



Preparing the Caithness & Sutherland Local Development Plan (CaSPlan)

Newsletter 1 - An update on progress

March 2015, CaSPlan Team

Introduction

The consultation period for the CaSPlan Main Issues Report (MIR) ended on 6 February 2015. This newsletter is intended to give an update on the work the CaSPlan team will be doing over the coming months as well as outlining an additional period of consultation to be held on new sites and issues that were suggested to us during the MIR consultation.

The MIR is not intended as a draft version of the plan; it is a discussion document that sets out initial ideas for what the plan needs to achieve for people and places in the area and the Council's initial preferences for where new development might be located.

A total of 258 comments were submitted during the consultation, including comments from a number of Community Councils and community organisations. The CaSPlan team has begun the process of working through these comments to examine the issues raised. The next formal stage of the plan making process will be the Proposed Plan. This will represent the Council's settled view as to what the final adopted content of the plan should be. The Proposed Plan will also be subject to a period of consultation.



MIR consultation

The MIR consultation ran for a total of 14 weeks; the original timescale was from 30 October 2014 until 29 January 2015, with an extension added to 6 February 2015 due to the postponement and rescheduling of the Brora workshop.

The MIR was publicised through a variety of sources: press releases; adverts in the Northern Times and John O'Groats Journal; an article in Executive magazine; neighbour notification to

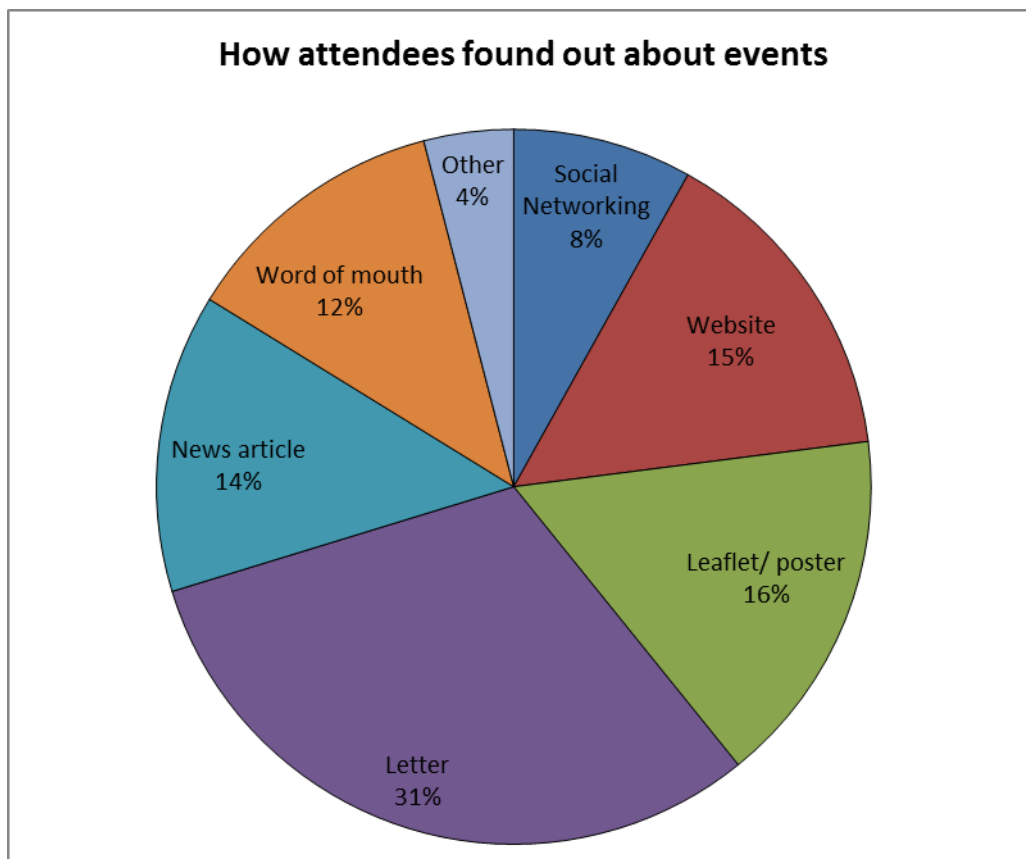
2,437 properties within 30 metres of sites identified in the MIR; 22,537 postcards sent to addresses in the plan area; regular use of social media (Facebook and Twitter); emails or letters sent to everyone that had previously registered an interest; and posters sent to all places where we made a paper copy of the MIR available for public viewing and to Community Councils in the plan area.

A series of consultation events were held across the plan area at Brora, Dornoch, Halkirk, Lairg, Lochinver, Thurso, Tongue and Wick and these comprised drop in sessions and evening workshops. Overall 210 people attended the drop in sessions and 74 people the evening workshops.

Paper copies of the MIR were made available to view at Service Points and Public Libraries, and copies sent to each Community Council. An online interactive version of the MIR was provided and we encouraged people to submit comments using an online form. Just over 70% of respondents submitted their comments using the online form. 58% of respondents found the interactive MIR and online comments form easy or very easy to use and 25% were neutral. 65% of respondents found the presentation quality of the MIR good or very good and 23% were neutral.

Figures up to 5 February 2015 show that 1,526 people viewed the CaSPlan webpage and that the Main Issues Report was downloaded 1,196 times. Through social media (Facebook), CaSPlan advertisements reached over 14,500 people with almost 1,000 people opening the advertisements.

How people heard about the MIR consultation events:



From feedback received at events, almost a third of people attending had heard about the events through a letter they had received. 23% had heard either via the Council's website or social networking sites.

Getting to Proposed Plan stage

All comments received on the MIR (and the additional consultation on the new sites and issues) will be validated and considered. Recommendations for site allocations and policies for the Proposed Plan will be prepared.

We intend to have further liaison with Agencies (such as SNH, SEPA, Historic Scotland, Transport Scotland) and other Council Services in order to help identify issues that developers will need to address when developing a site.

We are required to revise the SEA Environmental Report and to prepare a draft Habitats Regulations Appraisal of the plan, ready to be published alongside the Proposed Plan.

We will pick up on any clarifications and corrections required which we identified or were highlighted to us during the MIR consultation, in preparing the Proposed Plan content.

Emerging Issues

We are at an early stage of working through the comments received. At this early stage we have noted that the feedback includes the following:

- The Strategy Map could be improved e.g. amendments to the annotations;
- General support for the boundary amendments to the Special Landscape Areas (SLAs);
- High proportion of the overall number of comments received related to site options in Thurso west, particularly at Pennyland;
- General agreement with the proposed Outcomes for the Plan;
- Green network assets and enhancements should be mapped.

Potential new sites and issues

Through the MIR consultation a small number of new sites and issues were identified to us. A small number of new Growing Settlements and Economic Development Areas were also suggested to us. Not all of these suggested new sites are suitable for identification in the development plan, for example single house sites or sites distant from settlements. Reasonable alternatives that have been identified to us will now be subject of an additional period of consultation. These include suggestions such as boundary changes to sites included in the MIR, sites within settlements that did not feature in the MIR or proposed alternative land uses on sites that had been included in the MIR. This provides everyone with the opportunity to submit their views about whether these new suggestions would be suitable for inclusion in the Plan. Details of the sites being consulted on are available on the CaSPlan webpage www.highland.gov.uk/casplan where comments can also be submitted. Comments received will be considered alongside others submitted during the MIR consultation. This will help the Council decide which sites to allocate for future development

and any additional Growing Settlements and Economic Development Areas to be included in the next stage of the Plan, known as the Proposed Plan.

We are holding a 6 week consultation from 13 March to 24 April 2015. We will notify neighbours within 30 metres of these new sites of the opportunity to comment. When undertaking this consultation the Council will not be expressing any firm position on whether these suggestions are suitable. The Council is only consulting on these new sites and issues; the consultation on the MIR has finished. Any comments received on anything other than the new sites and issues will not be considered.

Next Steps After the New Sites and Issues Consultation

The next steps are:

- Report to Caithness and Sutherland Area Committee on 26 May 2015;
- Report Proposed Plan to PDI Committee on 19 August 2015;
- Following approval by Planning, Development and Infrastructure (PDI) Committee in August 2015 publish Proposed Plan and have a period of consultation.