

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

Reference Number:	HWLDP-MIR-42
Organisation/Individual:	Dornoch Rail Link Action Group (Mark Norton)

Action:

Immediate Response Required	x
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	x
Smaller Settlements in A96		Agricultural Land	
Caithness and North Sutherland	x	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		Coastal Development	
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)	
Natural, Built and Cultural Heritage			

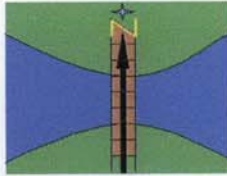
Key:

Background	Spatial Strategy	Policy Options	Consultation
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Notes:

Requests commitment to Dornoch Rail link: Pass to TECS for transport strategy (Response to say this).

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



DORNOCH RAIL LINK ACTION GROUP

Hon. President Revd. Alistair Roy BD

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H.C. PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT SERVICE		
22 OCT 2009		
PASS TO	INITIALS	DATE

Response to the 2009 Highland Draft Local Plan 19/10/09

Dear Sir/ Madam,

We are formally responding to the ongoing consultation for the Draft Highland Wide Local Development Plan (2009), in particular Questions 8 concerning Caithness and North Sutherland and Question 28b concerning Accessibility and Transport. For ease of reading, we will give our responses to the questions separately.

Question 8

Action Plan for Caithness and North Sutherland

Q8 Do you agree with our Preferred Option? If not, tell us why

Are there any other alternatives that should be considered?

Yes	No
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

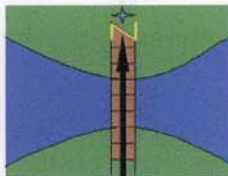
Response:

We welcome and support the recognition given within the Plan to the priorities concerning the Dounreay decommissioning and the Pentland Firth tidal power generation project. We nevertheless ask that more meaningful and positive recognition is given to the massive economic development potential afforded by not just the Pentland Firth project, but also the West of Shetland Oil and Gas exploration potential. The Plan must recognise that the Pentland Firth scheme in particular is an internationally strategically important renewable energy resource which has the potential to meet most of Scotland's and a major part of the U.K.'s energy needs. This scheme, and that for future oil and gas exploration, also have the potential to generate several hundred million pounds of income per year from Caithness and the Far North.

This income would impart massive and welcome benefits to the Highland Council and the Scottish Government, which are both facing serious financial difficulties as a consequence of the credit crunch. Nevertheless, the importance of major transport link improvements, the rail link in particular, to the Far North in this context **cannot** be overstated. We welcome the recognition given in the accompanying map of Caithness to the need to upgrade both road and rail links. The rail link is however being increasingly recognised as too slow and inadequate to meet the needs of the above developments. This issue was treated with great importance in the recent Caithness Conference on the 1st October, and discussed more fully in our meeting with Transport Scotland and Network Rail on the 4th June.

We will address the rail link more fully in our response to Question 28b, but we ask that an additional bullet point is added:

- "to make sure that transport links, particularly the Inverness – Wick rail line, are substantially improved, by means of the Dornoch Rail Link and other rail upgrades, commensurate with the nationally strategically significant priorities identified above"



DORNOCH RAIL LINK ACTION GROUP

Hon. President Revd. Alistair Roy BD

Question 28b

Accessibility and Transport

Q28B Do you agree with our Preferred Option? If not, tell us why

Are there any other alternatives that should be considered?

Yes	No
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Response:

We note the recognition for the necessity of transport upgrades for the Highland region, although we are seriously concerned at the content of this section for two reasons:

1. Good transport links are important for any growing economy, particularly for a large area such as the Highlands. This is particularly relevant given the issues covered in our response to Question 8. Good, competitive, reliable and fast railway links are particularly critically important given the current economic, social and environmental concerns. We do not feel that the subsuming of the accessibility and transport section within the "competitive, sustainable and adaptable Highland economy" section heading gives sufficient credence to this priority.
2. The importance of rail improvements must be given much more prominence and priority than they are now. Such consideration as is given to transport is heavily road-oriented, with only the barest mention of rail improvements. This section is also partly Inverness-oriented, with little consideration given to the outlying regions.

We note the necessity for improving the Inverness – Wick and Highland Main lines as shown in the accompanying maps. It is nevertheless very important that the importance of rail improvements are given the fullest support and clarification possible, and that the accessibility and transport section is converted into a standalone section of any Plan. Good transport links are increasingly recognised at every level as being vital to the economic well-being of the areas served by such links.

This applies particularly to rail links, the Far North Line particularly. Rail enjoys significant environmental benefits, in that it emits one half of the carbon dioxide emissions per passenger kilometre and one tenth those per tonne kilometre of freight carried compared to road transport. This differential will increase as more of the Scottish rail network is electrified.

It is with these reasons in mind that we ask for the Accessibility and Transport section to be made a standalone section and that the following bullet point is inserted, please:

- "Highlighting the massive economic, social and environmental benefits (as easily recognised elsewhere) which rail links improved with major strategic upgrades including the Dornoch Rail Link can achieve particularly for the Northern Highlands commensurate with the strategic developments identified in Section 4 for Caithness and North Sutherland."

Please feel free to contact me at the heading address or email to discuss this further if you wish. I look forward to your reply.

[REDACTED]
Mark W. Norton, Convener, Dornoch Rail Link Action Group.