Landward Caithness Ward Forum
Action Note of Meeting 2nd October 2007

Question & Answer Session:

1. What financial powers do the Landward Councillors have?

Member's roles through the various committees are to scrutinise, monitor and regulate the financial performance of the service they are responsible for. Landward Councillors are also consulted over any application for funding from the Landward Discretionary Budget however the budget holder is the Ward Manager.

2. Can you supply an organisational chart for the area services?

Services are still progressing through the restructuring process and are all at different stages of this process. Once complete local structures will be provided for the operational area.

3. What powers do the local councillors have over the persons supplying services in their areas?

See answer to question 1

4. Has the recent change in the way that services are supplied improved local democratic control or removed it?

The recent changes are intended to open up the business to the public at a more local level and allow public participation through the ward forums. This avenue did not exist under the old area committee structure.

5. If we are not satisfied with the way services are delivered what means do we have to change matters?

Initially raise your concerns with the Service Area Manager or Ward Manager. You are also entitled to lobby your local councillors for the multi member ward and raise issue of concern at the ward forums.

6. Do you have control over any service providers?

The Members set policy and recently the ruling independent/SNP administration has published its programme for administration. Services then implement there programmes in accordance with the administrations programme. As stated above elected members scrutinise and monitor progress and performance of service through committees and by feedback from the electorate and forums such as this. As Ward Manager I have influence over all services through my work with elected members. Although I do not have any direct control over other services I am consulted on members and community councils views and concerns.

7. Do you have any financial powers?

The Ward Manager has responsibility for the Ward discretionary budget. Any spend however is following consultation with all the members of the ward.

8. Of the money that comes from the council taxes in Caithness, what proportion is controlled from Caithness and what from out with the area, and what body or bodies exerts that control?

Caithness is not an administrative area but forms 3 of the 22 wards of the Highland Council Area. All services now have Area Managers for the Caithness Sutherland & Easter Ross operational area so have direct control on their budgets for that area. The managers are based mainly in Wick and Dornoch/Brora (Soon to be Golspie). Programmes and budgets are agreed by core committees in line with the programme for administration or on a needs basis

9. What steps are being taken to provide an extension to Canisbay cemetery?

As at 2/10/2007 Canisbay Cemetery has 36 lairs left. Although there is a strip of grass that may be used for lairs but it is not marked as lairs on the map. If this area is going to be used as lairs this would increase the amount of available lairs from 36 to approx. 67. TECS are in the process of looking into this at the moment.

LAIRS ALLOCATED – CANISBAY CEMETERY						
Sept 2006-Present	**Sept 2005 – Aug 2006**	**Sept 2004 – Aug 2005**	**Sept 2003 – Aug 2004**	**Sept 2002 – Aug 2003**	**Sept 2001 – Aug 2002**	**Average lairs sold Per Year**
8	4	9	11	6	6	7

Worst case – If there are only 36 lairs left – Canisbay Cemetery will last approx 5 years.
If grassed area is used as lairs this should give us more lee way – Canisbay Cemetery will last approx 9½ years.

BURIALS – CANISBAY CEMETERY						
Sept 2006-Present	**Sept 2005 – Aug 2006**	**Sept 2004 – Aug 2005**	**Sept 2003 – Aug 2004**	**Sept 2002 – Aug 2003**	**Sept 2001 – Aug 2002**	**Average Burials Per Year**
16	11	14	19	14	15	15

10. There is a general perception that Highland Council are being bullied into accepting on-shore wind farm schemes which are outwith its Renewable Energy Strategy (RES), which was commissioned by the council in response to public disquiet over the free-for-all that seemed to be emerging. As the Executive seems quite firm that Highland Council will have the whip hand when considering the extent to which they will adhere to the RES, can we be given the assurance that they will stand firm on the RES and other planning policies which influenced its production?

It is felt that this question should be put to the local authority's core committee as to prejudge the committee's answer would be wrong. If a Member stands up at this meeting and says 'I oppose wind farms', when it comes to a meeting where an application is being considered they will be disqualified by virtue of having made their position clear. Members must absolutely avoid expressing personal opinions about this issue, or any other, which is going to

be the subject of a planning application. It must be understood that the burden on Members is very, very severe and they cannot express any opinion at all, and there's no way around that.