The Highland Council
Comhairle na Gàidhealtachd

Highland Indicative Regional Spatial Strategy to 2050

Ro-innleachd Spàsail Roinneil Taisbeanach na Gàidhealtachd gu 2050

April 2021

www.highland.gov.uk

HIGHLAND COUNCIL CANDIDATE NATIONAL DEVELOPMENTS RESPONSE FORMS:

Further Refined Submission – April 2021

Contents

NOTE TO READER (APRIL 2021):

This is The Highland Council's further refined candidate National Developments (cNDs), which is also part of the refined Indicative Regional Spatial Strategy for Highland (IRSS) – both submitted April 2021 to inform the preparation of NPF4. Every previously submitted cND (01-14) has been refined and a new cND (15) has been introduced for Opportunity Cromarty Firth (it was previously referenced in the earlier versions of the IRSS and cNDs under cND08); the full set of further refined cNDs should be taken into account. Aside from new cND15, attention is particularly drawn to: the expansion and renaming of cND03 which now covers Energy Generation, Transmission, Distribution and Consumption (rather than just National Grid Improvements) and of cND14 which now covers The Land and Water Management, Protection and Restoration of our Natural and Biodiversity Assets, including our Peatland, Reforestation and Coastal Assets (to more clearly cover water assets, not just those on the land).

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National Developments – Response Form

Please use the table below to let us know about projects you think may be suitable for national development status. You can also tell us your views on the existing national developments in National Planning Framework 3, referencing their name and number, and providing reasons as to why they should maintain their status. Please use a separate table for each project or development. **Please fill in a Respondent Information Form and return it with this form to scotplan@gov.scot.**

Name of proposed national development	**(cND01) Rail Infrastructure Improvements**
Brief description of proposed national development	Rail infrastructure improvements for both passenger and freight transport. Including the development of additional stations/rail halts, dual lining and additional freight sidings/connectivity where required; electrification and the use of 'alternative traction' improvements on the HML, FNL, WHL & A2I lines; all to deliver a decarbonised net zero system by 2045.
Location of proposed national development (information in a GIS format is welcome if available)	Highland Main Line (HML), Inverness to Aberdeen Line (A2I), Far North Line (FNL) & West Highland Line (WHL). Including but not limited to: a) Inverness Airport Station realisation b) Morayhill Freight terminal, c) 'Lentran Long Loop' between Clachnaharry and Clunes d) New Evanton Station including a new loop between Dingwall and Invergordon. e) Additional double tracking on Highland Mainline. f) Re-signalling of North Highland Lines to Dingwall. g) Potential rail halt at Tomatin. h) Delivery of the electrification and the use of 'alternative traction' improvements on the HML, FNL, WHL & A2I lines as detailed and committed in the Transport Scotland's 'Rail Services Decarbonisation Action Plan'.
What part or parts of the development requires planning permission or other consent?	Construction of a railway, erection of a railway station/halt, level crossings, railway bridges, power and fuel infrastructure. Consequential works involving level crossings.
When would the development be complete or operational?	Ongoing for the life of NPF4 and beyond. However, the early realisation of these projects will aid in the Scottish Government and Highland Council meeting their climate change agendas.
Is the development already formally recognised – for example identified in a development plan, has planning permission, in receipt of funding etc.	Rail Network upgrades to the HML & A2I identified as part of the 2004 STRP have been in the most part delivered. HwLDP; IMFLDP; CaSPlan and WestPlan all note improvements to the rail infrastructure are integral to the delivery of improved sustainable transport links.

	Transport Scotland are already considering further infrastructure improvements to the A2I line to support an hourly service between Aberdeen and Inverness, with an average journey time of around 2 hours. The exact scope and timing of these works are still to be determined. Planning permission previously granted for Dalcross Rail Halt for HiTrans; however, Network Rail has now taken over the project and has recently submitted a revised Planning application which is currently under consideration. Highland Main Line: Unfazed (SYSTRA for HITRANS, 2020) identified that electrification of the HML route would provide the most direct opportunity to reduce carbon impacts of both passenger and freight services and reduce journey times through the improved performance of electric trains. Transport Scotland's 'Rail Services Decarbonisation Action Plan'.

Contribution of proposed national development to the national development criteria:

Climate Change: Improving rail capacity (including double lining sections), efficiency of services and integration of active travel and other transport connections/interchanges (e.g. bus, airport, park and ride and freight terminals) will encourage and facilitate a move away from motor vehicle modal travel for passenger and freight thereby helping to deliver on the Scottish Government Climate Change agenda. Electrification and other measures (alternative traction) towards decarbonisation of rail would further enhance this contribution.

People: Furthering the integration of rail within the transport network will encourage active travel (as part of journeys) and reduce air pollution through less vehicle movement. Rail should be seen as a key element of a multi-modal integrated transport network which will give people choice. This will also help the wider Highlands and Islands Region and will go some way to addressing the fragility and isolation of the area by improving the physical connections within and beyond.

Inclusive Growth: Timetabling improvements associated with relatively short double tracking interventions allows for considerable improvements in the frequency of services in both directions (including peak time commuter services) and allow for more intermediate stops at local services.

Additionally, the ability for trains to pass at an increased number of double track locations significantly reduces delays to the service, resulting in faster, more reliable services, that would be further enhanced through electrification. A need specially required on the HML, to ensure that rail remains competitive with road for local and strategic journeys and one that will support the wider Highlands and Islands Region and address fragility by having good connections to wider Scotland.

Moreover, a cost effective and reliable rail network provides a more attractive alternative means of transport for tourists, which will aid the growth of a sustainable tourism industry, providing high-quality year-round employment opportunities.

The greater use of rail for movement of freight and in particular in terms of the Highlands, the movement of timber would help support the inclusive sustainable growth of the region.

Place: Improving rail connectivity will reduce the number of vehicles on the roads and in urban areas which can lead to a greater sense of place and greater opportunity to reclaim public spaces for people rather than vehicles. Given that Scotland and the Highland's main selling points are the wildness and quality of the environment. Modal shift to an integrated network including a fast, reliable and low carbon rail service will contribute towards maintaining the sense of wildness and quality of place rather than more generic roads from a vantage point that can be enjoyed in more relaxing manner.

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Name of proposed national development	**(cND02) Trunk and Other Strategic Road Improvements**
Brief description of proposed national development	The following new and improved road developments: a) Completion of the previously committed Trunk Road A9 (Inverness – Perth) and A96 (Inverness – Aberdeen) dualling programmes. b) Delivery of the A9-A96 Inshes to Smithton junction improvement works and the A9-A82 Longman junction grade separation funding through the Inverness City Region Deal (ICRD). c) Strategic safety interventions and localised trunk road improvements to the A9 north of Inverness. Trunk Road improvements to the A82 particularly in and around Fort William and others identified in the FW2040 document, as well as known accident hot spots, the onward link to vital lifeline links such as Corran Ferry (Corran Narrows Crossing) and the fragile lifeline A890 route (Stromeferry Bypass). Subject to Active Travel being at the forefront of their design and including greater integration of park & ride schemes, active travel, Electric Vehicle (EV) charging provision, e-bike provision, public transport infrastructure and interchanges.
Location of proposed national development (information in a GIS format is welcome if available)	**Trunk Road Dualling Programme**: • A9 (Inverness – Perth) • A96 (Inverness – Aberdeen) **ICRD Improvements:** • A9-A96 Inshes to Smithton junction (Inverness) • A9-A82 Longman roundabout removal (Inverness) **A9 & A82 safety interventions and localised improvements:** - A9 Munlochy junction improvement (Munlochy) - A9 Tomich junction improvement (Invergordon)

	- A9 Berriedale junction improvement (Berriedale) - A82 Fort William town and surrounding Lochaber area (FW2040 area) and lifeline links to Corran Ferry – including but not limited to the consideration of interventions for accident hot spots at: Aonachan Crossing; Torlundy - Nevis Range; Corran - Fort William (3 Mile Water) **Other Strategic Roads** Corran Narrows Crossing Stromeferry Bypass Park & ride schemes, active travel, Electric Vehicle (EV) charging provision, e-bike provision, public transport infrastructure and interchanges may be required within new and improved road developments and may also require to be accommodated within existing infrastructure. Any EV charging provision to be included in schemes should complement and contribute to the wider existing and future charging network, guided (in Highland) by the Council's EV Infrastructure Vision.
What part or parts of the development requires planning permission or other consent?	Road Orders and CPO requirement, process completed and ongoing for several of the schemes.
When would the development be complete or operational?	**Trunk Road Dualling Programme:** • A9 (Inverness – Perth) - 2025 • A96 (Inverness – Aberdeen) - 2030 **ICRD Improvements:** • A9-A96 Inshes to Smithton junction by 2027 • A9-A82 Longman roundabout removal by 2027 **A9 & A82 safety interventions and localised improvements:** Short term improvements and STAG work to identify medium and longer term interventions. Ongoing for the life of NPF4 and beyond.
Is the development already formally recognised – for example identified in a development plan, has planning permission, in receipt of funding etc.	The dualling development has been committed in NPF3 (as well as recognised in HwLDP, IMFLDP and STPR) with early phases of the A9(T) either under construction or complete and ground investigations and draft orders for phases of the A96(T) having been progressed. HwLDP; IMFLDP; CaSPlan and WestPlan all note improvements to the Trunk Road infrastructure are integral to the delivery of improved sustainable transport links. With regards to FW2040, a STAG appraisal has already been undertaken based around the 'place principle' agenda, which has supported the proposed infrastructure interventions. Corran Narrows Crossing Study has been prepared and submitted to the STPR Team.

	For Stromeferry Bypass a Revised Stage 2 STAG appraisal was submitted to Transport Scotland in 2017. Since then the Council's working group has reviewed the report and recommended that the Glen Udalain to Attadale option progress to public consultation.

Contribution of proposed national development to the national development criteria:

Climate Change: Our vision for the future shows how physical and digital connectivity is very important for realisation of our vision for net zero carbon and that includes strategic infrastructure projects such as the Trunk Road Network Projects that have already been committed to by Transport Scotland. Whilst overall a modal shift away from road based travel is preferred, improving the existing road network, and in particular dualling the A9(T) and A96(T) coupled with speed enforcement measures can bring more efficient and economical driving styles and ease congestion currently seen on some of the single carriageway sections. This development will also provide the opportunity to better integrate public transport, park and ride opportunities, electric vehicle charging points and e-bike provision (such as for commuting or for leisure use). Such measures will be important for promoting modal shift and through that limiting traffic growth, so helping maintain road capacity and traffic free-flow. Thus contributing to lowering carbon emissions. New or upgraded public transport infrastructure should seek to achieve a step-change, such that vehicles for example are wholly fit-for-purpose and deliver a high quality, modern, low or zero carbon service that can be responsive and matched to demand. It may be noted that the Council has agreed to prepare a Hydrogen Strategy for Highland, which will be vital for decarbonization. The Stromeferry Bypass proposal seeks to respond to the effects of climate change on the lifeline A890 where increased sustained rainfall events could increase the frequency of landslips which block the existing route.

People: Improved travel connections and safety on these lifeline roads will help to reduce road traffic accidents and fatalities at known locations. Moreover, the improved physical connectivity brought about by these projects will help to address the fragility and isolation of our communities as well as showing that we are a valued part of the Scottish community.

Having a Trunk and Strategic Road network which is easy to travel and one that seamlessly interconnects with active travel and public transport links will provide a high quality place to live and work as well as allow Scotland to be marketed to the tourist Sector as one which is easy to travel around and visit.

Inclusive Growth: Improved connections both locally and with elsewhere in Scotland will help business to grow and will reduce travel time. The A9(T) in its current form is a barrier to economic growth of the Highlands. A recent Ministerial letter has confirmed that the dualling of the A9 (Inverness – Perth) and A96 (Inverness – Aberdeen) projects are ongoing and has given central government commitment to these schemes. Delivering on improved travel connections will also help to attract and retain highly skilled employees within the Highland and Islands Region.

Active Travel must be at the forefront of the design of all new and improved road developments and include greater integration of park & ride schemes, active travel, Electric Vehicle (EV) charging provision and public transport infrastructure and interchanges.

Place: The benefits of delivering dual-carriageway by-passes with appropriate linkages into our key towns, will remove heavy polluting congestion from our town centre, thus allowing

them to develop into high-quality attractive places but with excellent sustainable transport links to the wider locale.

The design of all new and improved transport routes should be done to reflect and respect the local character in which they are located, including tunnelling where appropriate and other similar interventions. It will be important that new facilities such as EV charging points, park and ride schemes and other parking provision is carefully sited and designed, especially in sensitive locations of special and cherished character.

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Name of proposed national development	**(cND03) Energy Generation, Transmission, Distribution & Consumption**
Brief description of proposed national development	The transition to a truly inclusive whole-system energy transmission, distribution, and consumption network. With the current centralized network adapting to a 'smarter local energy model' network to ensure energy generation and usage (including heat) is fully resilient and efficient in the future, to deliver a decarbonised net zero system in line with national net zero ambition.
Location of proposed national development (information in a GIS format is welcome if available)	Pan Scotland The location of specific elements will be informed amongst other things by strategic consideration of connections, generating locations and population growth, including reinforcement or provision of connectors required across Scotland.
What part or parts of the development requires planning permission or other consent?	Installation of infrastructure including but not limited to: onshore and offshore generating equipment, storage facilities, hydrogen production and the transmission network (overhead lines; underground or subsea cables; sub-stations; converter stations). Including the enhancement/upgrade of existing infrastructure. Continued support for existing generating stations, where not having an unacceptable adverse impact, to ensure the current baseload is retained. In reflecting targets for domestic/local energy within planning policy (and noting that Building Standards and PDR may extend coverage in due course), some domestic/micro-renewables will require planning permission and there is also a need to consider those in new builds.
When would the development be complete or operational?	Ongoing, aligned with national ambition to end our contribution to climate change no later than 2045.
Is the development already formally recognised – for	Partly: The need for grid improvements, particularly in rural areas is highlighted throughout NPF3 and the High

example identified in a development plan, has planning permission, in receipt of funding etc.	Voltage Transmission Network is already a National Development. Our latest thinking is that this should be expanded to provide an inclusive whole-system energy transmission, distribution, and consumption network. Which would include all the consented, but not yet delivered generating capacity and network improvements. Notwithstanding the full and proper consideration of all the proposals currently within the Planning System or coming forward through it in the future. In terms of off-shore wind, the Scottish Government Sectoral Marine Plan for Offshore Wind Energy (October 2020) formally recognises 'Offshore Wind Option' areas, with leases for these areas currently open for auction by the Crown Estate Scotland. Clearly the Scottish Energy Strategy is also relevant here. Furthermore, given the considerable reliance on contribution from Highland, the region's energy development and the national strategy are inextricably linked. There is the potential for the Council, working with Scottish Government and key stakeholders, to produce a Highland Energy Strategy (effectively updating and replacing the Highland Renewable Energy Strategy 2006) and potentially embed that within the Development Plan.

Contribution of proposed national development to the national development criteria:

Climate Change: As Highland Council accelerates action following its declaration of a climate and ecological emergency, and in support of the Scottish Government's aim to end our national contribution to climate change no later than 2045, the key priority of decarbonisation of the whole energy system is fast becoming imperative.

To deliver this, a transition to a truly inclusive whole-system energy transmission, distribution and consumption network will be required. With the current centralized network adapting to a 'smarter local energy model' network to ensure energy generation and usage (including heat) is fully resilient and efficient in the future.

Within the lifetime of NPF4 the remaining large fossil fuelled electricity generation stations are scheduled for closure and decommissioning. These few large stations are being replaced with a substantial number of diverse smaller generating 'stations', including; onshore and offshore wind, solar, hydro, tidal, Nuclear (potentially fusion and for a while still fission), bio-mass, anaerobic digestion, energy from waste, heat recovery technologies, pumped storage and geo-thermal. In addition a number of early renewable energy projects are reassessing their role in the network and considering whether they extend the life of their developments or decommission and re-power the site with more modern technology.

Resulting in Scotland's energy and heat requirements being delivered by a complex mix including, electricity generated from low/zero carbon sources; heat from low/zero carbon sources; and low/zero carbon fuels (gases, liquids, solids). This complex mix of stations

and technologies renders a static national transmission and distribution network inefficient and unable to quickly respond to changing electricity needs.

Consequently, more local 'smart' transmission networks will be necessary, which will need to be delivered in a nationally holistic approach. Combined with this, the siting of energy storage and high electricity demand uses close to generators would enable generation to continue even when the grid is constrained, further increasing efficiency.

Moreover, as Scotland's transport network simultaneously evolves to decarbonise using Electric Vehicles (for private use) and potentially hydrogen for larger vehicles (including; HGV's, ferries and trains), these demands will place additional unprecedented pressure and opportunity on the existing energy network. The Council has agreed to prepare a Hydrogen Strategy for Highland, which will be vital for decarbonization.

People: Highland's geographical size, make up and population density, has already and will continue to result in the region being a large net exporter of renewable energy to the rest of Scotland, the UK and potentially Europe, As such a resilient transmission interconnect network will be required, linking the renewable generation to the larger population centres.

As newer generating technologies and energy storage methods are refined and developed, again given Highland's geographical size, make up and population density the region is seen as a key location to play a significant role in developing and siting this advancement.

Inclusive Growth: A more reliable sustainable energy network will, alongside digital network connections, help businesses to grow and develop, particularly in more fragile and remote areas. Greater control and optimisation of the system and a shift towards community owned generation will help to improve reliability and reduce the costs of energy which in some rural areas can be a barrier to development.

Place: Where practicable this should include the removal of redundant infrastructure as well as greater consideration and innovation to help reduce the impact of developments, whilst concurrently making them more sustainable and responsive to their locations. The promotion of undergrounding infrastructure will be strongly supported given Highland's unique environmental assets.

It is anticipated the Highland and Islands Region will continue to play a fundamental role in renewable energy generation and supply at a national level, which will be essential if national emissions reduction targets are to be met – a national move towards supplementing this with local generation and consumption (in all areas) will hopefully play a part in accommodating development by limiting the amount and/or scale of it and its local impacts.

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Name of proposed national development	**(cND04) Regionally Important Facilities**
Brief description of proposed national development	New, replaced and improved regionally important strategic healthcare, sports and leisure, cultural, justice and educational facilities. These are facilities that benefit the region as a whole and beyond as well as enabling/supporting the delivery of a network of more local facilities across Highland as part of cND05: Local Resilient Networks.
Location of proposed national development (information in a GIS format is welcome if available)	Inverness, as a central 'hub', with scope to include satellite 'hubs' in key settlements across Highland and supporting a network of local facility 'hubs' as part of cND05: Local Resilient Networks. This approach could be replicated across other regionally important areas across Scotland.
What part or parts of the development requires planning permission or other consent?	New, renovated/replaced and expanded physical infrastructure may require formal approvals on an individual basis.
When would the development be complete or operational?	Continual on-going programme for the life of NPF4. Including the following identified and/or committed projects: • Inverness Justice Centre – now open • HMP Highland – delayed until 2023. • NHS Highland Elective Care Centre – under construction (spring 2021) • Replacement of Belford Hospital • Inverness Castle transformation
Is the development already formally recognised – for example identified in a development plan, has planning permission, in receipt of funding etc.	The need for education, health and other community facilities is set out in the LDP Delivery Programme with land allocated where a specific need has been identified in the IMFLDP, CaSPlan and WestPlan. However, this National Development concept reflects a more considered and strategic approach to developing a network of key facilities and 'hubs'. HMP Inverness has received planning permission and the Inverness Justice Centre has recently opened.

	Inverness Castle redevelopment and the Centre for Health Innovation (Elective Care Centre) have funding provided as part of the Inverness City and Region Deal.

Contribution of proposed national development to the national development criteria:

Having a more strategic approach to the provision of key facilities across regional, sub-regional and neighbouring regional scales can enable these to be provided in a more targeted and efficient way. This can help to ensure that communities have the facilities that they need in a way that is more sustainable to deliver across Local Authorities and other public sector bodies. For example, upgraded healthcare facilities in Caithness could be shared with Orkney, HMP Highland could also serve Moray (if it will not already). The Inverness Justice Centre brings a number of justice related bodies under the same shared facility.

Climate Change: The development of state of the art Regionally Important Facilities within key well-connected urban locations will help to address the climate change agenda by:

- Reducing or negating the need to travel outwith the region to access specific services. This will also help to address 'travel poverty'.
- Creating state of the art modern facilities are more energy efficient in terms of day-to-day operations and often result in facilities being co-located, thereby resulting in less travel between facilities and 'land-take' in providing the facility/service. If use is made of existing derelict or landmark buildings or brownfield land to locate facilities, this can also embed them in their communities and provide a net benefit as well as being more sustainable.
- While having physical facilities will remain a key way to deliver services, Covid-19 has brought into sharp relief the importance of and our ability to access services remotely/digitally. The creation of regionally important 'digital hub' facilities which can then service 'local hubs and/or 'satellite' facilities also help to sustain rural community facilities and keep services local.

People: Will safeguard and grow locally resilient and self-supporting communities. It will also help to attract and retain people (particularly young people, families and professionals) to the Highlands. This could also help to address depopulation and deliver the Scottish Government aim of repopulating 'Highland glens' as this can only be done where there are fit for purpose facilities and amenities to support these new communities.

Inclusive Growth: Will help to attract and retain people (professionals, young families etc.) in rural areas which in turn helps to sustain jobs and businesses. Inverness can serve as an anchor point for key facilities as well as smaller more flexible facilities across the region.

Place: Inverness already operates as a regional hub for all the major facilities, healthcare, leisure and sport, cultural, justice and education, across Highlands, the Isles and parts of Moray. In doing so it acts as a convenient/central well served place where people from the surrounding communities can meet for shared interest and activities face to face.

While Inverness is a central focal point for facilities and investment, with changes to the way some services are being delivered Inverness could act as an anchor point for some key services with others being delivered remotely or in satellite 'hubs'. The use of more localised 'hubs' could also help to establish 20 Minute Communities in more rural areas.

Facilities can also provide wider enhancements to a place, beyond the initial benefit of that facility or service provided. Inverness Campus is a good example where health and education facilities that serve people across the region and beyond, are located together

and set within a high-quality public realm that enhances biodiversity and serves as open space and a place for the surrounding community to meet and enjoy. The regional and local hubs approach also provides a strong framework for cultural and recreational provision across the region.

It is anticipated that the nature and location of facilities will reflect the unique qualities of places throughout the Highland region with different offering of facilities to suit strengths and characteristics of each place. The general need for these facilities to be provided could also help to ensure that derelict buildings or land can be brought back into productive uses or ensure the future of key landmark buildings.

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Name of proposed national development	**(cND05) Local Resilient Networks**
Brief description of proposed national development	Local resilient networks for the production, added value processing, distribution and consumption of resources including local food, renewable energy generation and consumption, active travel, waste management and healthcare. We envisage that Local Resilient Networks will help to deliver resilient and self-sufficient communities that are sustainable and help to deliver rural repopulation and the localism agenda.
Location of proposed national development (information in a GIS format is welcome if available)	Pan Highland although this approach can also be replicated across Scotland.
What part or parts of the development requires planning permission or other consent?	Erection of facilities and installation of infrastructure where required.
When would the development be complete or operational?	Continual on-going programme for the life of NPF4.
Is the development already formally recognised – for example identified in a development plan, has planning permission, in receipt of funding etc.	This National Development is considered to be a national strategic approach to the delivery and utilisation of locally produced assets at a local level and beyond. As such, some allocations within current LDPs cover aspects of this cND but these are fragmented and lack local, regional and national collaboration.

Contribution of proposed national development to the national development criteria:

Climate Change: Developing resilient local networks for the production, added value, and consumption of food will reduce food miles. Similarly, for other locally produced assets (including waste) being able to produce and process these locally will reduce their carbon footprint throughout their supply chain/lifespan. Active travel networks will reduce the dependency on car based travel and should connect in with places where people need to go and public transport for longer journeys. Being able to produce and retain renewable energy locally will have clear benefits for reducing emissions. Furthermore processing waste locally by means of energy from waste could also supply local district heating networks.

People: Robust and reliable networks that provide both urban and rural communities with the security of supply of key products and services such as locally grown and/or sourced food, high-quality locally provided healthcare and waste management solutions that support a healthy, growing and self-sufficient community.

Healthcare, active travel and healthy local food should be seen as part of a wider network/system to improve the physical and mental health and wellbeing of communities. Community Fridges, such as the one in Muir Of Ord, help to reduce food waste and provide food to those in need by bringing the community together. Furthermore we believe that locally produced and sourced food and the generation of cost-effective renewable energy via local energy networks will help to address both food and fuel poverty.

Inclusive Growth: Local networks for the production, added value and consumption of local resources will support and grow local businesses, generate a more sustainable income, improve and secure the supply chain and ensure businesses and communities are more resilient and self supporting. This is particularly important for the security of food and energy supplies in our more fragile areas.

Local resilient networks can sit well with community wealth building efforts and help to support and sustain small businesses providing job opportunities in more remote communities as well as improving the vitality of town centres.

Creating sustainable and resilient communities, bolstered by improved digital connectivity, will help to attract and retain people within our more rural areas, thereby enabling greater rural repopulation (and countering of depopulation trends).

Place: Producing locally distinctive and high quality, high value and specialist products will enhance the sense of place and generate pride in communities, this can also attract people to live and work in an area and add to the tourism offer and the ‘Highland brand’.

We anticipate that creating these networks will require some significant changes to the way in which services and infrastructure are delivered with a greater focus on localised needs. In Highland the examples of FW2040 and the emerging Skye & Raasay Investment Plan illustrate aspects of the approach required. As such Place Planning and the Infrastructure First approach will be key to ensuring the success of these networks. The creation of Local Resilient Networks would also help to deliver more vibrant and sustainable town centres, and the regeneration of derelict buildings or brownfield land.

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Name of proposed national development	**(cND06) Long Distance Cycling and Walking Network**
Brief description of proposed national development	Maintenance, development and promotion of national long-distance cycling and walking networks, directly linking to local active travel corridors and networks and public transport connections which contain suitable transport carrying capacity. Closing gaps in the current networks to enhance visitor experiences and provide better access to the outdoors for people. Maintenance, development and promotion of new tourist cycle and walking routes across Scotland, including a range of route lengths and types catering for different abilities.
Location of proposed national development (information in a GIS format is welcome if available)	Routes including but not limited to: National Cycle Network routes, the Great Glen Way, West Highland Way, East Highland Way, Speyside Way, Dava Way, Cape Wrath Trail, Affric-Kintail Way, John O'Groats Trail, Lands End to John O'Groats route, and the establishment of a 'Route to the Isles' connecting NCN78 up the Great Glen and NCN780 in the Western Isles, Pan Scotland
What part or parts of the development requires planning permission or other consent?	Some route extensions may require permission if new paths require construction. Associated facilities such as electric bike hire and charging hubs.
When would the development be complete or operational?	Continual on-going programme for the life of NPF4.
Is the development already formally recognised – for example identified in a development plan, has planning permission, in receipt of funding etc.	Existing national development in NPF3, but in advancement to NPF4 the function, development and expansion should be more explicit.

Contribution of proposed national development to the national development criteria:

Climate Change: Encourages visitors and local people to switch to active travel where routes are joined up and connect places where people want/need to go, such work or leisure destinations, especially where these routes are viewed as a better alternative to car travel. Particular opportunities will arise for active travel provision as part of or in association with other projects, such as non-motorised user (NMU) provision along the dualling of the A9. Routes could also be populated with rental and charging facility 'hubs' for electric bikes to be used between drop-off points, for example by tourists to access visitor destinations – and opportunities should therefore be looked for to link the relevant strategies and investment plans.

People: Physical and mental health benefits are obvious and the reduction in health conditions and issues can be seen as a return on investment made. Walking and cycling are the most cost effective means of travel and by having better connected networks this will allow for people living near these routes to give up their car and walk or cycle for work and other services, helping to reduce poverty and isolation. A widened range of route lengths and types will provide opportunities for people of different abilities.

Inclusive Growth: Maintaining and promoting long distance routes and improving their connections with local active travel and public transport networks will encourage more people to use these routes and potentially stay for longer or visit nearby places, thereby supporting local businesses. Especially if these routes are promoted at a similar scale as the NC500 road route which supports and promotes a number of local businesses along the route. By developing the network, the range of opportunities for 'slow tourism' can be increased.

Place: Scotland and the Highlands are renowned for the high-quality environment and outdoor pursuits. This will enhance the offer for walkers and cyclists whilst also making the many communities along these routes better connected and more liveable. Added benefits may be delivered by connecting the long distance network to local networks and through effective cross-boundary thinking where routes cross between access authority areas or networks within different areas could be joined.

National Developments – Response Form

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Name of proposed national development	**(cND07) High Quality Housing**
Brief description of proposed national development	Deliver on the national commitment to develop and convert the existing housing stock to provide high quality, energy efficient and sustainable homes to meet Scotland's housing needs, particularly affordable and adaptive housing across the urban and rural setting.
Location of proposed national development (information in a GIS format is welcome if available)	Pan Scotland.
What part or parts of the development requires planning permission or other consent?	Erection of homes and major alterations, additions and improvements to the existing housing stock require planning approval.
When would the development be complete or operational?	Ongoing; however this is considered to be a high priority, therefore delivery of affordable and adaptive housing should begin at the earliest possible opportunity.
Is the development already formally recognised – for example identified in a development plan, has planning permission, in receipt of funding etc.	Not a single development but rather an ongoing commitment to delivering high quality housing that is affordable and adaptive to people's needs. This is supported in national and local policy.

Contribution of proposed national development to the national development criteria:

Climate Change: High quality, energy efficient and sustainable housing will lower carbon emissions, including through systems for efficient capture or generation, storage and use of heat and onsite micro renewable generation. Located in places which are easily accessible from sustainable means, whilst ensuring the housing is flexible and adaptive to people's needs, especially the needs of the elderly or people with disabilities, will ensure that people can stay in their own homes for longer and reduce the number of specialist homes required. In addition, to the continual improvements to the existing housing stock to ensure it is fit for purpose for future users and to transition it to being more energy efficient, thereby retaining the embodied energy and resources within the existing building.

People: The provision of high quality housing that is safe, light, warm and well ventilated is beneficial to both physical and mental health, including the provision of housing for the homeless. Having homes that are flexible and adaptive throughout their lifespan will also enable people to stay in their homes and close to their networks (e.g. schools, jobs) throughout their lives, should they wish to do so.

Inclusive Growth: Housebuilding significantly contributes to the economy, however housing should also be affordable in order to prevent or reduce poverty and inequality. The embedding of the place principle in our future developments will help deliver great places through a collaborative, place-based approach.

Inverness has a buoyant private housing market with high rental figures and in more remote rural areas holiday and second homes can price local people out of their area. Increasing the number of affordable homes in rural areas will also help accommodate growth and strengthen rural communities.

Additionally, the self-build, co-housing, community-led housing markets, alongside crofting have always contributed to the overall housing mix and, moving forward, further strengthening and support of these types of schemes will be key to provide strength and resilience across urban and rural economies.

Place: High quality housing, where it is well designed and integrated into its surroundings, and accessible via sustainable means can create high quality places for people to live. The changing shape and use of Scotland's Town Centres and to a lesser degree out of town retail is resulting in an excessive amount of retail floor space being available; its timely reuse and/or repurposement will be key to avoid a large number of buildings, many historic becoming disused. Housing should be seen as a key element to this reuse.

Furthermore, the integration of blue and green infrastructure/open space and the creation of habitats to support biodiversity within our future housing developments will be key to ensuring the developments respect the locale and deliver on climate and ecological declarations.

National Developments – Response Form

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Name of proposed national development	**(cND08) Sea Ports**
Brief description of proposed national development	Sea Port development and investment (including potential Greenport status), resulting in nationally significant employment, strengthened lifeline and other key ferry links, renewables technology handling and development, development of a hydrogen economy, oil and gas (decommissioning), bulky goods and freight handling, fishing and aquaculture, leisure boats and cruise ship visits.
Location of proposed national development (information in a GIS format is welcome if available)	Pan Scotland Potential locations in Highland include the Cromarty Firth (Port of Cromarty Firth, Nigg & Highland Deephaven), Corpach, Ardersier, Gills Bay, Inverness, Kishorn, Scrabster, Ullapool, Uig, Mallaig and Wick. As well as a network of smaller leisure and fishing harbours.
What part or parts of the development requires planning permission or other consent?	Erection of facilities and installation of infrastructure (or upgrade of existing) including: piers/quays, deep-water berthing, lay-down areas, sheds for assembly operations, operation maintenance bases, green fuel production and handling, etc. Also implications for wider infrastructure e.g. electricity and heat networks, local road network, active travel links, integration of public transport.
When would the development be complete or operational?	Various/ongoing - based on individual projects/ development programmes
Is the development already formally recognised – for example identified in a development plan, has planning permission, in receipt of funding etc.	Within NPF3, Ardersier, Nigg and Kishorn are already identified as NRIP Sites with Highland Deephaven, Scrabster and Wick identified as potential NRIP Sites. Nigg and Scrabster are also Enterprise Areas, and Port of Cromarty Firth (Invergordon) is recognised as a key port in the sub-region. The upgrade and development of the identified ports is broadly supported within the LDPs with Uig Development Brief agreed by the Skye and Raasay Area Committee in June 2019. Developments will include, but not be limited to, those that have recently been announced as having attracted increased, supportive investment from Scottish Government.

Contribution of proposed national development to the national development criteria:

Climate Change: Cromarty Firth, Kishorn, Wick, Scrabster and Gills Bay are already recognised as key sites for the renewables sector in terms of manufacturing/assembly/supply, research and development, operations and maintenance and/or support services. Further investment in these areas could result in greater development/deployment of more efficient and effective renewable energy generation that has less impact on the environment. There is also opportunity for sea ports to play a key part in the development of a hydrogen economy, vital for achieving decarbonisation [it may be noted that The Highland Council has recently (March 2021) agreed to prepare a Hydrogen Strategy]. Kishorn and the Cromarty Firth can, and do, also play a key role in refit/decommissioning of oil infrastructure. It is expected that any bids for 'Green Port' status in any of the potential locations will be assessed carefully, including for climatic and coastal effects, in a bid to achieve sustainable development.

Given the Highland's extensive coastline, a network of smaller scale ports, harbours and marinas exist which are seen as key in the delivery of high-quality sustainable marine tourism. With the Scottish Government already noting it as a key sector with significant potential growth over the next 10 years (Awaking the Giant).

People: Investment in these ports, particularly those outwith the Inner Moray Firth Area, will help to sustain fragile communities and secure service provision, including vital lifeline and other key ferry services, across the wider Highlands and Islands region. Opportunities can and should also be taken to improve active travel links, including links with other forms of public transport, when investing in ferries and ports and to support integrated journeys at ferry terminals, thus improving sustainable accessibility.

Inclusive Growth: Investment in these ports will help to provide significant numbers of jobs across a number of sectors, thereby attracting skilled and unskilled workers and their families. This will have a knock-on impact on the local economy e.g. shops, accommodation etc. as well as directly through the creation of new business or the expansion/diversification of existing business. Tourism/leisure, fishing and aquaculture are key sectors of the economy that can be developed at smaller ports/harbours that are not listed above but can contribute significantly to their local economy and food supply chain. They should not be lost amongst aspirations for larger scale industrial or cruise ship related development.

Ullapool, Uig and Scrabster harbours provide key ferry routes to Eilean Siar and Orkney – with Road Equivalent Tariff (RET) there will be increased traffic, both tourist and commercial. Affordable ferry travel will help to support business development, access to services and make our more remote communities more liveable. Road infrastructure connecting these ferry routes must be able to cope.

It is vital to recognise that Brexit has had negative impacts for sea ports as well as there being positive opportunities and some increased, supportive investment from Scottish Government recently announced.

The Trade Minister's aspirations for 'Green Ports' are noted and that "it meets our (Scottish Government) ambition to deliver a net zero, wellbeing economy that upholds the highest standards of environmental protections and fair work practices and supports our strategy of building clusters of high productivity businesses across Scotland's regions."
(https://www.gov.scot/news/green-ports-to-aid-economic-recovery/).

Place: Development of these ports, particularly should Greenport status be granted to the Cromarty Firth, could also result in further investment in improving the quality of the local area. Particularly at Invergordon which is the arrival point for thousands of tourists per year as well as Ullapool, Scrabster, Mallaig, Gills Bay and Uig as ferry ports. Furthermore, with the potential investment and job creation this could help drive delivery of significant new housing development and wider infrastructure investment in the local area to support and attract workers.

National Developments – Response Form

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Name of proposed national development	**(cND09) Strategic Airport & Service Enhancements**
Brief description of proposed national development	Supporting the main airports as gateways and recognising the importance of lifeline air links. Strategic Airport Enhancements (including investment in air traffic control technology) at Inverness, Skye & Wick John O'Groats and innovation in new sustainable aircraft design as part of Scottish Governments commitment to making the Highlands and Islands the world's first net zero aviation region by 2040, which will become a vital ambition across the whole of Scotland in achieving the net zero commitment.
Location of proposed national development (information in a GIS format is welcome if available)	Main national airports: Aberdeen, Edinburgh, Glasgow, Inverness and Prestwick. HIAL Airports particularly Inverness & Wick John O'Groats. Broadford Airstrip on Skye which has the potential for airport development.
What part or parts of the development requires planning permission or other consent?	Some works to airports/airfields (including the potential upgrades at Broadford, Skye) will fall under permitted development. However larger upgrades elsewhere may require planning permission. There may also be requirements to consult on airspace changes resulting from upgrades.
When would the development be complete or operational?	Various/ongoing - based on individual projects/development programmes. For Wick a PSO would need to be approved should there be support for this as a mechanism for flights to Edinburgh etc
Is the development already formally recognised – for example identified in a development plan, has planning permission, in receipt of funding etc.	Existing National Development from NPF3; however we propose that this is expanded upon to include investment in Air Traffic Control and innovation/investment in making air travel/aircraft more sustainable.

Contribution of proposed national development to the national development criteria:

Climate Change: Innovation and investment in making aircraft and air travel more sustainable will help to reduce the carbon emissions while still retaining air as a key means available for travel, especially to enable certain trip types. This is a key opportunity to address Scottish Government's commitment to net-zero aviation in Highlands and Islands by 2040 on shorter air routes, which will become a vital ambition across the whole of Scotland in achieving the net zero commitment. The likelihood for electric aircraft to be in operation within a few years could provide a 'stepchange' to the carbon footprint of aviation as a form of transport thereby making air travel more attractive (and arguably sustainable for longer journeys) than car travel.

Additionally, given benefits of air connections and notwithstanding the need to strive for low and zero carbon deployment, the promotion of offsetting measures to help to contribute to the net zero ambition through nature-based solutions such as woodland planting, peatland and habitat restoration/enhancement should also be promoted.

People: This will improve connections and airport capacity at Inverness as a key travel 'hub' for the Highlands as well as improving connectivity with our more remote areas such as Caithness and Skye. It could also contribute to more innovative ways of providing services, particularly more specialist services such as improving access to Consultant doctors by allowing them to fly to Broadford Hospital or Caithness General for appointments with patients. Improved active travel links and public transport routes to reduce the dependence on private car access will be strongly supported and promoted to the existing airports, to further support the net zero commitment.

Inclusive Growth: Frequency, capacity, resilience and reliability of service to main economic centres (chiefly Edinburgh, Glasgow and Aberdeen as well as further afield such as to London or to elsewhere in Europe) are key to businesses in remote areas. This will also improve connectivity for business growth and development including renewables in the North Sea and Pentland Firth and local business and tourism on Skye. There is already a positive business case for upgrading Broadford Airstrip and additionally Skye & Lochalsh is the only population centre in Scotland where it is not possible to make a return day trip to either Glasgow or Edinburgh. The recent loss of key service to Wick is likely to have a major negative economic impact on Caithness and efforts are underway to get a Public Service Obligation (PSO) to operate out of Wick, which would help support businesses. It could also make it easier for longer distance commuting e.g. Inverness to London which, although not necessarily sustainable long term, unless substantially de-carbonised, could widen the job market for some workers.

Place: Airports are key gateways and often the first impressions of a place or area for visitors; as such, high quality and efficient airports will contribute towards an enhanced experience of the place.

National Developments – Response Form

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Name of proposed national development	**(cND10) Digital Network**
Brief description of proposed national development	Continual delivery and modernisation of the virtual digital network including rollout of fixed fibre as part of both the R100 Project and the City Region Deal, as well as the continuing rollout of the 4G & 5G networks all supported by a network of datacentres powered by low carbon energy.
Location of proposed national development (information in a GIS format is welcome if available)	Pan Scotland. It should be noted that there are still a number of locations within Highland that are not covered by the digital fibre network. In other areas reliability and performance are still an issue which requires to be addressed.
What part or parts of the development requires planning permission or other consent?	Installation of infrastructure
When would the development be complete or operational?	While we understand that the roll out of the digital fibre network is classed as 'complete' there are still a number of 'notspots' in Highland that should be addressed as soon as practicable. Suggested target of 2025 intended to drive transformation and ensure that inequality in access is addressed as a high priority.
Is the development already formally recognised – for example identified in a development plan, has planning permission, in receipt of funding etc.	Digital Fibre Network is a National Development set out in NPF3, a Subject Policy in SPP and digital network connections forms part of the Inverness and Highland City-Region Deal, the Reaching 100% programme and the Local Full Fibre Network project.

Contribution of proposed national development to the national development criteria:

Climate Change: While physical connections are a key part of our vision, these should be supplemented with enhanced digital connectivity and the virtual digital network. This will have benefits in terms of reducing the need to physically travel and supporting a green circular economy. Virtual digital networks can also help to advance scientific modelling and remote monitoring of climate change impacts and mitigation measures. Integrating digital technology into the built environment (Smart Cities) can also allow for heat mapping, traffic modelling and interventions to ease congestion etc.

People: Particularly in light of the current COVID-19 pandemic, a fast and reliable virtual digital network can have benefits for facilitating social activity virtually, as a means of disseminating information and allowing for work and education to be undertaken remotely. Digital networks can also be integrated into the home to (remotely) monitor health and social care as well as the home environment and security. Digital networks and data gathering can also be used more widely to improve service delivery, and to ensure the long term viability and vibrancy of more rural, isolated and fragile communities.

Inclusive Growth: Digital and virtual networks can help to broaden the reach of small local businesses through a virtual marketplace as well as facilitating the important knowledge economy. They can also help to attract new markets and visitors related to tourism. Fast and reliable digital networks can allow businesses to expand in rural areas through an increased use of digital technology or more widely through the ability to work from home. This in turn could allow more flexibility in the workplace and allow more people to either remain in employment or progress their careers.

Datacentres powered by renewable energy and international fibre connections are key parts of the digital and data economy. In order to build on expanded broadband and mobile networks and open up new economic opportunities Highland, has been identified as a potential data centre location.

Place: Alongside physical connectivity, we regard digital connectivity to be equally vital to our vision for the future and also to economic recovery from COVID-19. By collecting and analysing (digital) data on how people use places this can improve decision and plan making and target investment to create better, more intuitive, places.

National Developments – Response Form

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Name of proposed national development	**(cND11) Emerging Space industry funding, support and development**
Brief description of proposed national development	A joint venture between the UK Space Agency, HIE and the private sector to develop an international space hub with a vertical launching pad for the delivery of low earth observational commercial satellites.
Location of proposed national development (information in a GIS format is welcome if available)	Melness, Sutherland Grid Ref. E: 254056 N. 962645
What part or parts of the development requires planning permission or other consent?	Construction of vertical launch space port with launch operations control centre, site integration facility, launch pad complex, antenna park, access road, fencing, services and associated infrastructure
When would the development be complete or operational?	The proposal had been to start construction during 2020, subject to planning permission and other consents. However, it is understood that this has been and continues to be reviewed following the COVID-19 outbreak (and the protracted restrictions due to the pandemic); it is also impacted by the ongoing judicial review that is referred to below. It is understood that construction could last around 15 months.
Is the development already formally recognised – for example identified in a development plan, has planning permission, in receipt of funding etc.	Planning Permission issued 05 August 2020 (Council 20/00616/FUL refers). [NB. The decision to grant planning permission is subject of an ongoing (as at April 2021) judicial review. The Council remains supportive of the principle of the Sutherland facility.]

Contribution of proposed national development to the national development criteria:

Climate Change: This cND proposes the development of a space hub principally for the delivery of low earth observational commercial satellites to monitor vegetation, weather, cloud cover and ice cover to monitor and understand climate change. Thereby bringing increased understanding, awareness and monitoring of Scotland's, the UK's, Europe's and the worldwide approach to addressing Climate Change.

People: The repopulation of the rural Highlands is outlined as one of the Scottish Government's key objectives. This will only be achieved if high-quality well-paid employment is available within these localities. HIE economic assessment published in February 2020 estimates that the development of the Space Hub will result in 61 highly skilled jobs within Caithness and Sutherland and 250 jobs within the wider regional area (https://www.hie.co.uk/our-region/regional-projects/space-hub-sutherland/space-hub-sutherland-faqs/) and consequently it is asserted that bringing these jobs to the local economy will significantly aid the Scottish Government in satisfying one of its key objectives.

Inclusive Growth: Rural Highland's economy primarily relies on agriculture, forestry and tourism, all of which are considered to be seasonal, lower skilled employment opportunities. Therefore, the development of a Space Port and the diversification this will bring in terms of high quality, permanent employment is judged to bring sustainable economic growth, helping to reduce poverty and inequality locally, regionally and across Scotland. Furthermore, it is considered that the facility would be a vital component of the country's infrastructure for and contribute to development of the space industry sector, for both Scotland and the UK, whilst also delivering benefits for Highland's economy.

Place: The siting of the Space Hub within Sutherland is locationally specific for the following reasons:

- A flight trajectory that does not overfly populated areas;
- Appropriate weather for scheduled launches;
- Access to key orbits;
- Both polar and sun-synchronous orbits can be achieved from North Scotland – these currently account for 95% of future orbital requirements.

Furthermore, detailed EIA will address, mitigate and seek improvements to natural and bio-diversity assets.

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Name of proposed national development	**(cND12) Sustainable Tourism Development Infrastructure Plan**
Brief description of proposed national development	Investment in the transport, interpretation, digital communications and waste management networks that ensure tourists enjoy a high quality of experience, whilst achieving the Scottish Government ambition for a net zero Scotland by 2045.
Location of proposed national development	Scotland wide; however, Highlands already offers considerable cultural, built and natural heritage tourism assets.
What part or parts of the development requires planning permission or other consent?	No specific high-level aspect will require formal permission. However, an overall co-ordinated plan would require consultation and individual developments to achieve the plan would require permissions.
When would the development be complete or operational?	Tourism is already well established across Scotland and future growth requires to be undertaken in a sustainable manner to aid transition of the sector to make its contribution to a net-zero Scotland by 2045.
Is the development already formally recognised – for example identified in a development plan, has planning permission, in receipt of funding etc.	SPP (2014) along with the majority of Scottish LDPs contain general advice and policies on tourist related developments. Nevertheless, the focus of this advice and policy framework is on the acceptability of individual projects at site specific locations, rather than achieving sustainable tourist development and/or the wider cumulative infrastructure and servicing provisions.
Contribution of proposed national development to the national development criteria: **Climate Change, People, Inclusive Growth and Place** In 2018 the Highlands tourism industry accounted for over 15% of total employment (https://www.visitscotland.org/binaries/content/assets/dot-org/pdf/research-papers-2/regional-factsheets/highland-factsheet-2018v2.pdf) an increase of 3% on the previous year and injected over £316.5M into our regional economy. Like the rest of Scotland, the growth of tourism has brought many benefits and investment into the area, however, it has also highlighted numerous infrastructure and servicing constraints, including across Highland. Particularly infrastructure issues (parking, public toilets etc.) at hotspots along the NC500, the Great Glen and Skye; affordable housing accommodation shortages through the increase in holiday lets and second homes; Inverness airport capacity issues; Fort William road network capacity; the loss of Visit Scotland Tourism Visitor/information	

centres to direct and educate tourists; and air pollution arising from particular tourist transport modes and attractions.

Furthermore, the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic has shown how fragile this industry can be and at the time of writing the long-term impact of this pandemic on Scotland's tourist industry is not yet able to be quantified. This not only relates to the impact of lockdowns on tourism related businesses and other small businesses that rely on tourism for passing trade, but also the impact of staycationing and the potential for small communities to become overwhelmed. This is a delicate balance but one that must be met to ensure a sustainable recovery.

Nevertheless, this current pause in the industry resulting from the pandemic offers Scotland a real opportunity to reposition our focus of the industry to achieve continual growth, but in a sustainable method, whilst providing high-quality year-round employment opportunities. This in turn can help to address certain concerns about negative effects of tourism, expressed by communities who otherwise embrace the industry.

This change in position should focus on the overall visitor experience from the moment they arrive at one of our ports of entry, to the way they travel around the area be it by private or public means, to the places they eat, sleep and visit, right up to the point of departure. All of which requires to be done in a joined-up way to ensure that each trip is as sustainable as possible, does not overwhelm any specific community, the natural environment or cultural heritage features and results in a low or preferably zero carbon trip. The Highlands provide wonderful opportunities to promote responsible tourism, encourage visitors to slow down, make longer stays and stimulate more visitor experiences based around walking and cycling. The key gateways into Highland are important to the arrival experience for people entering the region. They can provide opportunities to focus and enhance the sense of arrival, to raise the profile of the Highland brand and particularly to promote its growing sustainability values.

Key areas to focus on could include:

- Strategies to facilitate and promote "slow tourism", "heritage tourism" and "eco tourism" which could help to spread out tourism income away from honeypot areas and could also spread strain of tourist numbers;
- Enhancement and promotion of Long Distance (Walking and Cycling, but also Paddling, etc) Routes to encourage sustainable travel and facilitate the above;
- Invest in year round and indoor facilities to ensure that visitors have options for days of 'typical' highland weather and extend the tourist season;
- Provide a wide network of EV charging points, particularly on key tourist routes to make touring the Highlands by EV more practical and convenient;
- Provide year round pubic toilet and campervan/motorhome servicing and waste disposal facilities at key locations. Dumping of human waste has become a significant concern which can impact upon local communities and the environment as well as leaving visitors with an unpleasant experience.

In order to achieve this, it is Highland's view that a Scotland-wide approach is required to the resolution of specific identified infrastructure and servicing issues, by way of a targeted central funding pot to resolve and enhance existing shortcomings in the national infrastructure – be it transport, interpretation, digital communications or waste management networks. This could build on and complement existing regional efforts (for example, the current preparation of a Highland Tourism Infrastructure Plan) and Scottish Government's Rural Tourism Infrastructure Fund, within a development plan-led approach.

It is interesting and could be useful to observe approaches being taken elsewhere; for example, New Zealand's more holistic approach to addressing over tourism through regenerative tourism (https://www.lonelyplanet.com/articles/regenerative-tourism-new-zealand; https://www.researchgate.net/publication/348617887_Is_Regenerative_Tourism_Future_of_Tourism_A_future_of_tourism_industry_conscious_travel_destination_recovery_and_regenerative_tourism) as a step change in travelling responsibly, conserving the local environment and culture and having travellers themselves buying into a particular ethos both figuratively and literally through a (international) visitor tax or levy.

National Developments – Response Form

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Name of proposed national development	**(cND13) World Heritage Site for The Flow Country**
Brief description of proposed national development	Supporting the adoption and sustainable management of The Flow Country proposed World Heritage Site.
Location of proposed national development (information in a GIS format is welcome if available)	The Flow Country in Caithness and Sutherland. [See map within Technical Evaluation submitted to DCMS in December 2019 – providing a draft/proposed boundary for the WHS, which may be refined further. NB. Whilst the representation of The Flow Country on the Highland Indicative Regional Spatial Strategy map remains only broadly indicative, it has been refined (April 2021) to better represent the area.]
What part or parts of the development requires planning permission or other consent?	Peatland restoration proposals may be covered by the new permitted development rights introduced in April 2021, but any not covered would require planning permission. Also, WHS status will not prevent access and activity but is expected to lead to opportunities for tourism, recreation, education, research and enterprise, with an emphasis on that being managed, sustainable, net-zero carbon and compatible with preserving the Outstanding Universal Value of the WHS. This may include activities within the WHS or within the wider area associated with it – and may include changes of use of land and/or the building of facilities requiring planning permission. [NB. Whilst WHS status could bring potential tourism benefits, the Highland Indicative Regional Spatial Strategy map has been refined (April 2021) to better reflect the natural environment benefits that are at the core of the bid, together with related benefits for carbon sequestration (from protection of the peatland and peatland restoration) – the map having previously identified The Flow Country as an 'internationally important tourism asset'.]
When would the development be complete or operational?	The 'bid' process for The Flow Country to be accorded World Heritage status is ongoing. The aim is for nomination to UNESCO in 2023. If The Flow Country 'bid' subsequently succeeds, thereafter the WHS status would trigger a requirement for appropriate ongoing management and for WHS considerations to be embedded into policies and assessments. Outcomes sought are expected to include preservation of the

	Outstanding Universal Value of the WHS and further peatland restoration to complement the existing areas of OUV.
Is the development already formally recognised – for example identified in a development plan, has planning permission, in receipt of funding etc.	The Flow Country is already on the Tentative List for World Heritage. National Planning Framework 3 (paragraph 4.32) refers to the site being included on the tentative list of sites for nomination and describes it as an important asset. The Peatlands Partnership (of which The Highland Council is a member) is progressing the bid for The Flow Country to be inscribed on the list of World Heritage Sites and this is included as an action in the Delivery Programme for the Caithness and Sutherland Local Development Plan (CaSPlan). A Technical Evaluation was submitted to DCMS in December 2019. Following consideration of that by DCMS, it has been announced that the 'bid' should proceed to being worked up as a formal nomination by the UK to UNESCO.

Contribution of proposed national development to the national development criteria:

Climate Change: The Flow Country offers unparalleled peatland resource. By preserving this habitat, this hugely important carbon store will be safeguarded, thereby (in the national interest) avoiding carbon release. It will provide a focus for peatland restoration, thereby locking in further carbon. Management planning and policies will support activities that are compatible with preservation of the OUV of the WHS, with a particular emphasis on net-zero carbon.

People: A key strand of the case for The Flow Country to be inscribed as a WHS is an acknowledgement and understanding of the relationship that people have to the area, including those who live in, work in or visit it. Furthermore, communities are being engaged with as part of the 'bid' process. Through safeguarding this natural resource, Highland's and Scotland's population will benefit.

Inclusive Growth: A key aspect of the 'bid' for The Flow Country to be inscribed as a WHS is that it can bring opportunities for tourism, recreation, education, research and enterprise, with an emphasis on that being sustainable, net-zero carbon and compatible with preserving the Outstanding Universal Value of the WHS. The rural communities in and around The Flow Country are fragile, with depopulation, ageing population, climate change vulnerability and rural isolation issues – and the opportunities that WHS status can bring could help to support those communities.

Place: World Heritage Site status for The Flow Country would lead to renewed acknowledgement of the value of peatlands in Caithness and Sutherland and of the need to safeguard this resource, adding to it also through peatland restoration. It would be the first peatland WHS in the world, making it a flag bearer for the habitat worldwide. Key habitats and supported species are part of the basis for the bid – blanket bog habitat and biodiversity of The Flow Country, it being home to rare and endangered birds, molluscs and invertebrates and visited seasonally by non-resident rare birds. The Flow Country should be regarded as being vital blue and green content of the nation's infrastructure assets set. Engagement with communities in the 'bid' process is laying the foundation for the potential to work more collaboratively with communities in a place planning approach to management of The Flow Country.

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National Developments – Response Form

Please use the table below to let us know about projects you think may be suitable for national development status. You can also tell us your views on the existing national developments in National Planning Framework 3, referencing their name and number, and providing reasons as to why they should maintain their status. Please use a separate table for each project or development. **Please fill in a Respondent Information Form and return it with this form to scotplan@gov.scot.**

Name of proposed national development	**(cND14) The Land and Water Management, Protection and Restoration of our Natural & Biodiversity Assets, including our Peatland, Reforestation & Coastal Assets.**
Brief description of proposed national development	The use of both our land & water resource for the delivery of carbon reduction in support of wider national interests. Including the protection and restoration of our peatland resource, the reforestation of Scotland, rewilding ambitions and the protection and development of all our blue and green assets
Location of proposed national development	Scotland wide; however, given Highland's geographical size it offers unparalleled resources.
What part or parts of the development requires planning permission or other consent?	National overarching land and water use strategy establishing a collaborative approach across Scotland and setting priorities for each areas/regions which feed into the overall strategy. Individual specific development may require local permissions.
When would the development be complete or operational?	In line with Scottish Government target to reducing emissions to net zero by 2045, but given that some of the benefits take years to be fully realised (e.g. some of the carbon benefits) then early intervention will be required.
Is the development already formally recognised – for example identified in a development plan, has planning permission, in receipt of funding etc.	The commitment to reduce emissions to net zero by 2045 is set in statute in the Climate Change (Emissions Reduction Targets) (Scotland) Act 2019. However, the realisation of this commitment must transect and impact on all parts of legislation, with the planning function being one of the principal methods to deliver fundamental change in Scotland's approach to the use of our natural and bio-diversity resource.
Contribution of proposed national development to the national development criteria: **Climate Change**: The Highland area contains most of the country's peatland resource and by establishing long term protection of this unparalleled habitat, we will prevent the carbon release of this hugely important national carbon store. Moreover, a national plan and effective policies for its restoration will ensure locked-in carbon will remain in perpetuity. With a current national target of tree planting 10,000 ha per year, rising to 15,000 ha a year from 2024/25, the geographical area of Highlands is judged to be of paramount importance to achieve this ongoing Scottish Government commitment. However, achieving such sustained significant reforestation requires to be done in a national development plan-led approach.	

Historically agriculture has dried, drained or damaged peatlands and caused extensive deforestation, resulting in additional carbon emission. Moving forward the strategy for peatland restoration and reforestation will need to concurrently protect and enhance these elements whilst protecting the vital contribution that the agricultural sector makes to food supply and to the economy.

Highland region also encompasses 4,905 kilometres of coastline (21% of Scotland's total), as such it provides a substantial blue carbon resource in form of carbon rich habitats such as saltmarsh, seagrass, maerl bed and marine sediment. These habitats play a role in climate change mitigation through carbon sequestration and storage. Protection and restoration can also add further value in climate change adaptation by reducing risks of flooding and coastal erosion.

People: A national development plan-led approach to the protection and restoration of Scotland's natural and bio-diversity assets, will significantly aid the wellbeing, sustainability and quality of life of Scotland's current and future generations, providing them a location and habitat in which to thrive and continue to attract worldwide visitors. This could take account of statutorily designated assets and those that are acknowledged for their value without statutory designation for planning, such as the Wester Ross Biosphere.

Inclusive Growth: Water availability and quality has sustained biodiversity, the human population and important economic uses in the region for many years. It is a basic requirement for life, but a finite resource, accommodated in surface waterbodies including rivers, lakes, estuaries and coastal waters in addition to groundwater and therefore the importance of sustainably and nationally managing it are without question.

The protection and restoration of damaged peatlands has been identified to significantly contribute to lowering existing emissions in the land use sector as Peatlands in good condition actively form peat, removing CO2 from the atmosphere and storing carbon in the soil. Peatland restoration has many other benefits including providing an internationally important habitat, improving water quality and reducing flood risk.

Achieving the Scottish Government targets of reforestation, in the longer-term will work to reduce the current 70% deficit in our annual national timber requirements. Thereby resulting in substantial additional employment in forestry management and complementary sectors, whilst simultaneously achieving the Government climate change commitments and increasing bio-diversity habitat across the whole of Scotland. Reforestation therefore needs to include commercial forestry in appropriate locations but also recreational and amenity woodland using native species, which will bring particular biodiversity benefits.

Place: Scotland holds 13% of the world's blanket bog, with The Flow Country and the Lewis Peatlands considered likely to represent the largest contiguous areas globally, therefore Scotland and especially Highlands plays an unparalleled role in providing the protection and restoration of Peatlands.

Historically, Scotland was largely wooded however due to deforestation during the 18th century, by 1900 only about 5% of Scotland's land area was still wooded. Large-scale afforestation in the early 21st century has increased this figure to about 17%. But this is still much lower woodland cover than other countries in Europe and to address this shortfall the Scottish Government's Draft Climate Change Plan, has proposed the woodland expansion increases to 21% by 2032. In the effort to increase the forestation levels, the "right tree in the right place" (https://forestry.gov.scot/publications/96-the-right-tree-in-the-

right-place-planning-for-forestry-and-woodlands) should be adopted, particularly with respect to the steer to avoid or minimise adverse impacts of proposed planting on the valuable role played by carbon-rich soils.

Scotland's marine sediments contain about 18 times more carbon than either Scottish peatland or forests. The sheer abundance highlights the need to protect this resource in order to prevent unnecessary releases in the future. The Highland marine region is also home to a large proportion of Scotland's saltmarsh and seagrass and these are known to sequest carbon at a greater rate than the same area of forest on land.

Additionally, blue and green links have formed a network of a vital infrastructure for centuries all of which make a valuable contribution to the creation of and sustaining Places.

Therefore, Highland's land and marine area coupled with sparse population will play an important role in this ambitious plan, which can only be achieved by a national development plan-led approach.

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National Developments – Response Form

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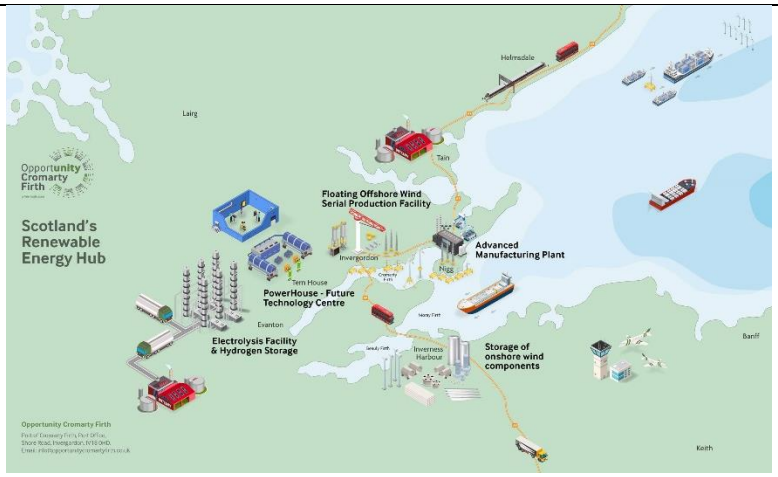
Name of proposed national development	**(cND15) Opportunity Cromarty Firth**
Brief description of proposed national development	Opportunity Cromarty Firth represents a series of transformative projects that provide the catalyst for decarbonising the economy at the local and national level. It will establish a global centre of excellence for renewable energy linked to the area's natural resources; deliver transformative education, employment and regeneration benefits for communities and businesses in Highland and across Scotland.
Location of proposed national development (information in a GIS format is welcome if available)	 Opportunity Cromarty Firth is focused on existing ports and clusters of industrial activities including: Port of Cromarty Firth, Port of Nigg, Highland Deephaven and Inverness Harbour. The masterplan above shows the main projects and some of the other related proposals which are envisaged as part of the wider Opportunity Cromarty Firth strategy.
What part or parts of the development requires planning permission or other consent?	Given the multi-faceted nature of Opportunity Cromarty Firth, planning and other consents will be required for certain components. The main projects, such as the hydrogen hub (known as North of Scotland Hydrogen) and the serial manufacturing plant are expected to require planning permission. Planning permission already exists for some of the proposed development. At Port of Nigg for example, permission exists for the expansion of the East Quay (which commenced

	construction in Spring 2021) and for an advanced manufacturing plant. It is likely that a 'phase 2' of the plant will now be required to accommodate greater forecasted demand. The Powerhouse Future Technology Centre is already being hosted from an existing University of the Highlands and Islands' building, although it is likely this will require expansion as it matures. There is a Harbour Revision Order covering the Port of Cromarty Firth which permits certain development rights. Other consents may include marine licences and CARS licence. Opportunity Cromarty Firth intends to bid for 'Greenport' status if this option is opened up by the new Scottish Government. Greenports would provide a package of measures to stimulate further economic activity and investment, including streamlined planning processes. The Consortium is aiming to make significant impacts over and above the contribution to net zero, and act as a catalyst for decarbonisation in Highland and across the country. Opportunity Cromarty Firth will also be looking to maintain high standards for its safeguarding and management the natural environment and biodiversity, in line with local and national policy, utilising the specialist input from the Highland Council and NatureScot.
When would the development be complete or operational?	The key proposals presented as part of Opportunity Cromarty Firth are closely linked to the construction and operation phases of the offshore wind developments associated with ScotWind Leasing. The University of the Highlands and Islands' Alness Campus has already been established as the host of the PowerHouse. Recruitment for a manager post is now complete. The advanced manufacturing plant is expected to reach final investment decision in the next few months. It is envisaged that a large-scale onshore electrolysis facility for the production of green hydrogen will be available in the Firth before 2025. Construction of the ScotWind projects is expected to commence from 2025/26 and then be ongoing for 15-20 years. There will be 25-30 years of operations and maintenance (O&M) for each site, plus repowering and eventual decommissioning. This will attract further investment and manufacturing capability, such as the serial manufacturing project for floating offshore wind substructures (for which there is already a Letter of Intent in place).

Is the development already formally recognised – for example identified in a development plan, has planning permission, in receipt of funding etc.	National Planning Framework 3 (2014) and National Renewable Infrastructure Programme (2014) recognise sites such as Port of Nigg and Highland Deephaven as being nationally important for the both transitioning to a low carbon and creating a successful place. This position is reflected in the Inner Moray Firth Local Development Plan (2015) which identifies the Ross Shire Growth Corridor, which also includes Port of Cromarty Firth, as the 'industrial heart' of the region and promotes the economic potential of the growing renewables sector. The emergence of Opportunity Cromarty Firth as an achievable and attractive proposition meeting decarbonisation targets and transitioning to a green economy has fortuitously aligned with the review of both national and local planning strategy and policy. The Inner Moray Firth Local Development Plan is currently being reviewed and the credibility of Opportunity Cromarty Firth as a means of delivering positive change and unlocking economic and regeneration opportunities across the wider Highland region is a central component of the Plan's emerging strategy. The vision contained within Highland Council's indicative Regional Spatial Strategy includes, amongst other things, Highland being an exemplar carbon action region and transitioning to a green, circular economy which maximises the value of existing core industries, helps attract new and emerging sectors and diversifies jobs and skills – maintaining and enhancing Highland's role as a global centre of excellence for renewable energy innovation and generation. The transformative potential of the Opportunity Cromarty Firth proposition is central to the achieving this vision and the delivery of national outcomes.

Contribution of proposed national development to the national development criteria (maximum 500 words):

Climate Change:
Opportunity Cromarty Firth aims to maximise the benefits from the investment in offshore wind planned for the north and east coasts of Scotland by utilising our assets to establish the wider region as a strategic national hub for the renewable energy industry – from research and development, through to manufacture, construction and operation and maintenance. Future projects include the potential to decarbonise wider regional hydrogen transport applications, the decarbonisation of heat and industrial use in the north of Scotland, and the potential for hydrogen export to other regions and countries, particularly Germany and the Netherlands.

Opportunity Cromarty Firth's private-public-academia sector consortium has made major progress in formulating credible and deliverable plans for reaching this vision.

People:

Based on current trends, demographic forecasting shows Highland is facing major challenges with depopulation, ageing communities and the out migration of young people. This is set against ongoing social issues such as low-income levels against the national average, pockets of severe deprivation, high fuel poverty and a lack of affordable housing.

A fundamental element of Opportunity Cromarty Firth is to maximise the economic benefits for the wider region and to regenerate our communities. It focuses on creating 'new' high-quality well-paid employment in clean energy sectors, many of which will be in locations which are at the forefront of these demographic and social challenges. By strengthening the entire supply chain and integrating it with a leading research and education programme (known as 'The PowerHouse') it will improve the prospects for current and future generations.

Inclusive Growth:
Opportunity Cromarty Firth seeks to take advantage of the 50-year pipeline of £multi-billion offshore wind projects in the Scottish waters and establish a world leading hub for renewable energy. The consortium is proactively engaging with communities, local businesses, education facilities and wider supply chains to deliver sustainable and far reaching growth.

With increasing commercial momentum and relatively short estimated timescales for first phases of development, the proposed National Development has the potential to transform the economy – from helping recover from COVID19 through to the transition to a green, circular economy. These projects will utilise our natural, human and physical assets and reinforce Scotland as a major global player in the renewable and emerging hydrogen markets

To ensure that the Opportunity Cromarty Firth proposition is competitive with other regions and attractive for inward investment the consortium intend to bid for Greenport status, should the Scottish Government introduce the policy. With the prioritisation of innovation, regeneration, fair work and decarbonisation, the Opportunity Cromarty Firth project fits perfectly with the Scottish Government proposed prospectus.

Place:
The Cromarty Firth is an area with significant geographical advantages, including close proximity to a nationally significant 50-year pipeline of £multi-billion offshore wind projects. Evidence shows that the ports of Invergordon, Nigg and Inverness are ideally positioned to provide a strategic approach to deployment of these infrastructure investments. Opportunity Cromarty Firth plans to build on its expertise and proven track record within this industry to construct and service these new offshore wind projects and play a crucial role in the decarbonisation of the economy and reaching Net Zero targets, creating jobs and opportunities for people and businesses across Scotland.

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