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Our Ref: HWLDP-EX1:14  
Your Ref: LDP-270-3  
Date: 17 October, 2011

Dear Ms Smith,

**HIGHLAND WIDE LOCAL PLAN - REQUEST FOR FURTHER INFORMATION – ISSUE 82  
CAITHNESS AND SUTHERLAND VISION**

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

**Map/Figure 1**

The Council considers that this part of the request for further information has been overtaken by the further information supplied by Scottish Natural Heritage to the reporters by letter dated 3 October 2011 in which SNH confirms the updated position on its representations to the Plan in the light of the Council's submission of the Habitats Regulations Appraisal of the Plan. Specifically, the Council refers the reporters to Schedule 2 to SNH's letter in so far as it refers to Figures 1, 2 and 3 in the Plan.

The Council's position is now therefore as set out in the final column in that schedule. For avoidance of doubt, the Council confirms that in respect of each figure, the title on the map and its title in the paragraph that immediately follows the figure should refer to "Vision and Spatial Strategy" and the proposed paragraph 3.8.4 in the amended form referred to by SNH should be included in the Plan.

**Dornoch Rail Link**

That the HwLDP's vision looks ahead 20 years is particularly driven by the requirement for the Council to consider such a lengthy time period when planning housing land requirements – in particular it should indicate the possible scale and location of housing land from year 10 up to year 20 beyond the predicted year of plan adoption, as set out in paragraph 73 of Scottish Planning Policy.

The Strategic Transport Projects Review (STPR) – available at <http://www.transportscotland.gov.uk/strategy-and-research/strategic-transport-projects-review> - sets the Scottish Government's 29 transport investment priorities for the next 20 years. Paragraph 1.13 of the STPR Final Report says:

*"The STPR identifies interventions to be delivered, designed or developed in the period beyond our current investment programme. Just as transport improvements have been, and are being made in advance of the STPR period, the delivery of the STPR will not mark the end point in improving Scotland's transport network. The changing demands of the 21st Century and continued need to address important issues such as climate change, economic growth*

*and social exclusion will demand continued action. In setting out interventions, the STPR marks an important step forward and establishes the basis upon which future action is taken.”*

The STPR therefore has a 20-year time horizon which includes intervention priorities to be designed or developed within that period rather than just those indicated as priorities for delivery within that period. Given that fact and that:

- in preparation of the STPR a Dornoch Rail Link was considered and not included at all (see Intervention ID 126 in STPR Appendix C), and
  - the Local Development Plan is required to be reviewed at least every five years and that the LDP could therefore respond to any future change of national transport priorities or increased national transport funding within a reasonable timescale,
- the Council remains of the view that the current HwLDP vision is correct to not include reference to a Dornoch Rail Link scheme even though its vision looks ahead 20 years.

### **Landscape protection**

The Council accepts that it is perfectly conceivable that a local community or local individual interest will seek to promote development which is at odds with the special qualities of an area designated for, say, its nationally important landscape value. The planning authority may well, on balance, find that it cannot support such development.

However, the Plan's vision reflects the intent that there will be a strong local appreciation of heritage and that it will be recognised as an asset and that those seeking to develop will work with those assets and seek sensitive solutions to accommodating development needs in support of the community. The planning authority has a role in helping communities to achieve this. Broader community planning activity also has a role and has shown significant progress in Highland.

The statement in the Plan's vision: “be a place of outstanding heritage: safe in the custody of local people” may therefore be taken as a general and worthwhile statement with respect to the overall heritage resource and the Council considers that no change is required to the Plan in response to the representation by the Mountaineering Council of Scotland.

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

Yours sincerely

Brian MacKenzie  
Principal Planner  
Development Plans Team