

Caithness Vision





Overall Strategy	95
Sustainable Growth	96
The Way Forward	97

Caithness Vision



Map of Caithness

Overall Strategy

At the Charrettes, Caithness was characterised as the *lowlands beyond the highlands*, a beautiful, low-lying and open county with long views, an heroic coastline and a wide range of environmental, heritage and cultural attractions many unknown beyond the county. The local economy is in transition - the decommissioning of Dounreay and decline in other related sectors such as administration, service and hospitality means that the area must develop effective strategies to attract investment and create employment. The new Local Development Plan will play an important role in this, as will the Caithness and North Sutherland Regeneration Partnership.

Charrette participants wanted to see the assets, skills and energies of Caithness brought together to make the most of the opportunities of the area for the future. There was also comment about the need for Caithness and Sutherland to work together. In both towns, it was evident that people believe that the communities should work together to welcome appropriate investment in the best locations. Although people are very attached to their own town, it is clear that Caithness as a whole weighs heavily in both their identity and loyalty.

Beyond the clear and present focus on economy, jobs and training, investment should focus on improving transport links, and enhancing the environmental and tourism offer. By working together the combined offer will be greater than the sum of the parts.

Caithness is a place apart and every bit as resilient and distinct as the island communities to the north. Inverness is a long way away and participants expressed a desire for the Caithness community to explore ways by which both decision-making and action can be brought to more local levels. Caithnesians want to express their pride in their area and culture and their optimism for its future, welcoming new investment whilst cherishing the local heritage.

Through the development of an integrated plan for Caithness the message will go out that Caithness is on the move and open for business - a great place to live, work, visit and invest.



“ We should be looking at Caithness as a whole - not Wick versus Thurso! ”



Caithness Vision

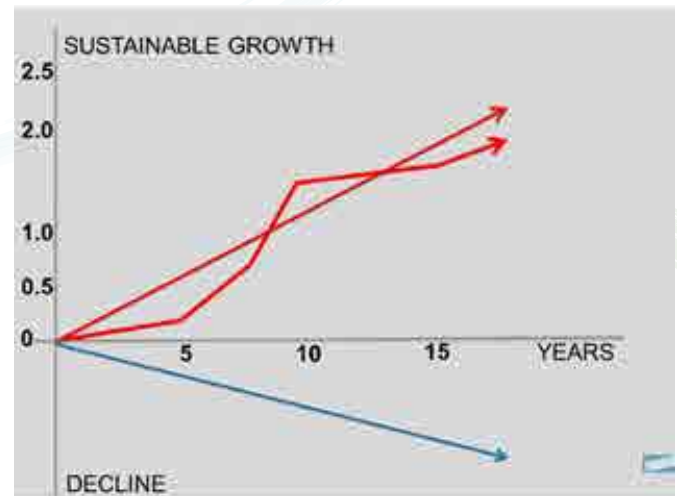
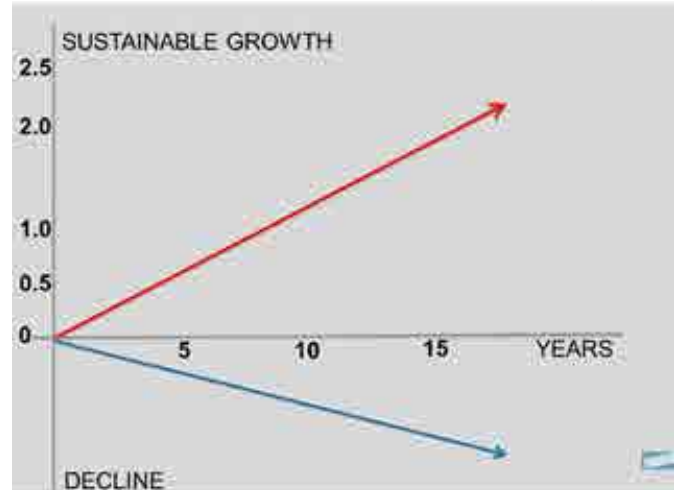
SUSTAINABLE GROWTH

The Local Development Plan for Caithness and Sutherland (CaS Plan) will be prepared over the next few years (refer to section 'Planning' at the beginning of this report for details.)

The inclusive design workshops run during the Charrette encouraged much debate amongst participants over the scale and location for growth and hands on planning sessions around maps generated several land use options.

Through discussing the options and finding consensus amongst the community, preferred and alternative land use strategies were developed. These options will now be fed into the preparation of the CaS Plan Main Issues Report, which will identify where development should go, set out options for consultation and guide the broad distribution of new homes, jobs and services in Caithness. The Local Development Plan will also set out what will be required of future developments

When plotted on a graph showing sustainable growth over time the aim will be to realise the aspirations and projects set out in the Local Development Plan over the coming years so that, although the path may not be a smooth incline, the overall impact is positive.



“ It’s a whole package we’re selling - I can feel it coming but no one’s going to do it for us! ”

Charrette participant in Thurso

The Way Forward

THE WAY FORWARD

By taking part in the Charrettes, people have helped to shape the future of their towns and the surrounding areas. Public reaction has been positive and the leader article in the John O’Groat Journal (25 February 2013) described project options being selected and refined via “a thoroughly democratic process” and went on, “We believe this gives a mandate for the projects to be taken forward within the new development plans for both towns.”

The Highland Council was pleased with the positive response and input from both communities to the events. The outcome of the Charrettes highlight the community’s aspirations for the future of Wick and Thurso and in response THC is considering the establishment of a local team or forum to progress the outcomes of the Charrettes alongside the Local Development Plan.

After the Charrette, Councillor Gail Ross, Caithness Civic Leader, said:

“ I would like to thank everyone who made the events possible but most of all the members of the public that turned up to give us their ideas and their vision. I think the main message was that yes, there is a lot of investment coming in the next few years but we need to make sure as a community that we keep making improvements for future generations to come. We have so much to offer up here, let’s start shouting about it! ”

