

# Contents

## Issue 14: Economic Development Areas

1. Schedule 4
2. Representations

### **Proposed Plan:**

Abbey Ecosse Ltd (959810)  
Brenda Herrick (966977)  
Gills Harbour Ltd (962325)  
London and Scottish Investments Ltd (979770)  
Network Rail (980184)  
RSPB Scotland (956544)  
SNH (909933)  
Wildland Limited (983561)

### **Modified Proposed Plan:**

Dunnet & Canisbay Community Council (MPP962464)  
Nuclear Decommissioning Authority (NDA) and Dounreay Site Restoration Limited (DSRL) (1036889)

3. Relevant Council's Supporting Documents

CD01: Scottish Planning Policy, Jun 2014  
CD15: Highland-wide Local Development Plan review, Main Issues Report, Sept 2015  
CD18: Highland-wide Local Development Plan, Apr 2012  
CD24: Dounreay Planning Framework 2, 2015  
CD29: National Renewables Infrastructure Plan

Issue 14	ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AREAS	
Development plan reference:	Economic Development Areas: Dounreay , Forss Business and Energy Park, Georgemas Junction, Gills Harbour, Seater Waste Management Facility pages 50 - 56	Reporter:
Body or person(s) submitting a representation raising the issue (including reference number):		
<p><b><u>Proposed Plan:</u></b> Abbey Ecosse Ltd (959810) Brenda Herrick (966977) Gills Harbour Ltd (962325) London and Scottish Investments Ltd (979770) Network Rail (980184) RSPB Scotland (956544) SNH (909933) Wildland Limited (983561)</p> <p><b><u>Modified Proposed Plan:</u></b> Dunnet &amp; Canisbay Community Council (MPP962464) Nuclear Decommissioning Authority (NDA) and Dounreay Site Restoration Limited (DSRL) (1036889),</p>		
Provision of the development plan to which the issue relates:	<p>Economic Development Areas: Dounreay, Forss Business and Energy Park, Georgemas Junction, Gills Harbour, Seater Waste Management Facility.</p> <p><i>* Please note that this part of the Plan was subject to a non notifiable modification which included the name of Forss Technology and Business Park being changed to Forss Business and Energy Park.</i></p>	
Planning authority's summary of the representation(s):		
<p><b>Dounreay</b> <u>Wildland Limited (983561)</u> Supports the ambition and foresight set out in Dounreay Planning Framework 2. Wildland Limited supports the position set out in the plan. Dounreay is the logical place to focus industrial and business development.</p> <p><u>Nuclear Decommissioning Authority (NDA) and Dounreay Site Restoration Limited (DSRL) (1036889), received 13 November 2016</u> NDA and DSRL are supportive of the plan's content for the Dounreay site and the linkage to Dounreay Planning Framework 2.</p> <p><b>Forss Business and Energy Park</b> <u>Abbey Ecosse Ltd (959810)</u> Abbey Ecosse Ltd have recently bought over the site and have now rebranded it from</p>		

‘Forss Technology and Business Park’ to ‘Forss Business and Energy Park’ in order to, as supported by the draft plan, seek to promote investment at the site from the energy sector. Abbey Ecosse Ltd therefore requests that CaSPlan adopts the new name.

Support the identification of the Forss Business and Energy Park as an Economic Development Area (EDA) and are pleased to see, following previous comments, that the potential for expansion to the west of the Park is supported by the Council.

On balance, respondent supports the Council's approach in not seeking to allocate a boundary around the EDA as this enables flexibility in relation to the delivery of the remainder of the site. Satisfied with the Placemaking Priorities.

#### SNH (909933)

Any development here would need to consider the known use of the site by geese connected with the Caithness Lochs Special Protection Area (SPA). Development would also need to ensure the maintenance of the Scottish Primrose (*Primula scotica*) population found in this location. This plant is nationally scarce and endemic, only found in the Orkney islands and the northern coast of Caithness and Sutherland. This should be added to the issues/placemaking text. This will ensure that developers are aware of the need to consider the SPA and other environmental interests.

#### London and Scottish Investments Ltd (979770)

Forss Wind Farm lies immediately to the west of Forss Technology and Business Park so it is difficult to see how it could be expanded to the west. It is assumed that any expansion will be further to the west of the wind farm. The suitability of such a proposal should be assessed in relation to the potential sensitivity of any such land from an ecological and ornithological perspective.

#### **Georgemas Junction**

##### Network Rail (980184)

The inclusion of this site is supported as a key freight hub, which is subject to ongoing investment.

#### **Gills Harbour**

##### SNH (909933)

Any development would need to consider the potential direct and indirect impacts that development such as a marine renewables service base could have on the various environmental interests in the area (such as, but not necessarily limited to, the North Caithness Cliffs SPA). This should be included in the “Issues” text. This would ensure that developers are aware of the need to consider the SPA and other environmental interests.

##### RSPB Scotland (956544)

Appropriate consideration should be given to the importance of the local marine area to foraging seabirds throughout the year in order to avoid adverse impacts on a wide range of species. Therefore, RSPB Scotland would like the following added to the placemaking priorities: “Development should not have an adverse impact on populations of foraging seabirds in the area.”

Gills Harbour Ltd (962325)

Supports Gills Harbour being listed as an Economic Development Area, which cements its designation by the Council as a 'Port for Action' in the context of 'marine renewables'. Gills Harbour is best-known as the Caithness terminal of Scotland's most successful 'Mainland to Island Group' ROPAX service operated by its lessee Pentland Ferries Ltd. The private sea-transport firm has constructed a modern multi-million pound terminal at Gills, on land/foreshore leased from GHL and on seabed rented from the Crown Estate. It is a considerable employer with shore-base staff, while its year-round construction/maintenance squad is based at Gills. It is preparing to install a Marine Scotland-consented 70-metre extension to its 116 metre-long breakwater/berth at Gills in the 2016 spring/early summer. The potential access constraints mentioned in the "issues" should be amended to reflect that the spur road onto the A836 carries 50-tonne HGVs on a daily basis and "abnormal loads" studies have been undertaken.

There is an important crofting background to Gills Harbour and its immediate area, one which ought to be encouraged to prevail. The Council's housing policy in this area should be positively encouraging persons to 'put down roots' to try and stop depopulation of the area. It is not clear what criteria are being used when it comes to defining 'remote and rural areas' or what 'fragile' means, but the Council should take a 'flexible approach' to new housing.

Dunnet & Canisbay Community Council (MPP962464)

CaSPlan should designate the Inner Basin of community-owned Gills Harbour as being the preferred Caithness Mainland location for a Pentland Firth workboat supply base for marine renewable electricity generation in local waters. This is as in N-RIP 2 (National Renewables Infrastructure Plan).

**Seater Waste Management Facility**

Brenda Herrick (966977)

Objects to the site continuing to be used for waste from outwith Caithness. The access route is not suitable for continued use from heavy lorries and is becoming increasingly dangerous. Queries whether anything is in place for beyond 2020.

**Modifications sought by those submitting representations:**

**Forss Business and Energy Park**

Abbey Ecosse Ltd (959810)

Rename the Economic Development Area from the 'Forss Technology and Business Park' (as shown in the Proposed Plan) to 'Forss Business and Energy Park'.

SNH (909933)

Add reference in Issues or Placemaking Priorities for developers to consider the use of the site by geese connected with the Caithness Lochs Special Protection Area (SPA) and to ensure the maintenance of the Scottish Primrose (*Primula scotica*) population found in this location.

London and Scottish Investments Ltd (979770)

Remove support for western expansion of the business park until an environmental assessment has been completed to inform its suitability. (Assumed)

**Gills Harbour**

SNH (909933)

Add reference in Issues section for developers to consider the potential direct and indirect impacts that development such as a marine renewables service base could have on the various environmental interests in the area (such as, but not necessarily limited to, the North Caithness Cliffs SPA).

RSPB Scotland (956544)

Add to the Placemaking Priorities “Development should not have an adverse impact on populations of foraging seabirds in the area”.

Gills Harbour Ltd (962325)

Potential access constraints mentioned in the “Issues” should be amended to reflect that the spur road onto the A836 carries 50-tonne HGVs on a daily basis and “abnormal loads” studies have been undertaken.

Gills Harbour Ltd (962325)

Provide greater clarity on the Council’s intentions for amending the Housing in the Countryside policy. The Council should take a 'flexible approach' to new housing.

Dunnet & Canisbay Community Council (MPP962464)

Add references to specific proposed/completed improvements and economic opportunities at Gills Harbour.

**Seater Waste Management Facility**

Brenda Herrick (966977)

Remove the site from the Plan. (Assumed)

**Summary of responses (including reasons) by planning authority:****Dounreay**

Support for the Economic Development Area and the Dounreay Planning Framework 2 (CD24) is noted.

The Local Committees agreed to take the late comments (received 13 November 2016) of NDA/DSRL into consideration and for them to be submitted as part of the Examination. The comments are supportive of the content of the Plan in relation to Dounreay, which is welcomed and noted.

**Forss Business and Energy Park**

Support for the Economic Development Area is noted.

As part of the preparation of the Modified Proposed Plan the Council agreed to amend, as a non-notifiable modification, the name of the Economic Development Area from Forss Technology and Business Par to Forss Business and Energy Park to reflect the rebranding of the site. No further comments were made on the matter during the Modified Proposed

Plan consultation.

If the Reporter is so minded, the Council would be agreeable to adding the following additional Placemaking Priority, or similar text: "Consideration of geese connected with the Caithness Lochs Special Protection Area (SPA) required. Ensure maintenance of the Scottish Primrose (*Primula scotica*) population found in this location."

It is considered that there may be potential for a degree of expansion between the business park and the wind turbines. It should be noted that in the Placemaking Priorities it states only that there *may* be potential. Support for this will be dependant on addressing the Issues and Placemaking Priorities set out in CaSPlan and the general policies set out in the Highland-wide Local Development Plan (HwLDP) (CD18).

### **Georgemas Junction**

Support for the Economic Development Area is noted.

### **Gills Harbour**

If the Reporter is so minded, the Council would be agreeable to adding the following additional Placemaking Priority (rather than as an 'Issue', ensuring consistency with other references throughout the Plan): "Consideration required of potential direct and indirect impacts that development could have on the various environmental interests in the area (such as, but not necessarily limited to, the North Caithness Cliffs SPA)."

The comments made by RSPB Scotland are noted. Other species of birds that are not qualifying interests of the SPA are undoubtedly important, however, they are not defining factors of whether development can/cannot occur. Therefore, the text in the Plan (together with additional amendments suggested by SNH during the Proposed Plan consultation which includes a more general reference to consideration of environmental interest) is considered to be the most appropriate wording. Development proposals not connected to Natura sites should be adequately protected by EIA (e.g. for large developments) and/or the HwLDP (CD18) policies on wildlife (e.g. for EIA and smaller developments).

The third Issue refers to the road from A836 down to the harbour which has a sharp bend and is narrow in places. If the Reporter is so minded, the Council would be agreeable to the following text, or similar: "Current access arrangements may need to be addressed to accommodate expansion of harbour facilities". This is to reflect the fact that it may be possible to address the issues with land reclamation.

The comments on the Council's planning policy for housing in the countryside appear to relate to the recent publication of the Main Issues Report for Highland-wide Local Development Plan (CD15) which is currently being reviewed. The comments have been passed to the Officer responsible for HwLDP (CD18) and will be considered as part of the preparation of the Proposed Plan.

The relationship between the National Renewables Infrastructure Plan (N-RIP) (CD29) and the potential economic opportunities in the local area, including the strategic importance of ports and harbours, was closely considered during the preparation of the Plan. The strategy section of the Plan sets out the Council's support for these opportunities and aims

to “maximise opportunities arising from the energy sector, particularly within the Area for Energy Business Expansion in the north east”. In addition, ports and harbours which have a potentially important role in the energy sector have been highlighted for development including Gills Harbour Economic Development Area. Despite the Community Council requesting specific proposals to be referenced (including promotion of existing facilities and potential for a range of new ‘high energy demand’ related industries) it is considered that the current references within the Plan provide sufficient support. As a result no change is proposed to the Plan.

### **Seater Waste Management Facility**

Scottish Planning Policy (SPP) (CD01) requires planning authorities to identify strategic waste management facilities within Local Development Plans. The landfill at Seater is a strategic waste management facility for The Highland Council, being one of the two landfill sites in operation in Highland, the other being in Granish, Badenoch and Strathspey. Although significant capacity exists legislation will prevent municipal waste going to landfill after 2020. The Council is currently reviewing its Municipal Waste Management Strategy and the range of waste management services which are undertaken. As an established waste management facility it is considered to be a prime location for future waste management transfer or treatment. It is also considered to be a potentially suitable site for energy from waste if associated with a high heat demand development that would make use of the heat generated. Should such proposals emerge then issues such as impact on the road network will be assessed at planning application stage. For these reasons the Council are minded to maintain the inclusion of Seater Waste Management Facility as an Economic Development Area.

### **Reporter’s conclusions:**

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### **Reporter’s recommendations:**

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