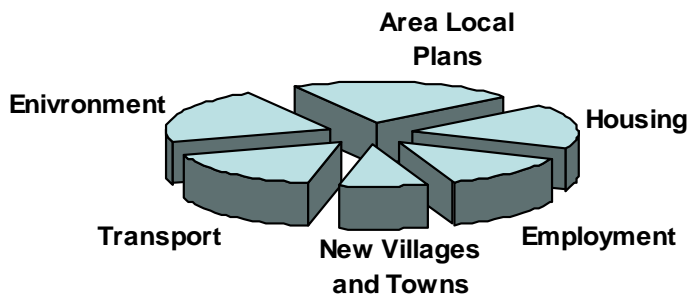


Welcome to the first in a series of newsletters updating you on the progress of the work carried out by the Development Plans Team at The Highland Council.

Development Plans Scheme

Since its launch in March, the Development Plan Scheme has been spread far and wide across Highland. A number of generally helpful comments have been received.

Most people thought the Development Plan Scheme was easy to read and understand. The chart below shows the issues which were highlighted as being particularly important to people. We are currently working hard to make sure everyone's view is considered when we are preparing the Highland Wide Local Development Plan.



We want to keep you up to date with what is going on with the development plan in your area. During the consultation on the Development Plan Scheme a number of you told us methods of keeping in touch that you would like us to use and these include:

- Presentations with Q & A sessions for communities, groups and organisations
- Public Meetings
- Newsletters
- Roadshows

We will take these suggestions on board and make sure that they form part of future consultation.

Keep Us in the Picture

As part of the Development Plan Scheme publicity, young people from across Highland were invited to take part in a photographic competition to let us know what they think of their community's environment and what aspirations they have for communities in the future. The Highland Youth Voice Forum chose the winners, which are shown below.

What you like about your community



What you're not so keen on in your community



What could be improved in your community



What would be really fun to have in your community or in the Highlands

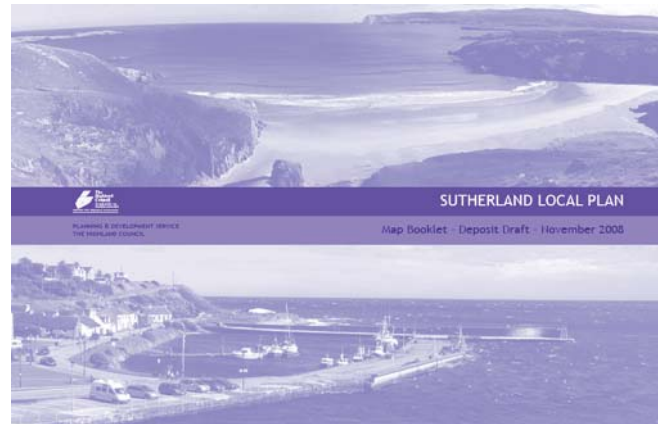


Development Plans News

We have been working on a range of projects over the past few months, and an update on progress on some of them is given below.

Sutherland Local Plan

A Deposit Draft version of the Sutherland Local Plan is out for public Consultation from 28th November 2008 to 23rd January 2009. This is accompanied by the Environmental Report. If you would like to make comments on the plan please go online to <http://www.highland.gov.uk> and click on Planning Consultations. There will be a Public Inquiry into the Plan mid-2009.



West Highlands and Islands Local Plan

A Deposit Draft version of the West Highlands and Islands Local Plan is also out for public consultation from 19th December 2008 to 13th February 2009. This is accompanied by the Environmental Report. If you would like to make comments on the plan please go online to <http://www.highland.gov.uk> and click on Planning Consultations. There will be a Public Inquiry into the Plan mid-2009.

Fort William Waterfront and Dingwall Masterplans

We are in the process of appointing consultants to prepare planning frameworks for both the wider Fort William Waterfront and the Riverside area of Dingwall. The masterplans will be ready mid-2009 following extensive public consultation.

Open Space in New Residential Development: Supplementary Guidance

We know how important open spaces can be to how you feel about your community. We have been working with Kit Campbell Associates to produce new guidance on how much open space there should be in new residential developments, how it can be accessed, how it can be maintained and making sure it will be great quality. We are going to ask what you think of the work we have done on this, early 2009.

Review of the Housing in the Countryside Policy

Over the course of 2008, a working group has carried out an initial review of the existing housing in the countryside policy, and highlighted a number of opportunities for possible change. This is being taken forward and further reports will be brought to Committee during the early part of 2009.

Houses in Multiple Occupation: Supplementary Guidance

Following a survey of best practice throughout Scotland the Council have produced guidance on the relationship between Planning and Licensing on the complicated issue of Houses in Multiple Occupation. We held a public consultation on this during late summer 2008 and the Planning, Environment and Development Committee approved it to be used as a policy for deciding planning applications in November 2009. It will be published online shortly.

Developer Contributions: Supplementary Guidance

We are also preparing guidance on developer contributions which will be presented to committee in early 2009.



The Planning etc. (Scotland) Act 2006 introduced important legal changes to planning in Scotland, but legislation on its own cannot deliver the improvements that are needed.

Delivering Planning Reform

Over the last few months the Scottish Government and its agencies have been working with the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities (COSLA) and the development industry to look at how they can significantly increase co-operation and speed up the pace of reform. This was summed up by, 'Delivering Planning Reform' published by the Scottish Government in October (please see www.scotland.gov.uk for further details).

The main benefits from this new way of working to improve the efficiency of the planning system will be:

- Up to date development plans that provide investors and communities alike with greater certainty.
- More proportionate demands made of developers by the public sector to focus resources on matters of greatest significance.
- Improved planning applications that help to speed up response times from the public sector.
- Simpler and more transparent processes, including streamlined statutory consultation processes by Scottish Government agencies that focus on matters of genuine national interest.
- Greater understanding and cooperation across the public and private sector.
- The right partnerships in place to deliver better developments in the right places – and to deliver these more efficiently.

Highland wide Local Development Plan

As set out in the Development Plan Scheme, 2009 will see the preparation of a new local development plan for the Highlands. The Council is working with Scottish Government on a pilot project to deliver new planning policies which are shorter, clearer and focussed on delivery of infrastructure and economic development for the area. The project will also act as a means of drawing together all the different Council Services and agencies like Transport Scotland, SEPA, SNH and Scottish Water to help deliver the Council's Programme and the Single Outcome Agreement. By setting out clear guidance for developers and infrastructure providers, which has been prepared in consultation with the community, a very clear message will be sent out that Highland is open for business.

At present we are awaiting the publication of new regulations from the Scottish Government on how the new Local Development Plan should be produced, but we are busy producing our main issues report and doing preparatory work on our Strategic Environmental Assessment of the document. We will have this work complete by the end of February and we will be consulting everyone in Highland on this in Spring 2009. This is your opportunity to contribute to making sure planning policies are geared towards your communities needs, and we look forward to working with you.

National Planning Framework

The National Planning Framework has now been issued by Scottish Government – you can view it on the their web-site at:

<http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Publications/2008/12/12093953/0>.

Key Dates in 2009

We want to give you a list of dates that we are working to for the production of some of the work mentioned in this newsletter.

Note: These dates are accurate at the time of printing however they are dependent on a number of internal and external factors. We will keep you informed of any changes.

Consultation on the Sutherland Local Plan	Closing Date 23 rd January 2009
Consultation on the West Highlands and Islands Local Plan	Closing Date 13 th February 2009
Consultation on Open Space in New Residential Development: Draft Supplementary Guidance	Late January 2009 – Early April 2009
Publish an Updated Development Plan Scheme	Spring 2009
Consultation on Main Issues Report for Highland Wide Local Development Plan	Spring 2009
Public Inquiry for Sutherland and West Highlands and Islands Local Plan	June 2009
Publication of the draft Highland Wide Local Plan	September 2009
Adoption of the Sutherland and West Highland and Island Local Plans	Late Autumn 2009
Work Commences on the Inner Moray Firth Local Development Plan	Early 2010

Getting Involved

There are going to be lots of ways in which you can get involved over the coming months. We will be constantly updating our website with any events we may be having. The link is shown below:

<http://www.highland.gov.uk/yourenvironment/planning/>

Although we already have an extensive list of individuals, groups and organisations who we consult on a range of different matters, we do want more! If you want to get involved let us know either send us a postcard with your name, address, email and telephone number or email your details to devplans@highland.gov.uk. To help keep costs low and help the environment we will be publishing all documents on-line and distributed by e-mail EXCEPT for Community Councils and where broadband internet access is poor. Please help us in this aim by keeping us up to date with your e-mail details.

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