? What is the rationale for

this project? Here again a change of user from agricultural to development is required and more productive land would be lost. At a recent day conference of staff and students held in Aviemore widespread concerns were voiced about the proposed site change, particularly in regard to increased transport difficulties for those travelling from the north and west. eg. Muir of Ord and Fort William. Have staff and students been consulted on this proposal? Have they even been offered copies of the MIR? To move UHI further away from the area it was established to serve and place it adjacent to an area which already has links with Aberdeen University (Culloden and Nairn Academies) would be counter-productive.

I disagree with the preferred option and particularly with the concept of dealing with infrastructure needs in a piecemeal fashion.
I would like to see UHI strengthening the vocational pathways already in place to the north and west.

Nairn

I consider that in recent years both the extent and density of development have been excessive. I believe this is now a widely held view, but I would like to see here whatever development is most favoured by the residents, while stressing the need for infrastructure to be fully in place before development goes ahead.

I see sympathetic redevelopment in the centre of the town as a priority, including a supermarket (please, not another Tesco). As someone who is partially sighted, I find the one-way High Street and the compact range of services and shops particularly helpful. Development should be related to the route and timescale of the by-pass.

I am therefore neither for nor against the preferred option. I want Nairn to be what its residents want it to be.

Tornagrain

I do not know on what grounds Tornagrain has been selected as one of the Scottish Government's Sustainable Community Initiative proposals" but whether on my understanding of true sustainability or under the somewhat strained definition in the glossary, I do not see how this proposal could be regarded as truly sustainable. Water (from a source as yet unidentified) will have to be transported for many miles over somebody else's land and waste matter taken away for somebody else to process. There is no undertaking that energy used will be supplied from truly renewable sources. There would be inadequate provision on site or nearby for jobs for the householders; indeed the insertion of this development in the very heart of a rural community would pose a major threat to existing jobs in agriculture and tourism which form the backbone

of this established and growing economy of the area. I understand the latest application, which is for outline planning consent, would require a routing and extension by some 2 miles of the A96. Every return journey between Inverness and any point from Croy eastward would be increased by 4 miles. How can this possibly be "sustainable"?

In regard to job provision I would also mention Norbord. With a workforce of over 100 it is a comparatively large employer in this area. It was deliberately sited in countryside to the east of Inverness because of its operations. It has established good relations with the community and produces regular measurements of its plume emissions (the reason for its careful siting). These are entirely safe but they can be very pungent. This is bearable if you are walking the dog or even doing a day's ploughing but it would not be a pleasant recurring feature in a home and garden, and the plume can drift over much of the proposed development site.

The authors state that Tornagrain will also divert development pressure from more inappropriate locations and therefore allow for the retention and creation of green space and green networks. I find it impossible to envisage anything more inappropriate than the Tornagrain proposal. It will be totally destructive of "green space and green networks".

The map of the Tornagrain site is misleading. Anyone who did not know the area would be unaware that Tornagra is planned to be cheek by jowl with Dalcross Airport and adjacent to a large industrial park. Highland Region would be unique in Europe in building a new town on an airport perimeter, particularly as in the latest edition the proposed development now includes some five-storey buildings. On this map Croy appears to have been robbed of its hinterland. The Tornagrain perimeter is about 700 metres away from the latest development in the village and is contiguous with several properties whose owners have long regarded Croy as their village.

The application to extend the airport industrial park is misconceived. From Forss to Nairn Tradespark there is space available - and in some cases plenty of it - if firms wish to come to Highland. The trouble is, they don't. Not a single company has been named as seeking to locate at the airport industrial park, so all an extension would do would be to take out of productive use more agricultural land.

The short response time allowed precludes me from going into detail on these and other fundamental flaws in this proposal but I can certainly provide substantiation if required.

If "The Council has not identified any reasonable alternatives to the Preferred Option this issue" it is in breach of S.17(2) of the Town and Country Planning (Scotland) Act 2006. However, it is common knowledge that a number of alternatives were produced by consultants a few years ago and the selection of the present preferred option was made by Highland Council, which then precluded all other options from going forward to public consultation. Was the competence of the consultants so poor that they produced a series of "unreasonable" options?

I do not agree with the Preferred Option.

My preference is for such development for which a need is proved not to take place in the centre of the corridor but to proceed at either end of the corridor and whenever possible on brownfield sites.

Smaller Settlements in the A96 Corridor

Is this a serious suggestion? One asks again, what is the underlying purpose of such development? Moreover, land can only be used once. To take the example of Croy, if the ill-conceived new town of Tornagrain were to go ahead, Croy's hinterland would already have been swallowed up by that and no longer available. If - and only if - all the proposed larger developments in the corridor were abandoned, then careful expansion of the smaller settlements would be a viable choice. There is no proven need for housing, and any business wishing to come to Highland can avail itself of a wide selection of sites on existing half-empty industrial parks.

The MIR does not meet the requirements of Planning Circular 1 of February 2009.

I wholly disagree with this preferred option.

In view of the pressures already being put on the smaller settlements, I would suggest that, far from expanding them, they should be ring-fenced within the corridor. It would, however, be worth looking for suitable small settlements in the more remote and fragile areas of Highland which would benefit positively from expansion. This raises difficult questions of how to generate jobs and how to retain an unspoiled countryside. The very short time allowed for this consultation does not enable me to expand at this point, but I intend to submit a brief addendum specifically on this issue within the next fortnight.**

Caithness and North Sutherland

We do not all have ready access to the internet. A brief outline of the strategy for economic development being pursued should have been included in this section. This is a pan-Highland document and there is interdependence between the areas. I am concerned about the apparent discrepancies in terms of cost and effort expended between the A96 Corridor area and the more remote and fragile areas. It appears from this document that excessive developer-led expansion is being sought for what is a comparatively robust and soundly based economy in the southeast of Highland at the expense of the north and west.

The MIR does not meet the requirements of Planning Circular 1 of February 2009.

I would like to have seen more clear purpose and vigour in this "preferred option".

I feel that research into tidal energy should be brought forward as soon as possible, not only in the Pentland Firth but along the West Coast. This venture is massively more important than all the development that could be crammed into the A96 Corridor put together, not just for Highland but also for Europe. It should in my view have been being addressed long before Dounreay was decommissioned.

The time constraints of this consultation make it impossible to make a full submission on this before the deadline but I would hope to send in a brief addendum within the next two weeks.**

Easter Ross and Nigg

I would make the same general comments as I did in the previous section. Again the MIR does not meet the requirements of Planning Circular 1 of February 2009.

Development of Local Centres

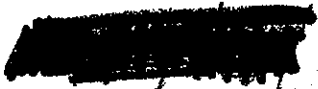
The opening sentence is absolutely right, and it is sad that it is thought necessary to make it. The authors state that "The smaller towns like Fort William, Wick, Thurso, Portree, Dingwall or key villages like Ullapool, Durness and Broadford are equally important in our strategy." But this can hardly be the case as the proposed population growth figure is already allotted to intended housing in the A96 Corridor. Highland Council needs to think this through again and arrive at a practical solution which will be fair to all communities in the region. Busing is no good without jobs, so we come back to the need to provide work. This is no easy task and once more I would like to submit a more detailed statement on this but cannot under the present time constraints; I will try to do so within the next two weeks.** The flights of fancy indulged in as to job creation in the A96 Corridor are truly frightening. I believe that long term there is a real chance of job creation across Highland but this will not happen if we continue to follow the ill-starred and costly policies of the past pursued by HIE and before that by HIDB.

Enforced Conclusion

At this point there is much more I wish to go into (and I had certainly intended to edit and cull what I have already dealt with) but my time is up; submissions must be before the Highland Council tomorrow morning. I reiterate that the consultation period allowed

is woefully inadequate, and this situation has been compounded by the difficulties the public have faced in attempting to obtain the necessary documentation. It almost appears that Highland Council considers public comment an irrelevancy. I intend to submit in the next fortnight very short addenda on items marked ** in this text.

Yours faithfully,

A large, solid black rectangular redaction covers the signature area of the letter.

E M C Holland (Mrs)