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## Issue 04: Employment

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2. Representations

Amelia Walker (931321)

Bill Badger (967160)

Caithness Chamber of Commerce (983321)

Carl Beck (980040)

David Doohan (980228)

Ian Walker (979716)

RSPB Scotland (956544)

Scottish Government (963027)

William Marshall (941627)

Wind Prospect Ltd (971514)

3. Relevant Council's Supporting Documents

CD05: CaSPlan Proposed Action Programme

CD39: Pilot Pentland Firth and Orkney Waters Marine Spatial Plan, Mar 2016

<b>Issue 4</b>	<b>EMPLOYMENT</b>	
<b>Development plan reference:</b>	Employment section pages 15 - 16	<b>Reporter:</b>
<b>Body or person(s) submitting a representation raising the issue (including reference number):</b>		
<p>Amelia Walker (931321)  Bill Badger (967160)  Caithness Chamber of Commerce (983321)  Carl Beck (980040)  David Doohan (980228)  Ian Walker (979716)  RSPB Scotland (956544)  Scottish Government (963027)  William Marshall (941627)  Wind Prospect Ltd (971514)</p>		
<b>Provision of the development plan to which the issue relates:</b>	<p>Employment section (paragraphs 50 to 65)</p> <p><i>* Please note that this part of the Plan was subject to non notifiable modifications, including updating and clarifying the most up-to-date national and regional marine planning framework.</i></p>	
<b>Planning authority's summary of the representation(s):</b>		
<p><b>Employment General</b>  <u>Wind Prospect Ltd (971514)</u>  Welcomes that renewable energy is recognised as an important contribution to a strong, diverse and sustainable economy in Highland and that paragraph 51 recognises that investment in renewable energy generation in North Highland is delivering economic benefits, as well as contributing to national climate change targets.</p> <p><u>William Marshall (941627)</u>  The reference to HMS Vulcan in paragraph 61 needs updated to NRTE Vulcan.</p> <p><u>Carl Beck (980040)</u>  Supports the North Coast 500 referred to in paragraph 55.</p> <p><u>Ian Walker (979716), David Doohan (980228)</u>  Employment is important but in Caithness and Sutherland many developments have been instigated, funded and then shut down. More severe due diligence should be applied by the Planning department in assessing future applications. The plan needs to be realistic - the oil, wind and wave energy sectors are declining, Dounreay and Vulcan being decommissioned and jobs from offshore renewables have not yet come to fruition for Thurso.</p> <p><u>Amelia Walker (931321)</u>  Agrees that employment is vital but over the years it has become increasingly difficult to</p>		

advance and retain industry as the population is too small. There is also a tendency to drift everything towards Inverness and the South. Caithness does not get a fair share of revenue and facilities, medical, administrative and transport has all been diminished.

Caithness Chamber of Commerce (983321)

Welcomes the recognition given to the marine renewables energy sector and the planned support for this. However would caution against an over-reliance on this sector for employment, particularly in the long term. Agree that tourism plays an important part in the local economy and welcomes the supports for opportunities in this area. While it is good to see the Plan encouraging communities “to work together to formulate a tourism plan for their own area”, we would recommend that the Council work with organisations such as the Chamber and Venture North to ensure that these plans fit into an overarching strategy for development of tourism in the region.

Bill Badger (967160)

Need to ensure that a wide range of jobs are available to encourage young people to stay in the area. Supports renewable energy but it must be balanced against the loss of the natural environment that can occur when policies are not thought out properly.

RSPB Scotland (956544)

RSPB Scotland supports appropriately sited renewable energy projects as climate change is currently the greatest threat to biodiversity. However the area of East Caithness identified in the plan as suitable for “energy business expansion” includes a number of designated European sites that are intended for the protection of wildlife. Not clear what “energy business expansion” covers but RSPB Scotland is concerned that the cumulative impact of continued development of wind energy in this area will adversely impact on the qualifying interests of these European sites. There are also large areas of deep peat within Caithness which are important carbon stores and that should be protected from development. In planning for the marine renewables industry, Highland Council must take full account of the importance of the Caithness and Sutherland shoreline and adjacent waters for bird life. RSPB Scotland notes that there are major opportunities for the promotion of wildlife tourism in Caithness and Sutherland and for the integration of biodiversity protection and enhancement with the creation of employment opportunities. In planning for an increase in tourism and visitor numbers, due attention must be given to the protection of important biodiversity assets as well as the opportunities for increasing public access to, and knowledge of, the natural heritage of Caithness and Sutherland. Seeking a modification in the form of the addition of text to paragraph 52 along the lines of, “Energy development (including wind turbines) in the Area for Energy Business Expansion must not adversely affect the integrity of any designated nature conservation site nor have an adverse impact on the population of any bird species listed in Birds of Conservation Concern, and should avoid areas of deep peat. Appropriate assessment will be required for any proposal which could have a significant effect on a Special Protection Area or Special Area of Conservation.” Also seeking a modification to the second last sentence of paragraph 55 to encourage the wider development of wildlife tourism, “Communities are encouraged to work together to formulate a tourism plan for their own area that makes the most of their natural and cultural heritage.”

**Marine Planning**

Scottish Government (963027)

Welcomes the references made to the National Marine Plan, however the Proposed Plan is not clear on the status of the National Marine Plan, the role it will play in decision making and its relationship with non-statutory marine plans. This section of the plan should be modified as follows: Paragraph 63 should be amended and brought together with the final sentence of Paragraph 65 to read: "The policy framework for marine planning is evolving at both national and regional levels with the publication of the National Marine Plan (March 2015) and the development of Regional Marine Plans. The National Marine Plan applies from Mean High Water Springs and covers both Scottish inshore waters (out to 12 nautical miles) and offshore waters (12 to 200 nautical miles). The National Marine Plan has statutory effect for any public authority taking decisions which can affect the marine area. Statutory Regional Marine Plans will be delivered by Marine Planning Partnerships once established. The Council, in partnership with Marine Scotland and Orkney Islands Council, is also developing a non-statutory Pilot Pentland Firth and Orkney Waters Marine Spatial Plan which will be used as a material consideration in assessing relevant planning applications along the north Caithness and Sutherland coastline. Key elements....." If this change is accepted by the Reporter, it is suggested that the first sentence of Paragraph 65 which reads "The HwLDP includes policy in support of marine renewables, aquaculture, the integration of coastal and marine planning and links to relevant supplementary guidance" is moved to follow the last sentence of Paragraph 64.

**Modifications sought by those submitting representations:**

**Employment General**

William Marshall (941627)

Replace reference to HMS Vulcan in paragraph 61 with NRTE Vulcan

RSPB Scotland (956544)

Add additional text to paragraph 52 along the lines of: "Energy development (including wind turbines) in the Area for Energy Business Expansion must not adversely affect the integrity of any designated nature conservation site nor have an adverse impact on the population of any bird species listed in Birds of Conservation Concern, and should avoid areas of deep peat. Appropriate assessment will be required for any proposal which could have a significant effect on a Special Protection Area or Special Area of Conservation."

Add additional text to the last sentence of paragraph 55: "Communities are encouraged to work together to formulate a tourism plan for their own area that makes the most of their natural and cultural heritage."

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

#### **Employment General**

Support for the recognition of the importance of renewable energy is noted.

Following comments made at Proposed Plan stage it was acknowledged that the MOD establishment at Dounreay which was formally named as HMS Vulcan was now known as The Vulcan Naval Reactor Test Establishment (NRTE). This factual change was made as a non-notifiable modification as part of the Modified Proposed Plan. No further comments were made in regard to the reference within the Employment section during the Modified Proposed Plan consultation.

#### *Economic prospects in north Highland*

CaSPlan is focused on supporting greater diversification of the economy. It recognises that the economy of Caithness and North Sutherland has been driven largely by Dounreay for more than 50 years but that this is now in the process of being decommissioned (the Interim End State was recently extended to a date range of 2030-2033). CaSPlan provides a strategy for supporting other industries which have been identified as being important growth sectors, particularly in marine renewables and tourism.

Although it is recognised that the growth of marine renewables has been slower than some initial forecasts there have been positive signs over more recent times that it will attract significant investment and deliver employment opportunities. MeyGen's tidal power project, located in the Pentland Firth, has attracted a range of investment streams and with the grid connection now completed the next milestone (which is nearly complete) involves the installation of the first turbines. When fully operational the scheme is expected to generate 400MW of electricity and employ an increasing number of people. SSE has confirmed the Final Investment Decision for the £2.6billion Beatrice Offshore Windfarm project in the Outer Moray Firth which has been considered as one of the largest private investments ever made in Scottish infrastructure. The 588MW, 84 turbine windfarm is expected to power approximately 450,000 homes. SSE has also announced around £10million of investment in Wick Harbour which will be used as the Service Base during the construction and operation stages. Planning permission has recently been granted for the conversion of historic buildings at Wick Harbour which will serve as the operation and maintenance base for the development. The proposal is also expected to have wider benefits across Wick and the whole county.

The decline in the price of oil and gas has had repercussions across the world. Businesses in Caithness do not appear to have experienced the same impact as others in the sector with reports that Scrabster Harbour's role in servicing the west of Shetland oil and gas fields is growing. Although it is clear that some businesses operating in the North Sea are scaling back operations the industry is also preparing for the emergent decommissioning industry (estimated to be worth up to £50 billion by 2040). This is expected to co-exist with continued exploration and production activity. With improvements to the harbours the area will be in a better position to attract new opportunities which arise from this growth industry.

The tourism industry is also becoming an important growth sector across Caithness and Sutherland. The North Highland Initiative's North Coast 500 coastal route has proved to be a great success including being identified as one of the world's greatest road trips by travel writers/publications. Recent publicity has shown that visitor numbers have risen substantially across much of Caithness and Sutherland. The Proposed Action Programme (CD05) also outlines a number of projects which will also enhance tourism and recreational facilities.

Other emerging industries are also attracted to Caithness and Sutherland. HIE have held talks with parties interested in developing a satellite launching facility in north west Sutherland. Initial results from a feasibility study have shown that the site has the specific requirements suitable for such a facility. In addition, Wildland Ltd's proposals for exclusive visitor facilities around north west Sutherland could lead to a range of new employment opportunities being created.

The points raised by RSPB Scotland about wildlife tourism are noted and comments made by the Chamber of Commerce in regard to communities formulating their own tourism plan for their area is noted. Paragraph 17 states that the Council is supportive of communities working together to create/implement their own Community Plan that complements the CaSPlan Vision. If the Reporter is so minded a similar reference could be made in Paragraph 55 such as "work together to formulate a tourism plan for their own area that makes the most of their natural and cultural heritage and complements the CaSPlan Vision".

#### *Area for Energy Business Expansion*

The "Area for Energy Business Expansion" is not intended to be used as a land use allocation for energy developments. It is not intended to show where renewables devices would be acceptable on the ground, but rather it is intended to show where the Council would be particularly supportive of the necessary supporting terrestrial infrastructure, including associated business and industrial developments. It is also intended to promote the energy sector within the area and help to generate local jobs. Therefore the Council does not feel that the modification suggested by RSPB Scotland is necessary.

#### *Due Diligence*

The effectiveness of sites is assessed as part of the preparation of the LDP. This may include the existing and proposed levels of infrastructure and services which would be required to support development to go ahead. Supply and demand of particular land uses is also assessed and helps to inform the sites recommended for inclusion in the Plan.

References to the Planning Authority carrying out due diligence for planning applications is not appropriate. Planning applications are not specifically determined on whether due diligence has been carried out prior to a planning application being submitted.

### **Marine Planning**

Support for the references made to the National Marine Plan are noted.

The Council agreed to make changes to paragraphs 63 and 65 (paragraphs 65 and 67 within the Proposed Plan respectively), including updating and clarifying references to the national and regional marine planning framework. These changes were carried out as non-notifiable modifications, included in the Modified Proposed Plan. No comments were received on the matter during the Modified Proposed Plan consultation.

The Council is also mindful that since the publication of the Modified Proposed Plan the pilot Pentland Firth and Orkney Waters Marine Spatial Plan (2016) (CD39) has been finalised and adopted for use as a material consideration. If the Reporter is so minded the Council would be content with reference in the Plan to the Marine Spatial Plan therefore being further updated to reflect this position.

In addition, reference to the Marine Spatial Plan within sentence 4 of paragraph 63 is also erroneously repeated in paragraph 65. If the Reporter is so minded the Council would be content with the removal of the sentence from paragraph 65.

### **Reporter's conclusions:**

### **Reporter's recommendations:**