

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

Reference Number:	HWLPD-MIR-271
Organisation/Individual:	Crofters Commission

**Action:**

Immediate Response Required	
Meeting required with Respondent	X
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		Wild Land	
Vision for the Highlands	X	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	X
Caithness and North Sutherland		Subdivision of Existing Crofts	X
Easter Ross and Nigg		Allocation of Inbye Land	X
Development of Local Centres		New Crofting Township	X
Wider Countryside and Fragile Areas	X	Small Scale New Crofts	X
Population and Housing		Coastal Development	
Housing in the Countryside	X	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:**

<b>Background</b>	<b>Spatial Strategy</b>	<b>Policy Options</b>	<b>Consultation</b>
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**Notes:**

- Land where food production is possible on crofts should be classed as locally important
- Support for protection of Class 3.2 and lower
- Support option for subdivision of existing crofts
- Wider countryside approach could have involvement of Crofters Commission
- Meeting with respondent required to identify and put in place processes for more streamlined approach to crofting and planning.

Action Sheet Completed by:	SH
Date:	14/12/09

**Dawn Sutherland**

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**From:** Uilleam Smith [REDACTED]  
**Sent:** 09 November 2009 17:03  
**To:** devplans  
**Cc:** Archie Macnab; Hugh MacKintosh; Jane Thomas; John Toal  
**Subject:** MAIN ISSUES REPORT CONSULTATION RESPONSE

Please see attached.

Uilleam Smith  
Crofters Commission,  
4/6 Castle Wynd,  
Inverness.  
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Tel.no. [REDACTED]

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12/11/2009

**HIGHLAND WIDE LOCAL DEVELOPMENT PLAN.  
MAIN ISSUES REPORT AUGUST 2009.**

**CROFTERS COMMISSION RESPONSE.**

Thank you for the opportunity to respond to the Main Issues Report issued in August 2009. The Crofters Commission share the vision of creating sustainable communities, where economic development and population growth is balanced with the need to ensure that the natural, built and cultural environment is protected, and where possible, enhanced, both as a sustainable resource, and for the enjoyment of future generations.

One of the key uses of land has always been as a means of food production, and any development proposal should always consider the value of this, as well as other possible land uses.

More specifically, we look forward to working with crofting communities, Highland Council, the Scottish Government, and any other organisation or individual with an interest in croft land to ensure that any new development proposed on croftland, will safeguard the key resources of land, water and air quality.

We seek therefore to contribute to the shaping of planning policies, to sustainably use these precious resources, and meet the needs of the nation, both now and in the future.

The Crofters Commission's duties are concerned with croft land, therefore we will concentrate most of our comments to the section of the Main Issues Report entitled **Crofting and Agriculture** (pages 64 to 67).

**QUESTION 29.**

It is stated in the Report that the quality of farm and croft land needs to be taken into account so that as much of our good quality land is retained as possible.

Government guidance is that development should not be permitted on prime land, unless in special circumstances.

Apart from some areas of Easter Ross, there is probably very little prime land, (as defined by the Macaulay Institute classification), currently in crofting tenure.

There is, however, land on every croft, where food production is possible, and which should be safeguarded as locally important agricultural land.

Reports of potential global food shortages, through climate change and increased world population growth, together with food security concerns and the issues associated with transporting food long distances, have been contributory factors in the Government's support for local food production.

This is reflected in the Government's aim to reduce the local and global environmental impact of our consumption and production.

Crofters and inbye croft land can make a significant contribution to this Government initiative. It is also noted that several of the existing Local Plans in the Highland Council area recognise that safeguarding and promoting crofting is a crucial element in preserving the unique identity of many areas in the Highlands.

Such Local Plans make the quality of croft land a key criterion in site and settlement boundary selection. It is stated that, where possible, sites will be chosen that do not represent locally important agricultural land and expansion of townships onto poorer common grazings will be supported.

**We therefore support the stated alternative that there is merit in protecting croft land in class 3.2 and lower, and request that the Crofters Commission are invited to contribute to the planning process, where any development is proposed on inbye croft land.**

#### **QUESTION 30.**

Your Preferred Option recognises that croft land can be protected through joint working between the Highland Council, Crofters Commission and the Scottish Government. We suggest that such an arrangement would be appropriate whenever croft land is the subject of a planning application, and not just when a subdivision of an existing croft is proposed. This can be achieved by encouraging the Scottish Government to carry out an assessment of the crofting impact of the development of a single house on a croft, **before** a planning application is determined.

In the Monitoring Statement issued by Highland Council in August 2009, you refer to informal discussions with the Crofters Commission and the Highlands and Islands Enterprise on proposed changes to the decrofting and planning procedures.

On page 77 of the Monitoring Statement, a diagram has been prepared which is entitled "Efficient Process with S.G.R.P.I.D. Report as the Foundation for both Decrofting and Planning Decisions".

This diagram presents one of the good proposals that was discussed at the Planning Master Class which the Crofters Commission organised earlier this year, with representatives from all Local Authorities in the Crofting Counties, attending. We are now taking forward some of the ideas generated at that meeting.

We therefore recognise that the councils and especially their planning departments, are very significant partners, and that we should seek to align our processes, together with the Scottish Government Rural Payments and Inspections Directorate (S.G.R.P.I.D.), in a joint working arrangement.

Such an arrangement could be hugely beneficial for crofters, for crofting communities, for the organisations involved and for sustainable economic growth.

**We support the Preferred Option.**

#### **QUESTION 31.**

In the Government response (October 2008) to the Committee of Inquiry on Crofting Report, it is recorded that the Government are keen to encourage more public involvement in the planning process, and for there to be a greater articulation of crofting considerations in land use planning in the crofting counties.

Where possible the Government would also like to see housing constructed on poorer quality land rather than on better quality in-bye land that might be put to agricultural use.

The Crofters Commission fully support the proposal that Grazings Committees should be consulted, and invited to identify land they wish to put forward for consideration for development.

This process will help to protect the more productive croft land from unnecessary development.

We wish to encourage occupancy of crofts, appropriate housebuilding, and the repopulation of crofting areas, but this should be part of a process which encourages more thoughtful land use and promotes sound stewardship of croft land, for the benefit of future generations. The Crofters Commission have already assisted Highland Council in promoting this initiative in Wester Ross, Sutherland, Skye and Lochalsh, and look forward to continuing with this work, where it is appropriate.

**We support the Preferred Option.**

**QUESTION 32.**

The Crofters Commission are keen to engage with the Highland Council, the local community and other interested parties, whenever such a proposal is presented.

**The Preferred Option seems a reasonable starting point.**

**QUESTION 33.**

We agree that before planning applications are determined, it is reasonable for the Highland Council to check that the proposed development is on a genuine croft which is registered with the Crofters Commission.

The Crofters Commission also agree that working arrangements with the Highland Council and the Forestry Commission are important, where 'woodland crofts' are being proposed.

We would like to emphasise though, that most of the proposals we have received for new crofts, have not contained a woodland element.

**We support the Preferred Option.**

**QUESTION 34.**

The sea often forms part of the boundary of a croft or area of common grazings. Additionally, a significant number of crofters depend on the sea for their livelihood or for recreation.

Where any coastal development is planned adjacent to, or on croft land( e.g. building, access etc.) it would be appropriate to consult the crofter/Grazings Clerk/Crofters Commission in such cases.

We offer this as an additional consideration to the proposals listed on page 68 of the Report.

**APPENDIX.**

As part of the 'Suggested policy approach for development in the wider Countryside', it is noted that development proposals will be assessed for the extent to which they avoid, where possible, the loss of locally important croft land.

It is requested that this assessment, also includes consultation with the Crofters Commission and Scottish Government, before the application is determined.

Please contact us if you wish to further discuss this response.

Crofters Commission.