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Issue 15	GROWING SETTLEMENTS - CAITHNESS	
Development plan reference:	Growing Settlements Caithness : Dunbeath, Dunnet, John O'Groats, Keiss, Latheronwheel, Reay, Thrumster, Watten pages 57 - 64	Reporter:
Body or person(s) submitting a representation raising the issue (including reference number):		
<p><u>Proposed Plan:</u> Crofting Commission (955042) Dorothy MacDonald (978176) Dunnet & Canisbay Community Council (962464) John Swanson (980308) North Highland Initiative (983130) Robert Christie (967644) RSPB Scotland (956544) Scottish Water (953627) SNH (909933)</p> <p><u>Modified Proposed Plan:</u> Dunnet & Canisbay Community Council (MPP962464)</p>		
Provision of the development plan to which the issue relates:	Growing Settlements Caithness : Dunbeath, Dunnet, John O'Groats, Keiss, Latheronwheel, Reay, Thrumster, Watten	
Planning authority's summary of the representation(s):		
<p>Dunbeath <u>Crofting Commission (955042)</u> Dunbeath has significant areas of crofting interest, none of which appear to be directly impacted by identified priorities.</p> <p><u>Scottish Water (953627)</u> Should development exceed the current capacity of the WWTW, then Scottish Water is currently funded to meet the demands of domestic growth. However other mechanisms such as the Memorandum of Understanding with SEPA and capital maintenance interventions may also provide a solution to meet moderate increases above current capacity.</p> <p><u>SNH (909933)</u> To ensure that developers are aware of the need to consider the relevant environmental interests, any development would also need to consider the potential direct and indirect impacts on the East Caithness Cliffs MPA.</p> <p>Dunnet <u>Crofting Commission (955042)</u> It is noted that the area of proposed development is proximate to an area of croft land.</p>		

However, the settlement pattern is acknowledged.

RSPB Scotland (956544)

Planned developments, particularly in relation to tourism, based in or around Dunnet should take account of the importance of Dunnet Head to breeding seabirds and the following should be added to the placemaking priorities, "Development should take account of the importance of Dunnet Head to breeding seabirds, and must not have an adverse impact on the North Caithness Cliffs Special Protection Area."

Dunnet & Canisbay Community Council (962464)

The area is a key part of The North Coast 500. In November 2015 The Community Council published 'Community Development Plan for Dunnet & Canisbay'. Sections of this plan should be incorporated into the final version of CaSPlan. It shows that the area is still suffering from de-population and remedial measures from the Council may be appropriate. Canisbay should also be included as a growing settlement. In Dunnet and Canisbay the Council should routinely take a flexible approach to planning applications for new homes, with a policy of 'positive encouragement' for younger people wishing to settle in the area. The Plan should also be clear about the potential positive impacts from renewable energy being generated in the Pentland Firth and should promote the creation of jobs. The Plan should adopt a policy of having an 'Around the Caithness Coastline' long-distance walking way constructed and maintained, perhaps with an extension southwards to the outskirts of Inverness and westwards toward Durness. CaSPlan should highlight the amount of archaeology in Caithness and should provide facilities for tourists. The Community Council feels the area covered by CaSPlan is too large and is disappointed that a public meeting was not held in the Community Council area.

Dunnet & Canisbay Community Council (MPP962464)

With the decommissioning of Dounreay and the slow population decline there is a compelling argument to re-designate Dunnet and Canisbay as 'fragile areas'.

John O'Groats

Crofting Commission (955042)

There is a significant level of land held in crofting tenure within this settlement, but we do not envisage the identified priorities having an adverse impact upon this.

Alan Jones Associates on behalf of North Highland Initiative (983130)

North Highland Initiative would like the following mentioned in the plan: The restoration of John O Groats Mill as a new visitor attraction which would showcase a working mill and include an interpretation and heritage centre. It would meet all four outcomes of the plan. Also considering housing a collection of classic cars as part of the overall visitor attraction.

Dunnet & Canisbay Community Council (MPP962464)

The Plan should promote opportunities for the renovation of the John O Groats Mill which is historically important for the local area.

The Broch Project concept is to build a modern dry-stone recreation of an Iron Age broch in Caithness. Clearly this has to be at, or close to, a location where tourists actually stop (as, for example, they have to do at John O'Groats, Gills and Dunnet Head). The Broch Project seems to be a well thought-out idea, and includes persons with relevant skills from dry-

stone masonry to marketing. It deserves support via CaSPlan.

The Community Council request that the Council should adopt as Core Paths: 1) the route between the End of the Road and the Ness of Duncansby; 2) the long distance route between Inverness and John O' Groats.

The End of the Road car park must continue to provide unimpeded access for visitors.

The historic museum loan collection at John O' Groats should be re-instated.

Keiss

Crofting Commission (955042)

The priority to focus development within the existing village is supported. It is noted that the village is closely surrounded by relatively good quality croftland. The intent to prevent ad hoc development on such land is supported, albeit with the caveat that where there are justifiable reasons in terms of croft management, a relevant development should not be prohibited.

Latheronwheel

SNH (909933)

To ensure that developers are aware of the need to consider the relevant environmental interests, include a reference to the Dunbeath to Sgaps Geo SSSI in the last point.

Crofting Commission (955042)

There continues to be significant croft landholdings within the surrounding area that should be appropriately considered should future proposals emerge. We would expect this to be considered within the stated context of complementing the existing settlement.

Reay

Crofting Commission (955042)

Does not consider that there is anything in the specific priorities that will impact adversely on crofting interests.

Thrumster

Robert Christie (967644)

The sea cliffs of Sarclet are becoming well known in rock climbing circles as the best sea cliff climbing in Scotland. More people should be aware of this as an attraction in the Thrumster area.

RSPB Scotland (956544)

Would like the following added to the placemaking priorities, "Development should minimise encroachment into open farmland, in order to avoid impacts on breeding waders such as lapwing, curlews and oystercatcher."

Crofting Commission (955042)

Much of the village centre is surrounded by croftland. The intimated development potential

north of Stewart Crescent could potentially impact upon some of this.

Watten

Dorothy MacDonald (978176)

Direct access to the 4 acre field to the north of Watten primary school site is now available and there are intentions to apply for full planning for this development.

John Swanson (980308)

Objects to the prohibition of further linear development along the B870 north of Henderson Square. Proposes limited continuation of sensitive development along the B870 north of Henderson Square, which would promote growth and make best use of existing community infrastructure, enhancing the existing local community services and facilities. There is potential for development to the east of B870 south of Watten Hall to meet the need for local housing requirements. Objects to the safeguarding of the whole of the countryside in the immediate vicinity around the village as it limits opportunities to provide new housing. Appreciates the need to protect valuable agricultural land but there is limited opportunity for infill development in Watten.

Modifications sought by those submitting representations:

Dunbeath

SNH (909933)

Add reference for developers to consider the potential direct and indirect impacts on the East Caithness Cliffs MPA.

Dunnet

RSPB Scotland (956544)

Add the following to the Placemaking Priorities, "Development should take account of the importance of Dunnet Head to breeding seabirds, and must not have an adverse impact on the North Caithness Cliffs Special Protection Area."

Dunnet & Canisbay Community Council (962464)

Incorporate sections of the Community Council's 'The Community Development Plan for Dunnet & Canisbay' into CaSPlan including measures to address depopulation, more flexible approach to housing in the countryside for young people, encourage growth of marine renewables industry, include aspiration of a Caithness coastline long-distance walking route and highlight the rich archaeology and provide tourist facilities.

Include Canisbay as a Growing Settlement.

Dunnet & Canisbay Community Council (MPP962464)

Re-designate Dunnet and Canisbay as 'fragile areas'.

John O'Groats

North Highland Initiative (983130), Dunnet & Canisbay Community Council (MPP962464)

Add reference to the restoration of John O Groats Mill as a new visitor attraction.

Barbara L. Hiddleston (MPP962464) on behalf of Dunnet & Canisbay Community Council
Add reference to the Caithness Broch Project

Adopt as Core Paths: 1) the route between the End of the Road and the Ness of Duncansby; 2) the long distance route between Inverness and John O' Groats.

Add statement that the End of the Road car park must continue to provide unimpeded access for visitors.

Reference should be made to re-instate historic museum loan collection at John O' Groats.

Keiss

Crofting Commission (955042)

Amend second last Placemaking Priority to include a caveat "where there are justifiable reason is terms of croft management".

Latheronwheel

Scottish Natural Heritage (909933)

Include a reference to the Dunbeath to Sgaps Geo SSSI in the last Placemaking Priority.

Thrumster

RSPB Scotland (956544)

Would like the following added to the Placemaking Priorities, "Development should minimise encroachment into open farmland, in order to avoid impacts on breeding waders such as lapwing, curlews and oystercatcher."

Watten

Pete Baker (Bidwells) (980295) on behalf of John Swanson (980308)

Remove the Placemaking Priority relating to the prohibition of further linear development along the B870 north of Henderson Square.

Remove the Placemaking Priority "Safeguard the countryside around the village which is relatively high quality agricultural land." (Assumed)

Summary of responses (including reasons) by planning authority:

Dunbeath

Comments by the Crofting Commission are noted.

Comments by the Scottish Water are noted.

The Council would be content if the Reporter agrees to add in the following additional text to the fifth Placemaking Priority (additional text italicised): "Protect natural heritage features along the north bank of Dunbeath Water, development should avoid any adverse effect of East Caithness Cliffs SPA, MPA and SAC or Dunbeath Water SSSI."

Dunnet

Comments by the Crofting Commission are noted.

The Council would be content if the Reporter agrees to add in the following additional Placemaking Priority “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 and the Dunnet Links SSSI).” This would make it more consistent with other references throughout the Plan.

The comment on the long distance route around the coast of Caithness is noted. An unofficial coastal route from John O’Groats to Cape Wrath, known as the North Highland Way, already exists. There was also an announcement in June 2016 by a local campaign group that a new walking route could be established between Inverness and John O’Groats. As there are no details available regarding how the routes will be funded the Council are not minded to make any modification to the Plan.

The recently published Community Development Plan for Dunnet & Canisbay (CD30) was taken into consideration by the Council during the preparation of the Plan. Many of the issues included within the Community Plan were also identified in as issues affecting communities across the Plan area and addressed within the strategy section. The Growing Communities section of the Plan highlights the need to retain services and attract new ones to retain/attract young people and families to the area. The Employment section of the Plan clearly sets out support for the growth of the renewables industry and the tourism sector and associated employment opportunities which it could bring. The Issues and Placemaking Priorities also pick up specific proposals such as taking advantage of Dunnet’s strategic position on tourist routes including the NC500 and John O’ Groats to Lands End. Although the Community Plan holds a large amount of detailed analysis and set out aspiration for the area, on balance, the Council do not propose any modifications to the Plan.

The Council’s approach to dealing with housing in the countryside is set out in HwLDP (CD18) Policy 35 Housing in the Countryside (Hinterland areas) and Policy 36 Development in the Wider Countryside and the Housing in the Countryside and Siting and Design: Supplementary Guidance (CD19). Since the removal of the Hinterland designation around Thurso and Wick the area has had a relatively flexible planning framework. This is reflected by the high levels of house completions and population growth in Landward Caithness. The existing planning policies are currently under review as part of the revision of the HwLDP. There will be opportunity for engagement in the review of HwLDP, which is the most appropriate place to address these issues. As a result the Council do no proposed any modification to the Plan.

As part of the preparation of the Main Issues Report (CD04) and the emerging Growing Settlements Policy an assessment was made of potentially suitable settlements which would be identified. This looked at features such as the range of existing facilities, settlement pattern and levels of development pressure. It is recognised that Canisbay has community facilities but there has been limited development in the settlement since the existing Caithness Local Plan (CD17) was adopted in 2002. Many new houses have been built in areas around Canisbay, such as Gills, and Upper Gills. As a result it was considered that general policies would be sufficient to guide future development as it would

provide a more flexible approach. Similar requests were made for Laid and Bower, but these can be read in the Growing Communities Schedule 4. As a result the Council do not propose any modification to the Plan.

Fragile Areas

Fragile Areas are identified by Highlands and Islands Enterprise (HIE) who undertake periodic reviews based on a set of key indicators (the methodology used is shown on the [Scottish Government website http://www.gov.scot/Publications/2010/07/30101940/4](http://www.gov.scot/Publications/2010/07/30101940/4)).

Whilst the Council uses fragile areas as a part of a policy tool e.g. in the HwLDP (CD18), the Council is not the authority that identifies fragile areas and as such we do not propose any changes to the Plan.

John O'Groats

Comments by the Crofting Commission are noted.

The Council acknowledge the heritage value of the John O Groats Mill and proposals by The Prince's Regeneration Trust and the North Highland Initiative to develop a new heritage-led regeneration project to convert it into a visitor centre. If the Reporter is so minded, the Council will be content to add in the following reference to the mill within the Placemaking Priorities: "The restoration of John O' Groats Mill has the potential to form the focus for a range of cultural, commercial and community activities".

Reference to the Caithness Broch Project has already been included within the Employment section of CaSPlan (paragraph 54) and identified within the Action Programme. Given that no preferred site has been suggested to us by the Caithness Broch Project, neither any preference for the broch to be constructed around John O Groats we do not propose any changes to the Plan.

The request to reinstate the core path at John O' Groats was also considered as part of the recent Core Path Review for Caithness and Sutherland during 2014. The Access Officer notes in the [Consultative Report](#) (CD31) state that the section of path has been re-instated twice before and the Council are not willing to commit to reinstating it again until coastal protection works are undertaken. Given that no such coastal defence scheme is expected at this time we do not propose any changes to the Plan. However, it was agreed that reference to the proposal will be included within the Aspirational List of the Action Programme (CD05).

The response to the proposed long distance routes is covered within the Dunnet section above as similar comments were raised by the Community Council at Proposed Plan stage.

In relation to concerns raised regarding changes proposed to the access and car parking arrangements at the End of the Road, John O' Groats, it is noted that similar comments were made during the Main Issues Report (MIR) consultation. The Council's position agreed at that stage was that the detail of any particular layout would be best considered at planning application stage. This position was then reflected within the Placemaking Priorities for John O' Groats as set out in the Proposed Plan. As no further evidence has been provided which adequately challenges this, no change is proposed to the Plan.

The potential benefits of the reinstatement of the Frank Sutherland museum loan collection at John O' Groats in terms of education and cultural heritage are noted. However, its

reinstatement does not warrant or require a reference within the Development Plan to occur. As a result no change is proposed to the Plan.

Keiss

The Council would be content if the Reporter agrees to add the following text to the Placemaking Priority “Protect and restrict further built encroachment along the strand line of Sinclair’s Bay at Stain unless there are justifiable reasons in terms of croft management.” This will help ensure that crofting operations are not restricted unnecessarily around the settlement.

Latheronwheel

The Council would be content if the Reporter agrees to add the following text to the last Placemaking Priority “...and Dunbeath to Sgaps Geo SSSI.”

Comments by the Crofting Commission are noted.

Reay

Comments by the Crofting Commission are noted.

Thrumster

Comments regarding the popularity of rock climbing in the area is noted.

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 any additional amendments suggested by SNH during the Proposed Plan consultation) is considered to be the most appropriate wording for complying with the Natura Habitats Directive. Development proposals not connected to Natura sites should be adequately protected by EIA (e.g. for large developments) and/or the HwLDP policies, in particular Policy 57 Natural, Built and Cultural Heritage, Policy 58 Protected Species, and Policy 59 Other Important Species (e.g. for EIA and smaller developments). No modification is proposed by the Council.

Comments by the Crofting Commission are noted.

Watten

The Plan already identifies potential housing development opportunities on the north of the A882. However, to give greater clarity on where this may occur, and if the Reporter agrees, the Council would be content with replacing “...north side of the A882” with “land immediately north west of the primary school”.

Some small scale development may be appropriate to the south of Watten Hall but it is not identified in the Plan due to access constraints. No modification is proposed by the Council.

Sufficient housing development opportunities have been identified adjoining the built

development of Watten. In addition, given that the farmland around Watten is some of the highest quality in Caithness, the Council are not minded to remove the Placemaking Priority to safeguard the countryside around the village.

The respondent requests the Plan allows for a 'continuation of sensitive development along the B870'. However, the first Issue and the fourth Placemaking Priority look to protect the setting of the village and Loch Watten from what is considered to be recent insensitive and inappropriate development. No modification is proposed by the Council.

Reporter's conclusions:

Reporter's recommendations: