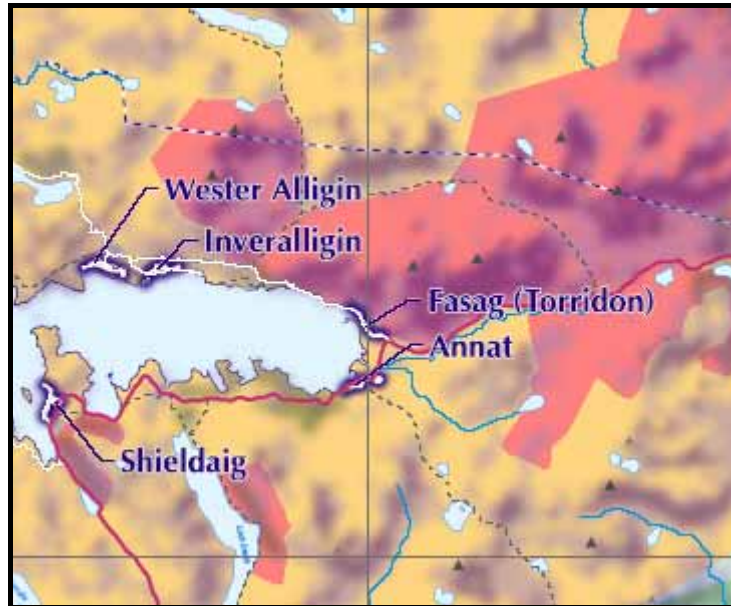


Wester Ross Local Plan

Assessment of the effect of the Wester Ross Local Plan on European Sites



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Introduction

The European Court of Justice has ruled that the UK is not compliant with the Habitats Directive because the transposition of the Directive to the UK Habitats Regulations does not specifically require land use plans to be considered under Articles 6 (3) and 6 (4) of the Directive. Local Plans can not therefore be approved by planning authorities unless:

- there has been a determination by the planning authority based on objective information that the provisions of the plan are not likely to have a significant effect on any European site; or
- an appropriate assessment has been carried out in respect of the provisions of the plan in line with the requirements of Article 6.3 and 6.4 of the Habitats Directive.

This report sets out an assessment by the planning authority based on objective information of the impacts of the Wester Ross Local Plan on European designated sites within the area. The Wester Ross Local Plan is currently at Intention to Adopt stage, and it is hoped that it can be adopted by Highland Council on 29th June 2006.

This document sets out a description of the Plan area, the context to the preparation of the Plan, a summary of the content of the Plan and a detailed assessment of the effect of the Local Plan on each individual Special Protection Area, Special Area of Conservation or RAMSAR site in Wester Ross.

The Wester Ross Local Plan area

The Wester Ross Local Plan covers an area of almost 3500 square kilometres, from Inverpolly and Achiltibuie in the north to Applecross, and Lochcarron in the south and east, towards (but not including) Achnasheen.

It has a population of around 6000 people, most of whom live and work in small and scattered crofting and fishing communities around the coastline. However, almost half of the population live in the four main villages of Ullapool, Aultbea, Gairloch and Lochcarron. Ullapool, with a population of 1300, is the largest of these, offering a high level of services to a wide area of population within Wester Ross and beyond into parts of Sutherland.

The area is dominated by rugged mountains, remote glens and long steep straths (mountain valleys), with fast-flowing rivers that empty into sheltered bays and sea lochs. The landscape is an attractive combination of mountain, moor, loch and coast, which offers outstanding scenery. The high quality of the environment is reflected in the fact that much of the area is recognised by European designation as having a high value for nature conservation.

Over the past 20 years the area has experienced significant changes. While the population has been growing, it has also been ageing. In 2001 almost 20% of the population was aged 65 or over. The area has been under considerable pressure for second and holiday homes. Almost a quarter of all houses in Wester Ross are second or holiday homes, but in Torridon this rises to 40%. Ullapool in particular has experienced major development pressure, with a high demand for new housing in an area with severe physical limits, due to things such as its landscape and steep rocky ground. Road improvements have made the larger settlements to the east more accessible, although there are still large sections of single-track A roads.

Plan Preparation

Following the Notice of Intention to Prepare the Local Plan in March 2003, The Wester Ross Local Plan Deposit Draft was approved by the Area Planning Committee on 24 May 2004. The Plan was placed on deposit on 4 June 2004 and there was a six week period for the public to lodge representations. Following the receipt of objections, discussions took place with a number of the main objectors, particularly Scottish Natural Heritage and the Scottish Environment Protection Agency to seek to agree modifications to the Plan which would meet the concerns raised. A substantial level of agreement was reached and this formed the basis of the proposed modifications to the Plan.

At a meeting on 28 September 2004, the Ross & Cromarty Area Planning Committee considered all of the objections and representations made to the Deposit Draft Local Plan and agreed the proposed Modifications to the Plan. These Modifications were advertised as the Pre – PLI Draft for a six week period and further objections invited. The Committee agreed to refer all unresolved objections for consideration at a Public Local Inquiry.

As noted above, Scottish Natural Heritage had submitted a number of objections, one of which related specifically to the approach the Plan took to European sites. Following discussions, modifications were proposed which satisfied that objection and ensured that the wording of the policy properly followed the wording set out within the regulations. A letter was received on 9th November 2004, which stated that “SNH notes the response made by the Council in respect of the objections raised by SNH and in general accepts the manner in which these have been incorporated into the plan document. SNH therefore confirms that it will remove all of the objections raised in our letters of 15 and 23 July 2004”.

The Inquiry into objections made but not withdrawn to the Deposit Draft Local Plan – conducted by Mr Michael Thomson – was held in January 2005 at venues throughout the area. Three issues were dealt with through formal inquiry procedures, with the others being dealt with through written submissions. These largely related to specific site or settlement boundary issues.

At its meeting on 17th August 2005, further to consideration of the Report of Public Local Inquiry, the Planning Development Europe and Tourism Committee agreed further modifications to the Local Plan. These were advertised with an opportunity for objections to be lodged by 14th October 2005.

Seven separate representations were received, five of which are objections to the Plan. In each case, the objections lodged relate to matters already considered at the PLI. It was therefore agreed to make no further modifications to the Plan. The Plan was submitted to Scottish Ministers on 10th February 2006, where it is currently awaiting release for The Council to formally adopt the Plan.

Content of the Plan

In line with the Modernising Planning agenda, the Wester Ross Local Plan has adopted a relatively straightforward policy approach. The preparation of the Local Plan has been recognised through a commendation in the recent Scottish Awards for Quality in Planning. Particular attention was drawn to the partnership working evident in the preparation of the Local Plan.

The local plan recognises the need for a number of approaches to respond to different pressures and to put different parts of the strategy into practice in distinct geographical areas.

A number of parts of the strategy highlight the importance of supporting existing communities. The Plan has defined settlement development areas for most of the villages in the Plan area. These are the preferred areas for most types of development, including housing. This is consistent with the Structure Plan Policy H3, which says that housing development will generally be within existing and planned new settlements. This makes best use of existing infrastructure and services and protects the character of the surrounding countryside. Settlement development areas have been defined taking a number of issues into account, including the quality of neighbouring croft or agricultural land, nature conservation designations, the ability of the landscape to allow for development, the pattern of existing settlements and the availability of infrastructure.

The strategy recognises that most of the future growth of Wester Ross will be in the three villages of Ullapool, Gairloch and Lochcarron (defined as local centres in the Highland Structure Plan). These are the communities which have experienced the greatest development pressures, where the main services are, where the best transport links are and where larger-scale industrial and business development is the most practical. Land is specifically allocated in those settlements to meet most of future housing need in Wester Ross. The Plan also identifies allocations in Aultbea and Poolewe because of the scale of possible housing sites and the need to provide for their development in a planned way.

The Plan recognises affordable housing as a particular need. As a result, the Plan allocates land to meet this need in certain settlements. It identifies sites in Ullapool, Aultbea, Poolewe, Torridon and Lochcarron on the basis that there is enough land for general housing and a proven local need.

The Plan recognises that there will continue to be demand for development outwith the settlement development areas. The strategy identifies three categories of countryside based on the type and importance of natural and cultural heritage they contain. The main proposals map which accompanies the Plan identifies the locations of these categories of countryside (see Map 1).

Local and regionally important features are mostly identified by The Council, and contribute to the identity of Wester Ross. Nationally important natural and cultural heritage features are identified by national organisations or by The Council under national legislation in line with National Planning Policy Guidelines 5, 13 and 14.

Internationally important natural and cultural heritage features are those sites identified under European legislation and regulations. The Background Maps which accompany the Plan set out the location and type of European designations in the Wester Ross area (Map 2). There are 11 Special Areas of Conservation, 5 Special Protection Areas and 1 RAMSAR site in the area.

The Policies contained within the Local Plan are shown in appendix 1 for information. It is worth noting that the wording used in Policy 2.3 which relates to the safeguard of internationally important areas equates to that set out in NPPG14 and follows the wording of Article 6.3 of the Habitats Directive. The full text of the Plan is available on the Highlands Council web-site at www.highland.gov.uk.

Detailed Assessment

The assessment which follows is based on objective information gleaned from discussions with Scottish Natural Heritage, representations made during the plan preparation process and the local knowledge of the plan team.

For each European site, the qualifying interests are set out followed by an assessment of the likely impact of the policies and proposals on the site, both directly and indirectly, in light of the conservation objectives for each site which ensures the avoidance of deterioration or significant disturbance to the qualifying interests. As recognised in the interim guidance issued by the Scottish Executive, an assessment of a plan is likely by its very nature to be less specific and detailed than an assessment of an individual project would be.

Where allocations or settlement development area boundaries are close to European sites, the local plan proposals map for that settlement development area has been included for information within appendix 2.

Name of European Site: Loch Maree
Site Type: Special Protection Area RAMSAR Site
<p>Qualifying Interest(s):</p> <p>This site qualifies under Article 4.1 of the Directive (79/409/EEC) by supporting populations of European importance of the following species listed on Annex I of the Directive:</p> <p>During the breeding season; Black-throated Diver <i>Gavia arctica</i>, 10 pairs representing up to 6.3% of the breeding population in Great Britain (11 year mean, 1986-1996)</p>
<p>Assessment:</p> <p>Loch Maree is a large freshwater loch with a mean depth of 38 m and a number of wooded islands. Adjacent catchments support a range of habitats, including freshwater lochs, upland heath, native pinewood, broad-leaved woodland and montane vegetation. It is an important area for breeding waterbirds and birds of prey. Loch Maree is the single most important breeding site in Britain for Black-throated Diver <i>Gavia arctica</i>.</p> <p>There are no specific proposals for development outlined in the Plan either within or directly adjacent to the site. The SPA is shown as an area of International Importance to which Policy 2.3 applies.</p> <p>The SPA lies a considerable distance from the nearest Settlement Development Areas, so there is considered to be no effect. There were no objections raised in relation to the loch in the preparation of the Local Plan.</p> <p>The Plan recognises that there will continue to be demand for development in the wider countryside outwith the settlement development areas. This development could include single houses, rural business needs, or renewable energy projects. A balance is sought between the countryside's development potential and the possible effect on the natural and cultural heritage. The strategy identifies three categories of countryside based on the type and importance of the natural and cultural heritage. The Plan requires any proposal outwith the Settlement Development Areas to be assessed against Policy 2 which has three tiers relating to the level of importance of the natural and cultural heritage. The policy takes account of the effect on the natural and cultural heritage and the compatibility with Structure Plan Policy G2 Design for Sustainability.</p> <p>Should any proposals come forward for development directly impacting on the site through a planning application, it would fall to be considered under the terms of Policy 2 of the Local Plan and any other relevant policies within the Local Plan or the Highland Structure Plan. Policy 2 of the Plan was amended following representation from Scottish Natural Heritage to fully reflect the requirements of the Habitats</p>

Directive. This will ensure that no proposal can be agreed unless it can be ascertained that it will not adversely affect the integrity of the site.

Conclusion:

It is concluded that the provisions of the Plan, and in particular the safeguarding policies relating to any individual proposal will not adversely affect the integrity of the European site.

Name of European Site: Wester Ross Lochs

Component SSSI/ASSIs
Ardlair - Letterewe
Wester Ross Lochs

Site Type: Special Protection Area

Qualifying Interest(s):

Qualifying species

This site qualifies under Article 4.1 of the Directive (79/409/EEC) by supporting populations of European importance of the following species listed on Annex I of the Directive:

During the breeding season; Black-throated Diver *Gavia arctica*, 8 pairs representing at least 5.0% of the breeding population in Great Britain (1986-1996)

Assessment:

The Wester Ross Lochs are located to the north-west of Kinlochewe. The site comprises a cluster of 13 freshwater lochs ranging from 25-320 m above sea level, surrounded by heath and blanket bog. These lochs are (from west to east): Loch Kernsary, Loch a' Bhaid-luachraich, Lochan Dubh Druim na h-Airde, Loch Fada, Loch na Moine Buige, Fionn Loch, Loch na h-Uidhe, Lochan Beannach Mor, Lochan Beannach Beg, Loch a' Mhadaidh Mor, Loch Garbhaig, Lochan Fada and Loch an Sgeirach. These lochs have intricate shorelines and islands, and mostly support typical oligotrophic fauna and flora. Several of the islands support relict examples of the original vegetation cover of Wester Ross (little of which now remains elsewhere). The site supports a breeding population of European importance of the Annex I species Black-throated Diver *Gavia arctica*. Of the regular breeding territories within the site, not all are occupied each year. This population has higher than average productivity (one-third greater than the national average between 1986 and 1998). The combination of large population size and high productivity means that the site makes a significant contribution to the production of fledged chicks in Scotland as a whole.

There are no specific proposals for development outlined in the Plan either within or directly adjacent to the site. The SPA is shown as an area of International Importance to which Policy 2.3 applies.

The SPA lies a considerable distance from the nearest Settlement Development Areas, so there is considered to be no effect. One of the lochs does operate as the water supply source for Aultbea (Loch a' Bhaid-luachraich), although there are not considered to be any issues in relation to the level of development anticipated in the village.

There were no objections raised to this countryside area in the preparation of the

Local Plan.

The Plan recognises that there will continue to be demand for development in the wider countryside outwith the settlement development areas. This development could include single houses, rural business needs, or renewable energy projects. A balance is sought between the countryside's development potential and the possible effect on the natural and cultural heritage. The strategy identifies three categories of countryside based on the type and importance of the natural and cultural heritage.

The Plan requires any proposal outwith the Settlement Development Areas to be assessed against Policy 2 which has three tiers relating to the level of importance of the natural and cultural heritage. The policy takes account of the effect on the natural and cultural heritage and the compatibility with Structure Plan Policy G2 Design for Sustainability.

Should any proposals come forward for development directly impacting on the site through a planning application, it would fall to be considered under the terms of Policy 2 of the Local Plan and any other relevant policies within the Local Plan or the Highland Structure Plan. Policy 2 of the Plan was amended following representation from Scottish Natural Heritage to fully reflect the requirements of the Habitats Directive. This will ensure that no proposal can be agreed unless it can be ascertained that it will not adversely affect the integrity of the site.

Conclusion:

It is concluded that the provisions of the Plan, and in particular the safeguarding policies relating to any individual proposal will not adversely affect the integrity of the European site.

<p>Name of European Site: Beinn Dearg</p> <p>Component SSSI/ASSIs Beinn Dearg</p>
<p>Site Type: Special Protection Area</p>
<p>Qualifying Interest(s):</p> <p>This site qualifies under Article 4.1 of the Directive (79/409/EEC) by supporting populations of European importance of the following species listed on Annex I of the Directive:</p> <p>During the breeding season;</p> <p>Dotterel <i>Charadrius morinellus</i>, 22 pairs representing at least 2.6% of the breeding population in Great Britain (Seven year mean, 1987-1993)</p>
<p>Assessment:</p> <p>Beinn Dearg is located in the northern Highlands of Scotland, in the Ross & Cromarty district, east of the head of Loch Broom. A large and diverse mountain massif, deeply dissected by glacial action, with several broad, rounded summits over 900 m, it is regarded as one of the most important mountain systems in Britain. The variety of habitats includes woodland, mire, open water, dwarf-shrub heath, summit and snow bed communities, flushes and cliffs. The extensive summit areas are of particular significance, with a diverse and important assemblage of specialist montane birds, including breeding Dotterel <i>Charadrius morinellus</i>.</p> <p>Part of the Beinn Dearg SPA lies within the Local Plan area at its eastern boundary. There are no specific proposals for development outlined in the Plan either within or directly adjacent to the site. The SPA is shown as an area of International Importance to which Policy 2.3 applies.</p> <p>The SPA lies a considerable distance from the nearest Settlement Development Areas, so there is considered to be no effect.</p> <p>A number of representations were raised in relation to this general area of countryside during consideration of the Plan. These representations related largely to the potential impact of a transmission line between Ullapool (Ardmair or Loch Broom) to Beaulieu to serve renewable energy developments in the Western Isles. It should be stressed that this line is not identified within the Local Plan. Whilst the objections received were largely related to landscape issues, The Council agreed to modify the Plan to include the statement “We will oppose the erection of any overhead 400 kV Extra High Voltage Transmission Line between Ullapool (Ardmair or Loch Broom) and the Local Plan boundary at Dirrie Mor on the basis that such a route would be unacceptable in landscape and scenic terms”.</p> <p>The Plan recognises that there will continue to be demand for development in the</p>

wider countryside outwith the settlement development areas. This development could include single houses, rural business needs, or renewable energy projects. A balance is sought between the countryside's development potential and the possible effect on the natural and cultural heritage. The strategy identifies three categories of countryside based on the type and importance of the natural and cultural heritage. The Plan requires any proposal outwith the Settlement Development Areas to be assessed against Policy 2 which has three tiers relating to the level of importance of the natural and cultural heritage. The policy takes account of the effect on the natural and cultural heritage and the compatibility with Structure Plan Policy G2 Design for Sustainability.

Should any proposals come forward for development directly on the site through a planning application, whether for a transmission line or for any other use, it would fall to be considered under the terms of Policy 2 of the Local Plan and any other relevant policies within the Local Plan or the Highland Structure Plan. Policy 2 of the Plan was amended following representation from Scottish Natural Heritage to fully reflect the requirements of the Habitats Directive. This will ensure that no proposal can be agreed unless it can be ascertained that it will not adversely affect the integrity of the site.

Conclusion:

It is concluded that the provisions of the Plan, and in particular the safeguarding policies relating to any individual proposal will not adversely affect the integrity of the European site.

Name of European Site: Priest Island
Component SSSI/ASSIs Priest Island
Site Type: Special Protection Area
<p>Qualifying Interest(s):</p> <p>This site qualifies under Article 4.1 of the Directive (79/409/EEC) by supporting populations of European importance of the following species listed on Annex I of the Directive:</p> <p>During the breeding season;</p> <p>Storm Petrel <i>Hydrobates pelagicus</i>, 2,200 pairs representing at least 2.6% of the breeding population in Great Britain (Count, as at 1995)</p>
<p>Assessment:</p> <p>Priest Island is the outermost and most exposed of the Summer Isles, lying about 6 km off the west coast of Wester Ross. The island rises to about 75 m and supports heath communities, numerous lochs and a small amount of woodland. Enrichment from salt spray and bird guano enables more species-rich maritime heath and cliff communities to exist around the coast. Priest Island supports one of the largest Storm Petrel <i>Hydrobates pelagicus</i> colonies in the UK, together with small numbers of other breeding seabirds. These species feed outside the SPA in surrounding and more distant marine areas.</p> <p>There are no specific proposals for development outlined in the Plan either within or directly adjacent to the site. The SPA is shown as an area of International Importance to which Policy 2.3 applies.</p> <p>No objections were raised in relation to this SPA during consideration of the Plan.</p> <p>The Plan recognises that there will continue to be demand for development in the wider countryside outwith the settlement development areas. This development could include single houses, rural business needs, or renewable energy projects. A balance is sought between the countryside's development potential and the possible effect on the natural and cultural heritage. The strategy identifies three categories of countryside based on the type and importance of the natural and cultural heritage. The Plan requires any proposal outwith the Settlement Development Areas to be assessed against Policy 2 which has three tiers relating to the level of importance of the natural and cultural heritage. The policy takes account of the effect on the natural and cultural heritage and the compatibility with Structure Plan Policy G2 Design for Sustainability.</p> <p>Should any proposals come forward for development directly impacting on the SPA through a planning application, it would fall to be considered under the terms of Policy 2 of the Local Plan and any other relevant policies within the Local Plan or the Highland Structure Plan. Policy 2 of the Plan was amended following representation</p>

from Scottish Natural Heritage to fully reflect the requirements of the Habitats Directive. This will ensure that no proposal can be agreed unless it can be ascertained that it will not adversely affect the integrity of the site.

Conclusion:

It is concluded that the provisions of the Plan, and in particular the safeguarding policies relating to any individual proposal will not adversely affect the integrity of the European site.

<p>Name of European Site: Inverpolly, Loch Urigill and Nearby Lochs</p> <p>Component SSSI/ASSIs Cam Loch Inverpolly Loch Awe and Loch Alsh Loch Urigill</p>
<p>Site Type: Special Protection Area</p>
<p>Qualifying Interest(s):</p> <p>Qualifying species</p> <p>This site qualifies under Article 4.1 of the Directive (79/409/EEC) by supporting populations of European importance of the following species listed on Annex I of the Directive:</p> <p>During the breeding season;</p> <p>Black-throated Diver <i>Gavia arctica</i>, 9 pairs representing at least 5.6% of the breeding population in Great Britain (1986-1996)</p>
<p>Assessment:</p> <p>The Inverpolly, Loch Urigill and Nearby Lochs SPA is located partly within the Wester Ross Local Plan area. The site includes several large lochans and many smaller lochans. The catchments around these waterbodies contain a wide range of habitats characteristic of the north-west Scottish Highlands, including upland heath, upland mire, upland broad-leaved woodland, lochans, rivers and streams. The lochs form part of the core breeding range of Black-throated Diver <i>Gavia arctica</i> in the UK. The SPA lies a considerable distance from the Settlement Development Areas identified in the Plan, and there are no specific proposals for development outlined in the Plan either within or directly adjacent to the site. The SPA is shown as an area of International Importance to which Policy 2.3 applies.</p> <p>No objections were raised in relation to this area of countryside during consideration of the Plan.</p> <p>The Plan recognises that there will continue to be demand for development in the wider countryside outwith the settlement development areas. This development could include single houses, rural business needs, or renewable energy projects. A balance is sought between the countryside's development potential and the possible effect on the natural and cultural heritage. The strategy identifies three categories of countryside based on the type and importance of the natural and cultural heritage. The Plan requires any proposal outwith the Settlement Development Areas to be assessed against Policy 2 which has three tiers relating to the level of importance of the natural and cultural heritage. The policy takes account of the effect on the natural</p>

and cultural heritage and the compatibility with Structure Plan Policy G2 Design for Sustainability.

Should any proposals come forward for development directly impacting on the SPA through a planning application, it would fall to be considered under the terms of Policy 2 of the Local Plan and any other relevant policies within the Local Plan or the Highland Structure Plan. Policy 2 of the Plan was amended following representation from Scottish Natural Heritage to fully reflect the requirements of the Habitats Directive. This will ensure that no proposal can be agreed unless it can be ascertained that it will not adversely affect the integrity of the site.

Conclusion:

It is concluded that the provisions of the Plan, and in particular the safeguarding policies relating to any individual proposal will not adversely affect the integrity of the European site.

Name of European Site: Beinn Dearg
Site Type: Special Area of Conservation
<p>Qualifying Interest(s):</p> <p>Annex I habitats that are a primary reason for selection of this site 3130 Oligotrophic to mesotrophic standing waters with vegetation of the Littorelletea uniflorae and/or of the Isoëto-Nanojuncetea 4060 Alpine and Boreal heaths 6150 Siliceous alpine and boreal grasslands 6170 Alpine and subalpine calcareous grasslands 6430 Hydrophilous tall herb fringe communities of plains and of the montane to alpine levels 7240 Alpine pioneer formations of the Caricion bicoloris-atrofuscae * Priority feature 8210 Calcareous rocky slopes with chasmophytic vegetation 8220 Siliceous rocky slopes with chasmophytic vegetation</p> <p>Annex I habitats present as a qualifying feature, but not a primary reason for selection of this site 4010 Northern Atlantic wet heaths with Erica tetralix 4030 European dry heaths 4080 Sub-Arctic Salix spp. scrub 6230 Species-rich Nardus grassland, on siliceous substrates in mountain areas (and submountain areas in continental Europe) * Priority feature 7130 Blanket bogs * Priority feature 8110 Siliceous scree of the montane to snow levels (Androsacetalia alpinae and Galeopsietalia ladani) 91C0 Caledonian forest * Priority feature</p> <p>Annex II species that are a primary reason for selection of this site Not applicable.</p> <p>Annex II species present as a qualifying feature, but not a primary reason for site selection Not applicable.</p>
<p>Assessment:</p> <p>Part of the Beinn Dearg SAC lies within the Local Plan area at its eastern boundary. There are no specific proposals for development outlined in the Plan either within or directly adjacent to the site. The SAC is shown as an area of International Importance to which Policy 2.3 applies.</p> <p>The SAC lies a considerable distance from the nearest Settlement Development Areas, so there is considered to be no effect.</p> <p>A number of representations were raised in relation to this general area of countryside during consideration of the Plan. These representations related largely to the potential</p>

impact of a transmission line between Ullapool (Ardmair or Loch Broom) to Beaully to serve renewable energy developments in the Western Isles. It should be stressed that this line is not identified within the Local Plan. Whilst the objections received were largely related to landscape issues, The Council agreed to modify the Plan to include the statement “We will oppose the erection of any overhead 400 kV Extra High Voltage Transmission Line between Ullapool (Ardmair or Loch Broom) and the Local Plan boundary at Dirrie Mor on the basis that such a route would be unacceptable in landscape and scenic terms”.

The Plan recognises that there will continue to be demand for development in the wider countryside outwith the settlement development areas. This development could include single houses, rural business needs, or renewable energy projects. A balance is sought between the countryside’s development potential and the possible effect on the natural and cultural heritage. The strategy identifies three categories of countryside based on the type and importance of the natural and cultural heritage. The Plan requires any proposal outwith the Settlement Development Areas to be assessed against Policy 2 which has three tiers relating to the level of importance of the natural and cultural heritage. The policy takes account of the effect on the natural and cultural heritage and the compatibility with Structure Plan Policy G2 Design for Sustainability.

Should any proposals come forward for development directly on the site through a planning application, whether for a transmission line or for any other use, it would fall to be considered under the terms of Policy 2 of the Local Plan and any other relevant policies within the Local Plan or the Highland Structure Plan. Policy 2 of the Plan was amended following representation from Scottish Natural Heritage to fully reflect the requirements of the Habitats Directive. This will ensure that no proposal can be agreed unless it can be ascertained that it will not adversely affect the integrity of the site.

Conclusion:

It is concluded that the provisions of the Plan, and in particular the safeguarding policies relating to any individual proposal will not adversely affect the integrity of the European site.

Name of European Site: Rhidorroch Woods
Site Type: Special Area of Conservation
<p>Qualifying Interest(s):</p> <p>Annex I habitats that are a primary reason for selection of this site 91C0 Caledonian forest * Priority feature</p> <p>Annex I habitats present as a qualifying feature, but not a primary reason for selection of this site 4010 Northern Atlantic wet heaths with Erica tetralix</p> <p>Annex II species that are a primary reason for selection of this site Not applicable.</p> <p>Annex II species present as a qualifying feature, but not a primary reason for site selection Not applicable.</p>
<p>Assessment:</p> <p>The Rhiddoroch Woods SAC lies in the north of the Plan area. There are no specific proposals for development outlined in the Plan either within or directly adjacent to the site. The SAC is shown as an area of International Importance to which Policy 2.3 applies.</p> <p>The SAC lies some 2 kilometres from an active quarry (Morefield Quarry) which is identified for business or industrial use within the Local Plan. Given the distance involved it is not considered that there would be any direct or indirect impact on the SAC.</p> <p>The Plan recognises that there will continue to be demand for development in the wider countryside outwith the settlement development areas. This development could include single houses, rural business needs, or renewable energy projects. A balance is sought between the countryside's development potential and the possible effect on the natural and cultural heritage. The strategy identifies three categories of countryside based on the type and importance of the natural and cultural heritage. The Plan requires any proposal outwith the Settlement Development Areas to be assessed against Policy 2 which has three tiers relating to the level of importance of the natural and cultural heritage. The policy takes account of the effect on the natural and cultural heritage and the compatibility with Structure Plan Policy G2 Design for Sustainability.</p> <p>Should any proposals come forward for development directly on the site through a planning application, it would fall to be considered under the terms of Policy 2 of the Local Plan and any other relevant policies within the Local Plan or the Highland Structure Plan. Policy 2 of the Plan was amended following representation from Scottish Natural Heritage to fully reflect the requirements of the Habitats Directive.</p>

This will ensure that no proposal can be agreed unless it can be ascertained that it will not adversely affect the integrity of the site.

Conclusion:

It is concluded that the provisions of the Plan, and in particular the safeguarding policies relating to any individual proposal will not adversely affect the integrity of the European site.

Name of European Site: Fannich Hills
Site Type: Special Area of Conservation
<p>Qualifying Interest(s):</p> <p>Annex I habitats that are a primary reason for selection of this site</p> <p>4010 Northern Atlantic wet heaths with <i>Erica tetralix</i> 4060 Alpine and Boreal heaths 6150 Siliceous alpine and boreal grasslands</p> <p>Annex I habitats present as a qualifying feature, but not a primary reason for selection of this site</p> <p>3130 Oligotrophic to mesotrophic standing waters with vegetation of the <i>Littorelletea uniflorae</i> and/or of the <i>Isoëto-Nanojuncetea</i> 4030 European dry heaths 7130 Blanket bogs * Priority feature 8110 Siliceous scree of the montane to snow levels (<i>Androsacetalia alpinae</i> and <i>Galeopsietalia ladani</i>) 8220 Siliceous rocky slopes with chasmophytic vegetation</p> <p>Annex II species that are a primary reason for selection of this site Not applicable.</p> <p>Annex II species present as a qualifying feature, but not a primary reason for site selection Not applicable.</p>
<p>Assessment:</p> <p>The Local Plan area contains part of the Fannich Hills SAC, which has been designated for the heath and grass interests found within it. It lies directly adjacent to the eastern boundary of the plan area.</p> <p>There are no specific proposals for development outlined in the Plan either within or directly adjacent to the site. The SAC is shown as an area of International Importance to which Policy 2.3 applies.</p> <p>A number of representations were raised in relation to this general area of countryside during consideration of the Plan. These representations related largely to the potential impact of a transmission line between Ullapool (Ardmair or Loch Broom) to Beauly to serve renewable energy developments in the Western Isles. It should be stressed that this proposal is not identified within the Local Plan, nor is it a formal application before The Council or the Scottish Executive. Whilst the objections received were largely related to landscape issues, The Council agreed to modify the Plan to include the statement “We will oppose the erection of any overhead 400 kV Extra High Voltage Transmission Line between Ullapool (Ardmair or Loch Broom) and the Local Plan boundary at Dirrie Mor on the basis that such a route would be</p>

unacceptable in landscape and scenic terms”.

The Plan recognises that there will continue to be demand for development in the wider countryside outwith the settlement development areas. This development could include single houses, rural business needs, or renewable energy projects. A balance is sought between the countryside’s development potential and the possible effect on the natural and cultural heritage. The strategy identifies three categories of countryside based on the type and importance of the natural and cultural heritage.

The Plan requires any proposal outwith the Settlement Development Areas to be assessed against Policy 2 which has three tiers relating to the level of importance of the natural and cultural heritage. The policy takes account of the effect on the natural and cultural heritage and the compatibility with Structure Plan Policy G2 Design for Sustainability.

Should any proposals come forward for development directly on the site through a planning application, whether for a transmission line or for any other use, it would fall to be considered under the terms of Policy 2 of the Local Plan and any other relevant policies within the Local Plan or the Highland Structure Plan. Policy 2 of the Plan was amended following representation from Scottish Natural Heritage to fully reflect the requirements of the Habitats Directive. This will ensure that no proposal can be agreed unless it can be ascertained that it will not adversely affect the integrity of the site.

Conclusion:

It is concluded that the provisions of the Plan, and in particular the safeguarding policies relating to any individual proposal will not adversely affect the integrity of the European site.

Name of European Site: Little Gruinard River
Site Type: Special Area of Conservation
<p>Qualifying Interest(s):</p> <p>Annex I habitats that are a primary reason for selection of this site Not applicable</p> <p>Annex I habitats present as a qualifying feature, but not a primary reason for selection of this site Not applicable.</p> <p>Annex II species that are a primary reason for selection of this site</p> <p>1106 Atlantic salmon <i>Salmo salar</i></p> <p>Annex II species present as a qualifying feature, but not a primary reason for site selection Not applicable.</p>
<p>Assessment:</p> <p>The Little Gruinard River SAC supports a high-quality salmon <i>Salmo salar</i> population and flows into Gruinard Bay.</p> <p>There are no specific proposals for development outlined in the Plan either within or directly adjacent to the site. The SAC is shown as an area of International Importance to which Policy 2.3 applies.</p> <p>The Plan recognises that there will continue to be demand for development in the wider countryside outwith the settlement development areas. This development could include single houses, rural business needs, or renewable energy projects. A balance is sought between the countryside's development potential and the possible effect on the natural and cultural heritage. The strategy identifies three categories of countryside based on the type and importance of the natural and cultural heritage. The Plan requires any proposal outwith the Settlement Development Areas to be assessed against Policy 2 which has three tiers relating to the level of importance of the natural and cultural heritage. The policy takes account of the effect on the natural and cultural heritage and the compatibility with Structure Plan Policy G2 Design for Sustainability.</p> <p>The SAC is not located close to any of the Settlement Development Areas identified in the Plan (the closest being First Coast and Second Coast), and it is considered that there will therefore be no effect from these. There is some built development where the river joins the sea, but there are no specific proposals in the Plan associated with this. The key issue in relation to Little River Gruinard is that any proposals which come forward for development directly on or adjacent or having an effect on the site through a planning application, would fall to be considered under the terms of Policy</p>

2 of the Local Plan and any other relevant policies within the Local Plan or the Highland Structure Plan. Policy 2 of the Plan was amended following representation from Scottish Natural Heritage to fully reflect the requirements of the Habitats Directive. This will ensure that no proposal can be agreed unless it can be ascertained that it will not adversely affect the integrity of the site.

Conclusion:

It is concluded that the provisions of the Plan, and in particular the safeguarding policies relating to any individual proposal will not adversely affect the integrity of the European site.

Name of European Site: Loch Maree Complex

Site Type: Special Area of Conservation

Qualifying Interest(s):

Annex I habitats that are a primary reason for selection of this site

3130 Oligotrophic to mesotrophic standing waters with vegetation of the Littorelletea uniflorae and/or of the Isoëto-Nanojuncetea

4030 European dry heaths

4060 Alpine and Boreal heaths

6150 Siliceous alpine and boreal grasslands

8110 Siliceous scree of the montane to snow levels (Androsacetalia alpinae and Galeopsietalia ladani)

8220 Siliceous rocky slopes with chasmophytic vegetation

91A0 Old sessile oak woods with Ilex and Blechnum in the British Isles

91C0 Caledonian forest * Priority feature

Annex I habitats present as a qualifying feature, but not a primary reason for selection of this site

4010 Northern Atlantic wet heaths with Erica tetralix

6430 Hydrophilous tall herb fringe communities of plains and of the montane to alpine levels

7130 Blanket bogs * Priority feature

7150 Depressions on peat substrates of the Rhynchosporion

8210 Calcareous rocky slopes with chasmophytic vegetation

91D0 Bog woodland * Priority feature

91E0 Alluvial forests with Alnus glutinosa and Fraxinus excelsior (Alno-Padion, Alnion incanae, Salicion albae) * Priority feature

Annex II species that are a primary reason for selection of this site

1355 Otter Lutra lutra

This site contains the large freshwater waterbody of Loch Maree with its numerous heavily wooded islands and areas of fringing woodland and heath. There are also a number of smaller, higher altitude lochans within the site and numerous small streams which hold salmonid fish. The site contains all the necessary requirements for otters Lutra lutra and supports a good population representative of a freshwater loch environment in the west Highlands of Scotland.

Annex II species present as a qualifying feature, but not a primary reason for site selection

Not applicable.

Assessment:

The Loch Maree Complex SAC is made up of various different types on interests and stretches across several locations within the Local Plan area.

An assessment has been carried out on each constituent part of the SAC, as detailed below:

- Doire Damh

There are **no** specific proposals for development outlined in the Plan lying within the Doire Damh part of the Loch Maree Complex SAC. The SAC as a whole is shown as an area of International Importance to which Policy 2.3 applies.

This part of the SAC lies at some distance from the Settlement Development Areas identified in the Plan, and it is considered that there will be no effect from development taking place within these areas.

No objections were raised in relation to the area covered by this part of the SAC during preparation of the Plan.

The Plan recognises that there will continue to be demand for development in the wider countryside outwith the settlement development areas. This development could include single houses, rural business needs, or renewable energy projects. A balance is sought between the countryside's development potential and the possible effect on the natural and cultural heritage. The strategy identifies three categories of countryside based on the type and importance of the natural and cultural heritage. The Plan requires any proposal outwith the Settlement Development Areas to be assessed against Policy 2 which has three tiers relating to the level of importance of the natural and cultural heritage. The policy takes account of the effect on the natural and cultural heritage and the compatibility with Structure Plan Policy G2 Design for Sustainability.

Should any proposals come forward for development directly on the SAC through a planning application, it would fall to be considered under the terms of Policy 2 of the Local Plan and any other relevant policies within the Local Plan or the Highland Structure Plan. Policy 2 of the Plan was amended following representation from Scottish Natural Heritage to fully reflect the requirements of the Habitats Directive. This will ensure that no proposal can be agreed unless it can be ascertained that it will not adversely affect the integrity of the site.

- Shildaig Woods

The Shildaig Woods SSSI part of the SAC is an important area of woodland, as set out above. There are **no** specific proposals for development outlined in the Plan lying within the SAC. The SAC is shown as an area of International Importance to which Policy 2.3 applies.

The Shildaig Settlement Development Area lies relatively close to the north western boundary of the SAC (see map in appendix 2). No specific proposals for development have been identified within the Settlement Development Area, and Shildaig is not expected to see major development during the lifetime of the Plan. Policy 1 will apply to any development within the Settlement Development Areas. It is not considered that there will be an impact on the SAC from any development coming forward within the Settlement Development Area, particularly given the

likely scale of development.

No objections were raised in relation to the area covered by this part of the SAC during preparation of the Plan.

The Plan recognises that there will continue to be demand for development in the wider countryside outwith the settlement development areas. This development could include single houses, rural business needs, or renewable energy projects. A balance is sought between the countryside's development potential and the possible effect on the natural and cultural heritage. The strategy identifies three categories of countryside based on the type and importance of the natural and cultural heritage. The Plan requires any proposal outwith the Settlement Development Areas to be assessed against Policy 2 which has three tiers relating to the level of importance of the natural and cultural heritage. The policy takes account of the effect on the natural and cultural heritage and the compatibility with Structure Plan Policy G2 Design for Sustainability.

Should any proposals come forward for development directly on the SAC through a planning application, it would fall to be considered under the terms of Policy 2 of the Local Plan and any other relevant policies within the Local Plan or the Highland Structure Plan. Policy 2 of the Plan was amended following representation from Scottish Natural Heritage to fully reflect the requirements of the Habitats Directive. This will ensure that no proposal can be agreed unless it can be ascertained that it will not adversely affect the integrity of the site.

- Torridon Forest

The Torridon Forest SSSI part of the SAC is one of the most prominent parts of the Wester Ross landscape. There are **no** specific proposals for development outlined in the Plan lying within the SAC. The SAC is shown as an area of International Importance to which Policy 2.3 applies.

The Fasag (Torridon) Settlement Development Area lies adjacent to the southern boundary of the SSSI. The main allocation within the Settlement Development Area is an affordable housing site (AH1 – see map in Appendix 1). The site is allocated for the development of 5 affordable housing sites behind the recent Albyn housing development. Given the small scale nature of this proposed development, it is not considered that there would be any effect on the interests of the SAC. No objections were raised in relation to the inclusion of this site during the preparation of the Plan.

Elsewhere, the Settlement Development Area runs directly adjacent to the Settlement Development Area boundary. It is considered that there is very little scope for development at the north western end of the village which is closest to the boundary of the SAC (see map). Elsewhere in the village the only development likely to take place outwith the allocation described above will be single house development, and given the nature of this development it is considered that there will be no effect on the interests of the European site.

The Plan recognises that there will continue to be demand for development in the wider countryside outwith the settlement development areas. This development could

include single houses, rural business needs, or renewable energy projects. A balance is sought between the countryside's development potential and the possible effect on the natural and cultural heritage. The strategy identifies three categories of countryside based on the type and importance of the natural and cultural heritage. The Plan requires any proposal outwith the Settlement Development Areas to be assessed against Policy 2 which has three tiers relating to the level of importance of the natural and cultural heritage. The policy takes account of the effect on the natural and cultural heritage and the compatibility with Structure Plan Policy G2 Design for Sustainability.

Should any proposals come forward for development directly on the SAC through a planning application, it would fall to be considered under the terms of Policy 2 of the Local Plan and any other relevant policies within the Local Plan or the Highland Structure Plan. Policy 2 of the Plan was amended following representation from Scottish Natural Heritage to fully reflect the requirements of the Habitats Directive. This will ensure that no proposal can be agreed unless it can be ascertained that it will not adversely affect the integrity of the site.

- Coulin Pinewood

There are **no** specific proposals for development outlined in the Plan lying within the Coulin Pinewood SSSI part of the SAC. The SAC as a whole is shown as an area of International Importance to which Policy 2.3 applies.

This part of the SAC lies at some distance from the Settlement Development Areas identified in the Plan, and it is considered that there will be no effect from development taking place within these areas.

No objections were raised in relation to the area covered by this part of the SAC during preparation of the Plan.

The Plan recognises that there will continue to be demand for development in the wider countryside outwith the settlement development areas. This development could include single houses, rural business needs, or renewable energy projects. A balance is sought between the countryside's development potential and the possible effect on the natural and cultural heritage. The strategy identifies three categories of countryside based on the type and importance of the natural and cultural heritage. The Plan requires any proposal outwith the Settlement Development Areas to be assessed against Policy 2 which has three tiers relating to the level of importance of the natural and cultural heritage. The policy takes account of the effect on the natural and cultural heritage and the compatibility with Structure Plan Policy G2 Design for Sustainability.

Should any proposals come forward for development directly on the SAC through a planning application, it would fall to be considered under the terms of Policy 2 of the Local Plan and any other relevant policies within the Local Plan or the Highland Structure Plan. Policy 2 of the Plan was amended following representation from Scottish Natural Heritage to fully reflect the requirements of the Habitats Directive. This will ensure that no proposal can be agreed unless it can be ascertained that it will not adversely affect the integrity of the site.

- Beinn Eighe

The Beinn Eighe part of the SAC is a very large part of the total area covered, and there are no specific proposals for development outlined in the Plan lying within the vast part of it. The Kinlochewe Settlement Development Area immediately abuts the SAC.

The Deposit Draft of the Local Plan did include part of the Beinn Eighe SAC within the Settlement Development Area of Kinlochewe. This inclusion was objected to by SNH on the grounds that “the high nature conservation interest of this area, and the protection afforded to it means that it is inappropriate for development”. The Council accepted that the boundary did include this part of the SSSI and redrew the boundary of the Settlement Development Area to exclude the specific area referred to but to continue to include the area containing the village hall, the proposed location of four affordable houses (subsequently granted planning permission) and a proposed auxiliary fire station. This revised boundary was agreed with SNH and the objection withdrawn. It is therefore not considered that there is any significant effect on the SSSI in relation to the Settlement Development Area boundary.

The SAC is shown as an area of International Importance to which Policy 2.3 applies.

The Plan recognises that there will continue to be demand for development in the wider countryside outwith the settlement development areas. This development could include single houses, rural business needs, or renewable energy projects. A balance is sought between the countryside’s development potential and the possible effect on the natural and cultural heritage. The strategy identifies three categories of countryside based on the type and importance of the natural and cultural heritage. The Plan requires any proposal outwith the Settlement Development Areas to be assessed against Policy 2 which has three tiers relating to the level of importance of the natural and cultural heritage. The policy takes account of the effect on the natural and cultural heritage and the compatibility with Structure Plan Policy G2 Design for Sustainability.

Should any proposals come forward for development directly on the SAC through a planning application, it would fall to be considered under the terms of Policy 2 of the Local Plan and any other relevant policies within the Local Plan or the Highland Structure Plan. Policy 2 of the Plan was amended following representation from Scottish Natural Heritage to fully reflect the requirements of the Habitats Directive. This will ensure that no proposal can be agreed unless it can be ascertained that it will not adversely affect the integrity of the site.

- Loch Maree

There are no specific proposals for development outlined in the Plan either within or directly adjacent to the Loch Maree SSSI part of the SAC. It is shown as an area of International Importance to which Policy 2.3 applies.

This part of the SAC lies a considerable distance from the nearest Settlement Development Areas (Kinlochewe and Incheril), so there is considered to be no effect.

There were no objections raised in relation to the loch in the preparation of the Local Plan.

The Plan recognises that there will continue to be demand for development in the wider countryside outwith the settlement development areas. This development could include single houses, rural business needs, or renewable energy projects. A balance is sought between the countryside's development potential and the possible effect on the natural and cultural heritage. The strategy identifies three categories of countryside based on the type and importance of the natural and cultural heritage. The Plan requires any proposal outwith the Settlement Development Areas to be assessed against Policy 2 which has three tiers relating to the level of importance of the natural and cultural heritage. The policy takes account of the effect on the natural and cultural heritage and the compatibility with Structure Plan Policy G2 Design for Sustainability.

Should any proposals come forward for development directly impacting on the site through a planning application, it would fall to be considered under the terms of Policy 2 of the Local Plan and any other relevant policies within the Local Plan or the Highland Structure Plan. Policy 2 of the Plan was amended following representation from Scottish Natural Heritage to fully reflect the requirements of the Habitats Directive. This will ensure that no proposal can be agreed unless it can be ascertained that it will not adversely affect the integrity of the site.

- Ardlair – Letterewe

There are **no** specific proposals for development outlined in the Plan lying within the Ardlair-Letterewe part of the Loch Maree Complex SAC. The SAC as a whole is shown as an area of International Importance to which Policy 2.3 applies.

This part of the SAC lies at some distance from the Settlement Development Areas identified in the Plan, and it is considered that there will be no effect from development taking place within these areas.

No objections were raised in relation to the area covered by this part of the SAC during preparation of the Plan.

The Plan recognises that there will continue to be demand for development in the wider countryside outwith the settlement development areas. This development could include single houses, rural business needs, or renewable energy projects. A balance is sought between the countryside's development potential and the possible effect on the natural and cultural heritage. The strategy identifies three categories of countryside based on the type and importance of the natural and cultural heritage. The Plan requires any proposal outwith the Settlement Development Areas to be assessed against Policy 2 which has three tiers relating to the level of importance of the natural and cultural heritage. The policy takes account of the effect on the natural and cultural heritage and the compatibility with Structure Plan Policy G2 Design for Sustainability.

Should any proposals come forward for development directly on the SAC through a

planning application, it would fall to be considered under the terms of Policy 2 of the Local Plan and any other relevant policies within the Local Plan or the Highland Structure Plan. Policy 2 of the Plan was amended following representation from Scottish Natural Heritage to fully reflect the requirements of the Habitats Directive. This will ensure that no proposal can be agreed unless it can be ascertained that it will not adversely affect the integrity of the site.

Conclusion:

It is concluded that the provisions of the Plan, and in particular the safeguarding policies relating to any individual proposal will not adversely affect the integrity of the European site.

Name of European Site: River Kerry
Site Type: Special Area of Conservation
<p>Qualifying Interest(s):</p> <p>Annex I habitats that are a primary reason for selection of this site Not applicable</p> <p>Annex I habitats present as a qualifying feature, but not a primary reason for selection of this site Not applicable.</p> <p>Annex II species that are a primary reason for selection of this site</p> <p>1029 Freshwater pearl mussel <i>Margaritifera margaritifera</i></p> <p>Annex II species present as a qualifying feature, but not a primary reason for site selection Not applicable.</p>
<p>Assessment:</p> <p>The River Kerry SAC lies in the west of the Plan area, largely related to the river itself and the important Pearl Mussel population.</p> <p>There are no specific proposals for development outlined in the Plan either within or directly adjacent to the site. The SAC is shown as an area of International Importance to which Policy 2.3 applies.</p> <p>The SAC is not located close to any of the Settlement Development Areas identified in the Plan, and it is considered that there will therefore be no effect from these.</p> <p>The Plan recognises that there will continue to be demand for development in the wider countryside outwith the settlement development areas. This development could include single houses, rural business needs, or renewable energy projects. A balance is sought between the countryside's development potential and the possible effect on the natural and cultural heritage. The strategy identifies three categories of countryside based on the type and importance of the natural and cultural heritage. The Plan requires any proposal outwith the Settlement Development Areas to be assessed against Policy 2 which has three tiers relating to the level of importance of the natural and cultural heritage. The policy takes account of the effect on the natural and cultural heritage and the compatibility with Structure Plan Policy G2 Design for Sustainability.</p> <p>The key issue in relation to the River Kerry is that should any proposals come forward for development directly on or adjacent or having an effect on the site through a planning application, it would fall to be considered under the terms of Policy 2 of the Local Plan and any other relevant policies within the Local Plan or the Highland</p>

Structure Plan. Policy 2 of the Plan was amended following representation from Scottish Natural Heritage to fully reflect the requirements of the Habitats Directive. This will ensure that no proposal can be agreed unless it can be ascertained that it will not adversely affect the integrity of the site.

Conclusion:

It is concluded that the provisions of the Plan, and in particular the safeguarding policies relating to any individual proposal will not adversely affect the integrity of the European site.

Name of European Site: Rassal
Site Type: Special Area of Conservation
<p>Qualifying Interest(s):</p> <p>Annex I habitats that are a primary reason for selection of this site</p> <p>7230 Alkaline fens 8240 Limestone pavements * Priority feature 9180 Tilio-Acerion forests of slopes, screes and ravines * Priority feature</p> <p>Annex I habitats present as a qualifying feature, but not a primary reason for selection of this site</p> <p>4080 Sub-Arctic Salix spp. scrub 6170 Alpine and subalpine calcareous grasslands 7220 Petrifying springs with tufa formation (Cratoneurion) * Priority feature 8210 Calcareous rocky slopes with chasmophytic vegetation</p> <p>Annex II species that are a primary reason for selection of this site</p> <p>Not applicable.</p> <p>Annex II species present as a qualifying feature, but not a primary reason for site selection</p> <p>Not applicable.</p>
<p>Assessment:</p> <p>The Rassal SAC lies to the south of the Plan area. There are no specific proposals for development outlined in the Plan either within or directly adjacent to the site. The SAC is shown as an area of International Importance to which Policy 2.3 applies.</p> <p>There is no built development within the SAC, although there are estate buildings immediately outwith the site. It is not considered that there is likely to be proposals for much development in this general area, and the SAC lies some distance from the nearest Settlement Development Areas (Kishorn and Kishorn Yard).</p> <p>No objections were raised in relation to the area covered by the SAC or the countryside area surrounding it during preparation of the Plan.</p> <p>The Plan recognises that there will continue to be demand for development in the wider countryside outwith the settlement development areas. This development could include single houses, rural business needs, or renewable energy projects. A balance is sought between the countryside's development potential and the possible effect on the natural and cultural heritage. The strategy identifies three categories of countryside based on the type and importance of the natural and cultural heritage. The Plan requires any proposal outwith the Settlement Development Areas to be assessed against Policy 2 which has three tiers relating to the level of importance of the natural and cultural heritage. The policy takes account of the effect on the natural</p>

and cultural heritage and the compatibility with Structure Plan Policy G2 Design for Sustainability.

Should any proposals come forward for development directly on the site through a planning application, it would fall to be considered under the terms of Policy 2 of the Local Plan and any other relevant policies within the Local Plan or the Highland Structure Plan. Policy 2 of the Plan was amended following representation from Scottish Natural Heritage to fully reflect the requirements of the Habitats Directive. This will ensure that no proposal can be agreed unless it can be ascertained that it will not adversely affect the integrity of the site.

Conclusion:

It is concluded that the provisions of the Plan, and in particular the safeguarding policies relating to any individual proposal will not adversely affect the integrity of the European site.

Name of European Site: Inverasdale Peatlands
Site Type: Special Area of Conservation
<p>Qualifying Interest(s):</p> <p>Annex I habitats that are a primary reason for selection of this site 7130 Blanket bogs * Priority feature</p> <p>Annex I habitats present as a qualifying feature, but not a primary reason for selection of this site Not applicable.</p> <p>Annex II species that are a primary reason for selection of this site Not applicable.</p> <p>Annex II species present as a qualifying feature, but not a primary reason for site selection Not applicable.</p>
<p>Assessment:</p> <p>This SAC is located to the west of the Plan area and covers a large area of approximately 1200 hectares. There are no specific proposals for development outlined in the Plan lying within the site. The SAC is shown as an area of International Importance to which Policy 2.3 applies.</p> <p>A number of Settlement Development Areas are located adjacent or relatively close to the north eastern boundary of the SAC (Cove, Mellangaun, Firemore and Inverasdale). No specific proposals for development have been identified within the Plan. These small villages are not expected to see major development during the lifetime of the Plan, with likely development being restricted to single houses or possibly relatively small scale affordable housing development (up to four houses). Policy 1 will apply to any development within the Settlement Development Areas.</p> <p>The boundary of the Mellangaun SDA lies directly adjacent to the boundary of the SAC. Whilst the boundary has been drawn widely, the level of development expected is unlikely to extend much beyond the existing building line adjacent to the main road through the village. In discussions with SNH, it was concluded that the Settlement Development Area was outwith the hydrological influence of the site, and that there would be no impact on the site itself. It was also noted that there is a mains water supply stretching right along the coastline, which would negate the need for private bore holes for water supply.</p> <p>No objections were raised in relation to either the boundaries of the Settlement Development Areas or the area covered by the SAC during preparation of the Plan.</p> <p>The Plan recognises that there will continue to be demand for development in the wider countryside outwith the settlement development areas. This development could</p>

include single houses, rural business needs, or renewable energy projects. A balance is sought between the countryside's development potential and the possible effect on the natural and cultural heritage. The strategy identifies three categories of countryside based on the type and importance of the natural and cultural heritage. The Plan requires any proposal outwith the Settlement Development Areas to be assessed against Policy 2 which has three tiers relating to the level of importance of the natural and cultural heritage. The policy takes account of the effect on the natural and cultural heritage and the compatibility with Structure Plan Policy G2 Design for Sustainability.

Should any proposals come forward for development directly on the site through a planning application, it would fall to be considered under the terms of Policy 2 of the Local Plan and any other relevant policies within the Local Plan or the Highland Structure Plan. Policy 2 of the Plan was amended following representation from Scottish Natural Heritage to fully reflect the requirements of the Habitats Directive. This will ensure that no proposal can be agreed unless it can be ascertained that it will not adversely affect the integrity of the site.

Conclusion:

It is concluded that the provisions of the Plan, and in particular the safeguarding policies relating to any individual proposal will not adversely affect the integrity of the European site.

Name of European Site: Beinn Bhan
Site Type: Special Area of Conservation
<p>Qualifying Interest(s):</p> <p>Annex I habitats that are a primary reason for selection of this site 4030 European dry heaths 6430 Hydrophilous tall herb fringe communities of plains and of the montane to alpine levels 8110 Siliceous scree of the montane to snow levels (Androsacetalia alpinae and Galeopsietalia ladani)</p> <p>Annex I habitats present as a qualifying feature, but not a primary reason for selection of this site 4010 Northern Atlantic wet heaths with Erica tetralix 4060 Alpine and Boreal heaths 6150 Siliceous alpine and boreal grasslands 8220 Siliceous rocky slopes with chasmophytic vegetation</p> <p>Annex II species that are a primary reason for selection of this site Not applicable.</p> <p>Annex II species present as a qualifying feature, but not a primary reason for site selection Not applicable.</p>
<p>Assessment:</p> <p>Bein Bhan is located to the south of the Local Plan area, and covers a large area of mountainous heath north of Loch Kishorn. There are no specific proposals for development outlined in the Plan either within or directly adjacent to the site. The SAC is shown as an area of International Importance to which Policy 2.3 applies.</p> <p>The former Kishorn Fabrication Yard is located to the south of the SAC, at a distance of approximately 500 metres at its closest point. The Yard has been allocated as a redevelopment site within the Local Plan (as shown in appendix 1) suitable for a range of industrial/business uses, including potentially small scale mineral extraction and renewable energy. The Plan states the requirement for a Development Brief or Framework Plan to guide development, at which point clearer uses for the site will be established. In the absence of specific uses however, and following discussion with SNH, it is not considered that there would be a significant impact on the SAC. It is also worth noting that there were no recorded impacts from the previous large scale fabrication use.</p> <p>No objections were raised in relation to the boundary of the Settlement Development Area or the area covered by the SAC during consideration of the Plan.</p> <p>The Plan recognises that there will continue to be demand for development in the</p>

wider countryside outwith the settlement development areas. This development could include single houses, rural business needs, or renewable energy projects. A balance is sought between the countryside's development potential and the possible effect on the natural and cultural heritage. The strategy identifies three categories of countryside based on the type and importance of the natural and cultural heritage. The Plan requires any proposal outwith the Settlement Development Areas to be assessed against Policy 2 which has three tiers relating to the level of importance of the natural and cultural heritage. The policy takes account of the effect on the natural and cultural heritage and the compatibility with Structure Plan Policy G2 Design for Sustainability.

Should any proposals come forward for development directly on the site through a planning application, it would fall to be considered under the terms of Policy 2 of the Local Plan and any other relevant policies within the Local Plan or the Highland Structure Plan. Policy 2 of the Plan was amended following representation from Scottish Natural Heritage to fully reflect the requirements of the Habitats Directive. This will ensure that no proposal can be agreed unless it can be ascertained that it will not adversely affect the integrity of the site.

Conclusion:

It is concluded that the provisions of the Plan, and in particular the safeguarding policies relating to any individual proposal will not adversely affect the integrity of the European site.

Name of European Site: Achnahaird
Site Type: Special Area of Conservation
<p>Qualifying Interest(s):</p> <p>Annex I habitats that are a primary reason for selection of this site Not applicable</p> <p>Annex I habitats present as a qualifying feature, but not a primary reason for selection of this site Not applicable.</p> <p>Annex II species that are a primary reason for selection of this site 1395 Petalwort Petalophyllum ralfsii</p> <p>Annex II species present as a qualifying feature, but not a primary reason for site selection Not applicable.</p>
<p>Assessment:</p> <p>This site is located in the north of the Plan area, some distance east of the small village of Achnahaird. There are no specific proposals for development outlined in the Plan either within or directly adjacent to the site. The SAC is shown as an area of International Importance to which Policy 2.3 applies.</p> <p>A Settlement Development Area has been identified for Achnahaird, to which Policy 1 of the Local Plan will apply. No specific proposals for particular uses have been identified in the Plan, although the most likely development within the village will be small scale residential development associated with the crofting nature of the area. It is not considered that there will be any effect of such development on the SAC.</p> <p>No objections were raised in relation to the boundary of the Settlement Development Area or the area covered by the SAC during consideration of the Plan.</p> <p>The Plan recognises that there will continue to be demand for development in the wider countryside outwith the settlement development areas. This development could include single houses, rural business needs, or renewable energy projects. A balance is sought between the countryside's development potential and the possible effect on the natural and cultural heritage. The strategy identifies three categories of countryside based on the type and importance of the natural and cultural heritage. The Plan requires any proposal outwith the Settlement Development Areas to be assessed against Policy 2 which has three tiers relating to the level of importance of the natural and cultural heritage. The policy takes account of the effect on the natural and cultural heritage and the compatibility with Structure Plan Policy G2 Design for Sustainability.</p> <p>Should any proposals come forward for development directly on the site through a</p>

planning application, it would fall to be considered under the terms of Policy 2 of the Local Plan and any other relevant policies within the Local Plan or the Highland Structure Plan. Policy 2 of the Plan was amended following representation from Scottish Natural Heritage to fully reflect the requirements of the Habitats Directive. This will ensure that no proposal can be agreed unless it can be ascertained that it will not adversely affect the integrity of the site.

Conclusion:

It is concluded that the provisions of the Plan, and in particular the safeguarding policies relating to any individual proposal will not adversely affect the integrity of the European site.

Name of European Site: Inverpolly
Site Type: Special Area of Conservation
<p>Qualifying Interest(s):</p> <p>Annex I habitats that are a primary reason for selection of this site</p> <p>3130 Oligotrophic to mesotrophic standing waters with vegetation of the Littorelletea uniflorae and/or of the Isoëto-Nanojuncetea 3160 Natural dystrophic lakes and ponds 4010 Northern Atlantic wet heaths with Erica tetralix 7130 Blanket bogs * Priority feature 7140 Transition mires and quaking bogs 7150 Depressions on peat substrates of the Rhynchosporion</p> <p>Annex I habitats present as a qualifying feature, but not a primary reason for selection of this site</p> <p>4030 European dry heaths 4060 Alpine and Boreal heaths 6150 Siliceous alpine and boreal grasslands 8110 Siliceous scree of the montane to snow levels (Androsacetalia alpinae and Galeopsietalia ladani) 8220 Siliceous rocky slopes with chasmophytic vegetation 91A0 Old sessile oak woods with Ilex and Blechnum in the British Isles</p> <p>Annex II species that are a primary reason for selection of this site</p> <p>1355 Otter <i>Lutra lutra</i></p> <p>Annex II species present as a qualifying feature, but not a primary reason for site selection</p> <p>1029 Freshwater pearl mussel <i>Margaritifera margaritifera</i></p>
<p>Assessment:</p> <p>This site is located in the north of the Plan area, at some distance from the Settlement Development Areas identified in the Plan. There are no specific proposals for development outlined in the Plan either within or directly adjacent to the site. The SAC is shown as an area of International Importance to which Policy 2.3 applies.</p> <p>No objections were raised in relation to this area of countryside during consideration of the Plan.</p> <p>The Plan recognises that there will continue to be demand for development in the wider countryside outwith the settlement development areas. This development could include single houses, rural business needs, or renewable energy projects. A balance is sought between the countryside's development potential and the possible effect on the natural and cultural heritage. The strategy identifies three categories of countryside based on the type and importance of the natural and cultural heritage.</p>

The Plan requires any proposal outwith the Settlement Development Areas to be assessed against Policy 2 which has three tiers relating to the level of importance of the natural and cultural heritage. The policy takes account of the effect on the natural and cultural heritage and the compatibility with Structure Plan Policy G2 Design for Sustainability.

Should any proposals come forward for development directly on the site through a planning application, it would fall to be considered under the terms of Policy 2 of the Local Plan and any other relevant policies within the Local Plan or the Highland Structure Plan. Policy 2 of the Plan was amended following representation from Scottish Natural Heritage to fully reflect the requirements of the Habitats Directive. This will ensure that no proposal can be agreed unless it can be ascertained that it will not adversely affect the integrity of the site.

Conclusion:

It is concluded that the provisions of the Plan, and in particular the safeguarding policies relating to any individual proposal will not adversely affect the integrity of the European site.

Conclusions

It is considered that while some minor elements within the plan are likely to have a significant effect on European sites, the provisions of the plan policies have assisted in putting in place a framework against which proposals which do come forward through the planning application process can be fully considered in accordance with national guidance. This will ensure that no development will be permitted which will adversely affect the integrity of any site.

As a result of the above safeguarding framework, it is concluded that the proposals within this plan will not adversely affect the integrity of any European site. This conclusion has been reached with the full cooperation of Scottish Natural Heritage.