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**From:** West Highlands and Islands Local Development Plan  
**Subject:** FW: West Highland and Islands Local Development Plan [#268]

**Section 1:** John C Brown

**Your  
personal  
and contact  
details**

**1.1 Name \***

**1.2 Are you?** a community or other organisation

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**1.4 Name of Organisation** Astronomer Royal for Scotland representing Dark Skies issues etc for the community  
**(if applicable)**

**Select a topic to comment on** Tell us your vision for the area

**4.1 How do you want the West Highland and Islands area to change over the next 10–20 years?**

I want to see the area prosper but above all to do so alongside preserving its unique wild environment including its real night environment by avoiding over-lighting and stupid lighting

PRESERVING ONE OF EUROPE'S FEW WILDERNESS FROM COSTLY MISMANAGED LIGHTING

As Astronomer Royal for Scotland I am extremely concerned that so little heed is being paid to the potentially huge damage to the environment/ecology and to nature tourism, as well as to biology and astronomy, of the terrible overlighting impact of poorly planned lighting. It is disgraceful that there is nowhere any specific mention of this topic in your consultation. This comment applies widely across Scotland but particularly to places such as Skye and Lochalsh with fine skies and wildlife, and with active – government funded – schemes to promote off season dark sky and nocturnal ecology tourism. My remarks below apply to Sleat as an example as I happen to know it well as a Skye resident. In brief –

1 There is much welcome growth in Skye related to the resounding successes of SMO, new buildings, school, medical centre, and distillery etc

2 There is one major area of conflict in Sleat between 1) and the matter of poorly planned lighting which can ruin not only the night sky but also the nocturnal ecosystem. For example some

of the lighting around SMO and in the nearby developments such as Kilbeg (school, medical centre) , Armadale housing is frankly appalling – much of it upward and some of it a serious safety hazard through blinding drives with glaring light

3 Fortunately the form of well-planned lighting which minimises these problems is, contrary to common believe, the same form as provides good

security and smaller fuel bills (e.g. a year of just ONE 1 KW lamp using pure downlighters saves around £1500 over undirected lamps which pour the same again into the sky and the night environment)

I am more than willing, and indeed surely have the right, to be involved directly in this aspect of the consultation

Professor John C Brown

SEE ALSO

<http://planning.teanga.info/WHILDP/bileag.pdf>

<http://www.smo.uhi.ac.uk/~caoimhin/tmp/LightingSleat/PictureShow3.pptx>

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Tuath housing-association housing just before the garage in Armadale, which is also an adopted road with Highland Council lighting engineer involvement in its design.

The six lights still to be connected are on the road going up to the building and will be under control of Highland Council. The will be closer to the main road than the others, and if they are anything near as bright as the others (which they are) they will actually be a major \_hazard\_ to traffic on the main road, especially to cyclists cycling at night who will have their night vision ruined by them.

Going to the wider issue, there is the opportunity, until 27 March, i.e. a week on Friday, to comment on issues pertaining to the Local Development Plan, and I think anyone who cares about light pollution should put in comments about that. This is the only real opportunity there will be to comment on wider general issues rather than site specific issues. The url is ridiculously long, but if you google “WHILDP” it takes you straight to the place to comment. The online form is certainly not designed to invite comment on light pollution. It invites proposals from developers for big developments and invites the public to nominate small green areas which should be protected from development. (I’ll certainly be saying that there should be no concentrated development in any of east Sleat other than at Kilbeg.) But Section 4 does give a golden opportunity to talk about light pollution: “4.2 What do you think are the best, existing assets and characteristics of the area...?”, “4.4 How can these assets and characteristics best be safeguarded...?”. I think this is such an important opportunity to get the message straight to the planners and councillors that it would be

good to let all astronomy interest group members in the area know and encourage them to put in comments before Friday 27th, so that the message is coming from as many people as possible and not just from ourselves. An important message to get to the planners is that you can't have the same lighting rules in Inverness as in dark countryside, and that even a "small" amount of light pollution can ruin the darkness.

Something else worth commenting on. You'll see that the WHILDP site has a document "Example Strategic Environmental Site Assessment" which includes every imaginable criterion to consider in assessing a proposed development – everything except light pollution. In 48 pages there is not one mention of the word light.

Best wishes,

Kevin / Caoimhín o'Donniadh  
(SMO/Sleat Resident)

See also Gaelic leaflet

<http://planning.teanga.info/WHILDP/bileag.pdf>

on Sleat plans and light pollution which has attracted resounding local support and interest

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I apologise for not responding to your previous email and I thank you for your invitation (and reminder) to attend the meeting on Saturday. Unfortunately, I shall not be able to attend – not because I am not interested in the subject, but rather that I am committed to helping at a fund raising event for MacMillan Cancer Support which is on the same afternoon.

I personally would like the skies to be as dark as possible and the matter should include a discussion, not only with the applicants of new developments and their technical consultants, but also with the lighting department of Highland Council. We have had limited success in reducing the amount of street lighting in some areas due to concerns of safety and security from local residents and police. I hope that Sleat will achieve a greater degree of success. If a further meeting was scheduled, I would make every effort to attend.

Regards

Audrey

Audrey Sinclair  
Independent Councillor  
Wester Ross, Strathpeffer & Lochalsh

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Dear John– I am just catching up on a backlog of emails having been away hill walking with my sons on Hadrian's wall and the Lake District.

Thank you very much for the invitation.

I cannot get to SMO today – the weather is terrible and I need to sort out sheep and cattle.

However, I am very keen to help to progress any dark skies initiative.

As their Councillor and Chair of the Sunart Oakwoods Initiative, I tried to action this for Ardnamuchan and Morvern – and will try again.

Whilst sailing this summer there were some superb dark skies from parts of the Argyll coast.

SMO will be a challenge as there is a lot of lighting to allow people to walk at night between various parts of the campus but it could be significantly reduced.

If you are on the mainland next week, I will be at the Fort William Auction Mart Monday, in FW Tuesday am and could possibly meet you on Wednesday.

If not, I should be in Glasgow in the next few weeks.

Best wishes, Michael