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Our Ref: HWLDP-EX1:16  
Your Ref: LDP-270-3  
Date: 17 October, 2011

Dear Ms Smith,

**HIGHLAND WIDE LOCAL PLAN - REQUEST FOR FURTHER INFORMATION – ISSUE 70  
ELECTRICITY TRANSMISSION INFRASTRUCTURE**

In reference to the reporters request for further information regarding the above issue the Council offer the following response to each point as raised;

**Policy tests**

**1**

Policy 70 is generally supportive and facilitating of the development of electricity transmission infrastructure and as such the Council considers that this does fit with NPF2. In so far as the policy sets a threshold for proposals to pass, this is to encourage good planning for sustainable development (including consideration of options and mitigation) and to enable the Council to arrive at a position in respect of the proposal, but the decision itself will be made by Scottish Ministers. However, the Council now suggests that the first sentence of Policy 70 could be amended to include consideration of and balancing with the level of strategic significance of the infrastructure proposed (in similar format to the Council's suggested amendments to Policy 68 in its response to the reporters' request for further information dated 5 September in respect of that Issue). See suggested rewording below.

**2**

In response, the Council refers to its response to the reporters' request for further information dated 5 September in respect of Issue 68, specifically the section entitled "Significant detriment/ balance and weight". The generality of the relevant part of that response applies here and the Council therefore now suggests the inclusion of the word "overall" in Policy 70. See suggested rewording below.

**3**

The Council considers that the changes it now suggests in response to (1) and (2) above, address this matter. See suggested rewording below.

**4**

In general terms the Council wishes to be at least as supportive to underground and sub-sea grid proposals as to overground proposals. Indeed, in some circumstances underground or sub-sea alternatives will be preferred by the Council, particularly if overground proposals would have significant detrimental impact on the environment but underground or sub-sea alternatives would not.

The Council agrees that the policy could be made clearer in this respect, through rewording such that its policy test will relate to all these potential infrastructure positions and with consequential amendment elsewhere in the policy. See suggested rewording below.

Suggested Rewording of Policy 70 Electricity Transmission Infrastructure

In the light of matters (1) to (4) above, the Council therefore suggests that Policy 70 Electricity Transmission Infrastructure should be reworded as follows:

*“Proposals for overground, underground or sub-sea electricity transmission infrastructure (including lines and cables, pylons/ poles and vaults, transformers, switches and other plant) will be considered having regard to their level of strategic significance in transmitting electricity from areas of generation to areas of consumption. Subject to balancing with this consideration and taking into account any mitigation measures to be included, the Council will support proposals if assessed as not having a significantly detrimental overall impact on the environment. In locations that are sensitive, mitigation may help to address concerns and should be considered as part of the preparation of proposals. This may include, where appropriate, underground or sub-sea alternatives to overground route proposals. Where new infrastructure provision will result in existing infrastructure becoming redundant, the Council will seek the removal of the redundant infrastructure as a requirement of the development.”*

**Criteria**

The Council considers that it is not necessary to include in Policy 70 the same list of criteria as are included in Policy 68. The Council is mindful of the processes that are followed in preparing proposals for electricity transmission infrastructure, as has been referred to in representations and by the Reporter in part (1) of the further information request to which this response relates, and is content that Policy 70, used in combination with any other relevant policies of the Development Plan, provides a sufficient and appropriate development plan basis for assessing proposals.

I trust this response meets the requirement set out in the original request.

Yours sincerely

Brian MacKenzie  
Principal Planner  
Development Plans Team