

Online Consultation User Guide

Highland-wide
Local Development Plan

Am Planna Leasachaidh
Air Feadh na
Gàidhealtachd

Main Issues Report
Aithisg nam Prìomh
Chúisean

September 2015

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Highland-wide Local Development Plan 2 - Main Issues Report		15/09/15 00:00	18/12/15 12:00	open
Aquaculture Supplementary Guidance 20150522		25/05/15 10:00	19/07/15 12:00	closed
Draft Housing Land Audit 2014 Consultation		01/06/15 00:01	19/06/15 23:59	closed

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Organisation: Highland Council

Contact Name: Development Plans

Contact Email: hwldp@highland.gov.uk

Contact Telephone: 01349 886 608

Other Contact Information: The Highland Council Glenurquhart Road Inverness IV3 5NX

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Issue 2b) Enhancing the City and Town Centres

Issue 2c) Deciding How Smaller Settlements Can Grow

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Issue 2e) Supporting Rural and Fragile Areas

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2.10 The existing policy framework for determining proposals for new houses in the countryside is a two tier approach covering Hinterland Areas and then all other areas of Wider Countryside. The preferred approach outlined below explains the transition to a three tier approach covering Hinterland, Wider Countryside, and Fragile Areas.

Hinterland

2.11 Within areas known as Hinterland (see [Figure 3 - Three Tier Approach To Housing In The Countryside](#), Page 18) there are ongoing pressures for housing development and it is important to protect against unsustainable growth in car-based commuting and inappropriate housing in the countryside as well as providing protection for environmental assets, and supporting traditional land management / the rural economy. Within Hinterland areas [Policy 35](#) "Housing in the Countryside (Hinterland Areas)" applies which presumes against new housing subject to a number of exceptions (see proposed amendments described at issue 6).

2.12 Section 4.2 and Table 4-4 of the [Monitoring Statement](#) indicate that this policy is generally achieving its objectives, with around 90%⁽⁵⁾ of housing completions within the region is granted subject to a legal agreement. (uses) a legal agreement is often required to tie a proliferation of housing in the countryside.

2.13 Concerns have been raised regarding the use of legal agreements for newcroft houses due to associated costs, legal burdens and the potential availability of finance. We have therefore carefully examined this issue in recommending how to proceed with all types of Hinterland development in the new HwLDP. If we were to dispense with the need for legal agreements this would carry a number of risks including:

- Unsustainable patterns of housing development, with particular impacts on landscape and supporting infrastructure and services.
- Set a precedent for the removal of legal agreements for new houses required to support rural businesses.
- Forcroft proposals, potential increases in the subdivision of croftland thereby threatening future viability of traditional croft holdings.

2.14 Removing the requirement for legal agreements would therefore introduce too much flexibility for housing in Hinterland Areas. The preferred approach set out below recommends the continued use of legal agreements with no changes to this effect in Policy 35 or the associated [Housing in the Countryside Siting and Design SG](#).

2.15 To continue to achieve the objectives of Policy 35, minor wording amendments are proposed to its current exceptions that outline when a new house in Hinterland Areas may be acceptable (see Issue 6).

2.16 Related to the above exceptions, **Policy 44** Tourist Accommodation currently allows self catering units as an exception to **Policy 35**. However, Section 3.6.2 of the Monitoring Statement indicates that occupancy levels for self-catering units in Highland have been declining in recent years, resulting in requests for occupancy restrictions to be removed to allow for self catering units to become permanent dwellings. As there is a diminishing demand for self catering units, and with the market appearing to have reached saturation point, the preference is to remove this exception from the Hinterland policy. All future proposals of this nature would therefore be treated in the same manner as a proposal for a new house in the Hinterland.

Wider Countryside

2.17 In all other areas of the countryside proposals for most forms of development (including housing) are determined against Policy 36 "Development in the Wider Countryside" which takes a more permissive approach compared to Hinterland Areas. Section 9.2.3 of the Monitoring Statement reveals uncertainties as to whether Policy 36 is achieving a sustainable pattern of development. In the past 15 years, outwith Hinterland areas, almost 30% of homes have been built outwith settlements, an average 110 homes per annum. This has resulted in a large number of new single houses in the countryside, particularly in Caithness, Sutherland and Wester Ross. There are several long term sustainability issues arising from this. In particular, increased levels of car-based commuting, adverse impacts on sensitive landscapes, and increased costs to the Council for

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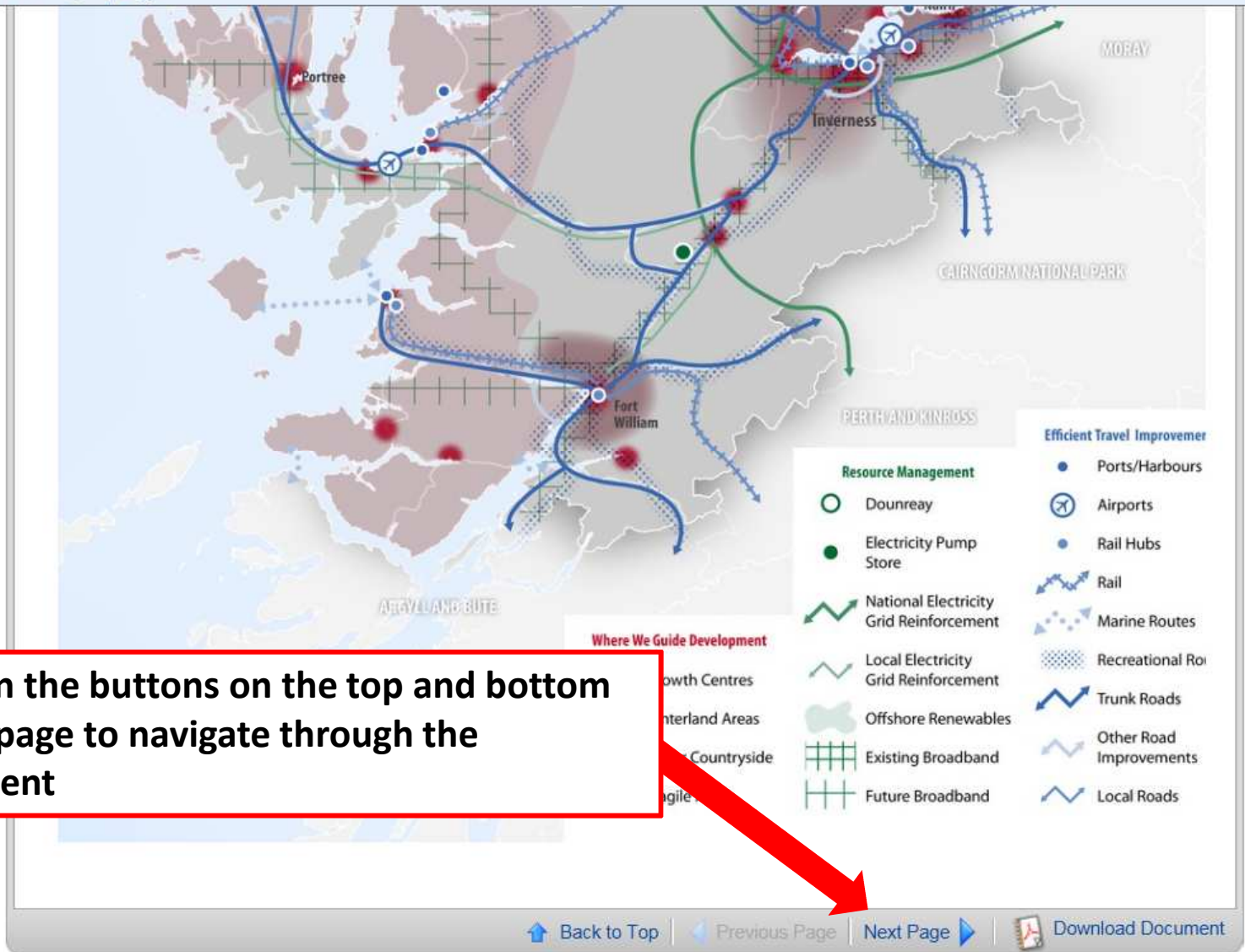
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Issue 2e) Supporting Rural and Fragile Areas

3 Placemaking, Design & Travel

Issue 2e) Supporting Rural and Fragile Areas

2.21 We want to support vibrant rural, coastal and island areas, with growing, sustainable communities supported by new opportunities for employment. Paragraph 74 of SPP places emphasis on maintaining and growing communities in remote and Fragile Areas by encouraging development that provides sustainable economic activity, while preserving important environmental assets that underpin tourism and quality of place.

2.22 Strengthening the labour market and the economic and social wellbeing of rural and fragile communities form part of the key outcomes of the SOA3. This is also one of Highland and Islands Enterprise's (HIE) four main priorities. To deliver these priorities HIE support the enhancement of community capacity and confidence, empower communities to acquire, manage and exploit community assets and help to enable sustainable growth.

2.23 Our support for rural economic development is not clearly presented within the existing HwLDP. At present existing Policy 36 Development in the Wider Countryside aims to give general support for development subject to meeting a number of criteria. We think that there is a need to introduce a new policy which specifically sets out our support for rural economic development. Housing in the countryside will be dealt with separately to this new policy as set out in issue 2d.

Option 1 - Preferred Approach

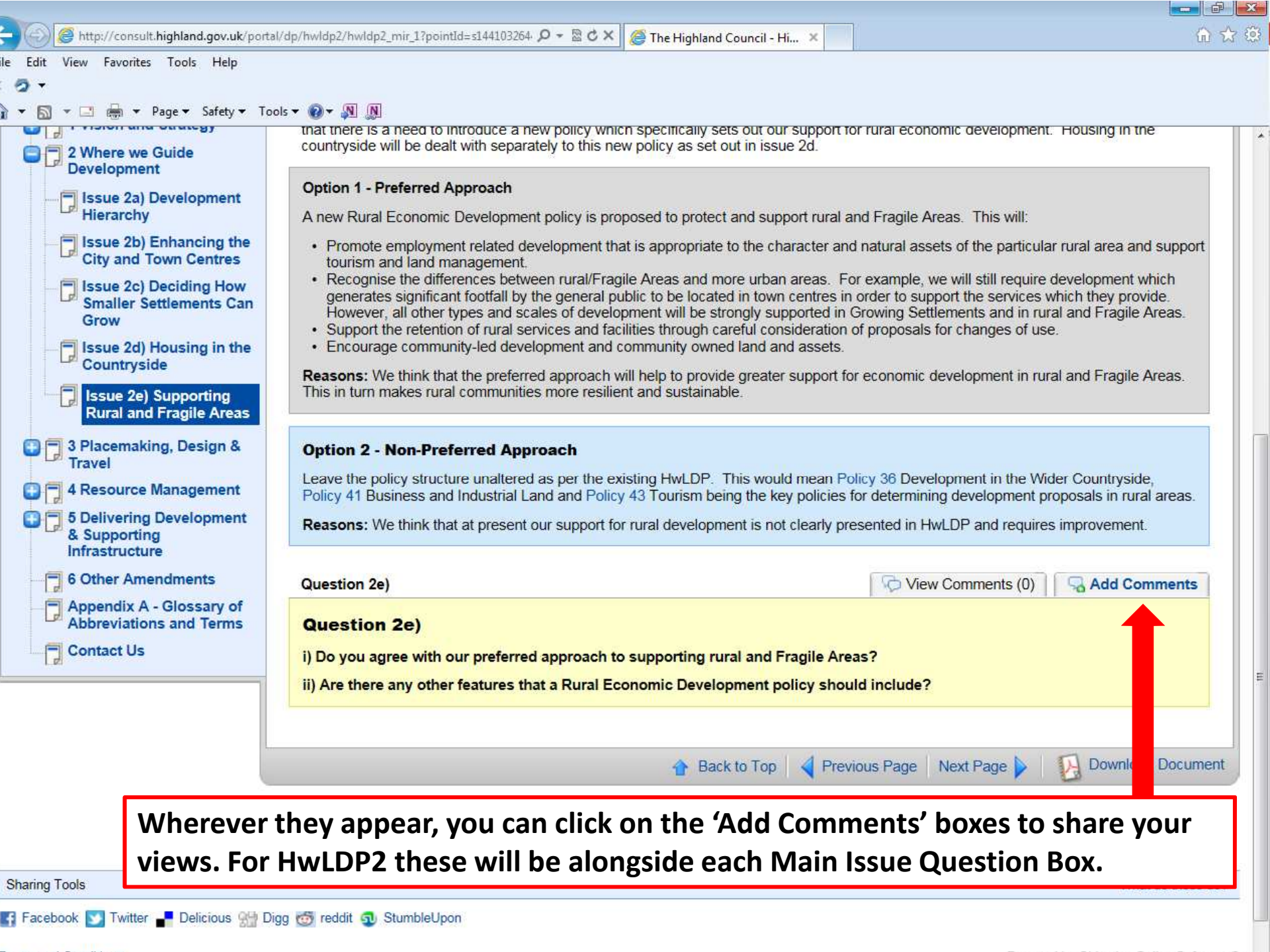
A new Rural Economic Development policy is proposed to protect and support rural and Fragile Areas. This will:

- Promote employment related development, tourism and land management.
- Recognise the differences between rural areas and generate significant footfall by the general public. However, all other types and scales of development.
- Support the retention of rural services and facilities through careful consideration of proposals for changes of use.
- Encourage community-led development and community owned land and assets.

Reasons: We think that the preferred approach will help to provide greater support for economic development in rural and Fragile Areas. This in turn makes rural communities more resilient and sustainable.

Option 2 - Non-Preferred Approach

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that there is a need to introduce a new policy which specifically sets out our support for rural economic development. Housing in the countryside will be dealt with separately to this new policy as set out in issue 2d.

Option 1 - Preferred Approach

A new Rural Economic Development policy is proposed to protect and support rural and Fragile Areas. This will:

- Promote employment related development that is appropriate to the character and natural assets of the particular rural area and support tourism and land management.
- Recognise the differences between rural/Fragile Areas and more urban areas. For example, we will still require development which generates significant footfall by the general public to be located in town centres in order to support the services which they provide. However, all other types and scales of development will be strongly supported in Growing Settlements and in rural and Fragile Areas.
- Support the retention of rural services and facilities through careful consideration of proposals for changes of use.
- Encourage community-led development and community owned land and assets.

Reasons: We think that the preferred approach will help to provide greater support for economic development in rural and Fragile Areas. This in turn makes rural communities more resilient and sustainable.

Option 2 - Non-Preferred Approach

Leave the policy structure unaltered as per the existing HwLDP. This would mean [Policy 36](#) Development in the Wider Countryside, [Policy 41](#) Business and Industrial Land and [Policy 43](#) Tourism being the key policies for determining development proposals in rural areas.

Reasons: We think that at present our support for rural development is not clearly presented in HwLDP and requires improvement.

Question 2e)

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Question 2e)

- Do you agree with our preferred approach to supporting rural and Fragile Areas?
- Are there any other features that a Rural Economic Development policy should include?

Wherever they appear, you can click on the 'Add Comments' boxes to share your views. For HwLDP2 these will be alongside each Main Issue Question Box.

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Policy 4.3 Tourism being the key pointer for determining development proposals in rural areas.

Reasons: We think that at present our support for rural development is not clearly presented in HwLDP and requires improvement.

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Question 2e)

i) Do you agree with our preferred approach to supporting rural and Fragile Areas?

☐ Strongly Agree ☐ Agree ☐ Neutral ☐ Disagree ☐ Strongly Disagree ☐ Don't Know

Tell us why you think this

ii) Are there any other features that a Rural Economic Development policy should include?

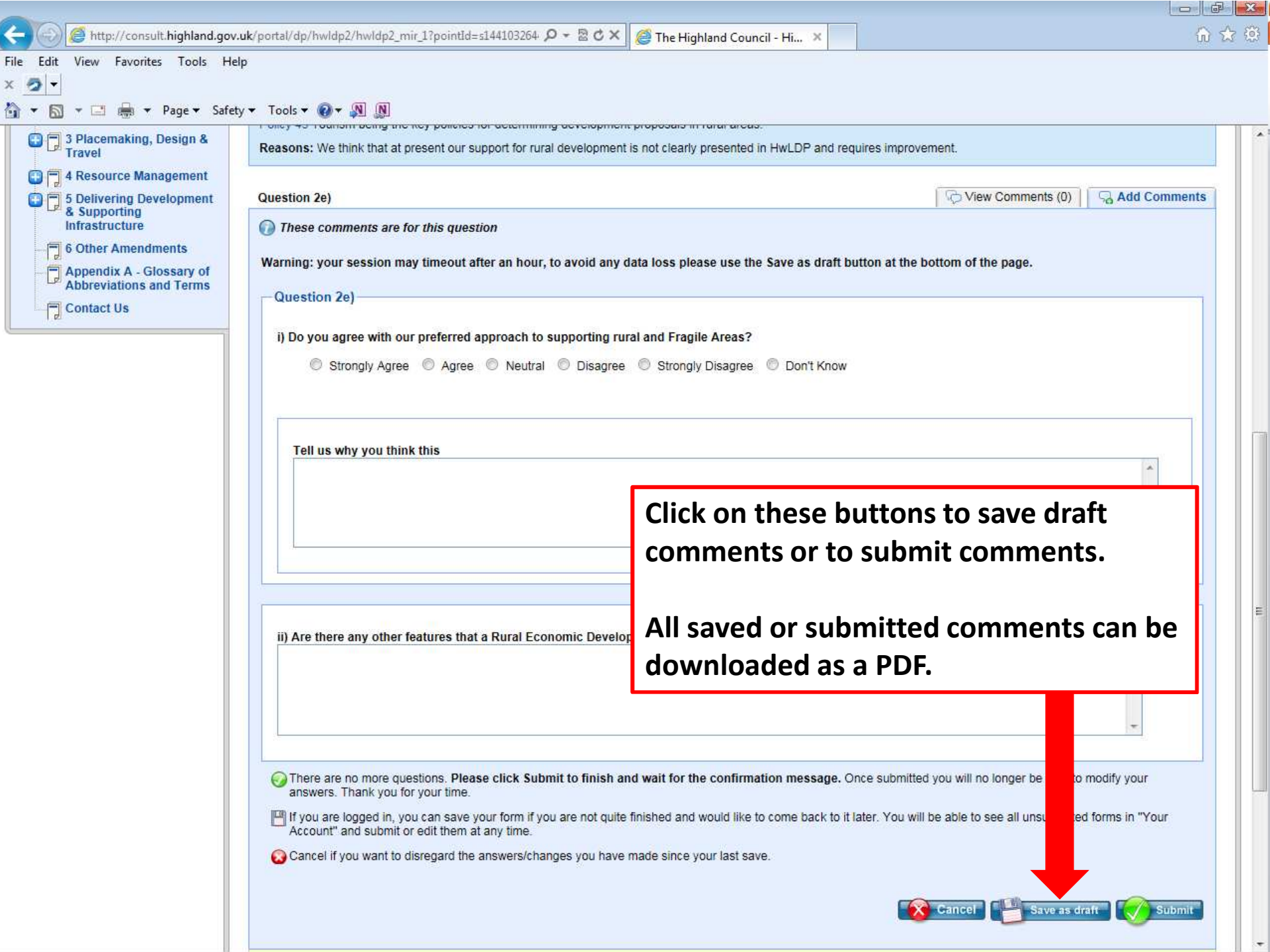
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2.21 We want to support vibrant rural, coastal and island areas, with growing, sustainable communities supported by new opportunities for employment. Paragraph 74 of SPP places emphasis on maintaining and growing communities in remote and Fragile Areas by encouraging development that provides sustainable economic activity, while preserving important environmental assets that underpin tourism and quality of place.

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- Reasons:** We think that the preferred approach will help to provide greater support for economic development in rural and Fragile Areas. This in turn makes rural communities more resilient and sustainable.

Leave the policy structure unaltered as per the existing HwLDP. This would mean [Policy 36](#) Development in the Wider Countryside, [Policy 41](#) Business and Industrial Land and [Policy 43](#) Tourism being the key policies for determining development proposals in rural areas.

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Deadline for Comments

**All comments should be submitted no later than
12 noon on Friday 29 January 2016**

**Unless otherwise agreed in advance with the Development Plans
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Next Steps

Following the end of the consultation event all comments will be processed and made available to view on the consultation portal.

Your comments will help inform the preparation of the Proposed Plan, targeted for Summer 2016.

By registering online you will be kept up to speed with progress in preparing the HwLDP2, Draft Onshore Wind Energy Supplementary Guidance & future Development Plan related documents.

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