



PLANNING &  
DEVELOPMENT SERVICE

# ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

## SUTHERLAND LOCAL PLAN

# BACKGROUND PAPER No. 2

November 2005

## 1. Introduction

1.1 Sutherland's economic structure varies from the Highland average in terms of under-representation in the business, manufacturing, retail and distribution sectors. It relies more heavily on the primary sector particularly in agriculture/crofting, fishing, tourism, public administration, education and health. The natural resource industries also play an important part in the economic, social and cultural life of Sutherland.

1.2 A significant number of jobs were lost in textile manufacturing, telecommunications, transport and distribution and fishing in the last 20 years, which have had a profound impact on communities such as Brora, Lairg and Lochinver. While unemployment is now at its lowest for some time (2.7% in June 2005), so are the number of jobs. This continues to cause many young people leave Sutherland as well as for further education and training. However, a survey of people who left over the past 20 years found that a massive 75% of them would like to return to the county if suitable jobs were available for them and their families. The attraction of new development such as the lithium ion battery recycling plant to Golspie and the Essentiagroup contact centre and community learning/business training centre to Brora provide optimism in this regard. The new Plan will consider whether additional innovative opportunities can be exploited and unlock potential to help create a strong, diverse and sustainable economy where quality of life is matched by quality of opportunity.

## 2. Land for business and industry

2.1 In addition to safeguarding key resources, notably the better land from development, the Local Plan's contribution to supporting economic development is primarily through the allocation and safeguarding of land for business and industrial uses. There is a need to review the existing allocations and consider whether additional land is required. The Local Plan also needs to consider any requirements for land that the more dispersed enterprises might generate. In doing this the Plan is required to comply with both national and Structure Plan policy. It will also take into account the activities of Caithness and Sutherland Enterprise, the Economic Development Forum and the Sutherland Community Planning Partnership. Table 1 (over the page) shows the major areas of land in the larger settlements identified in the adopted Local Plans for business and industry and their take up. Appendix 1 provides more detail on these and on allocations outwith the major settlements.

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**Table 1 Land for business and industry**

<b>Existing allocation</b>	<b>Take up</b>	<b>Remaining allocation</b>
<b>Brora</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Industrial Estate</li> <li>Industrial Estate Extension</li> </ul>	Take up of several units. Highland Council TEC Services depot.	4 small units vacant Land remaining (3.5 hectares)
<b>Golspie</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Station Yard</li> <li>Business Park</li> </ul>	Two houses built on part One plot houses a lithium ion battery recycling plant	Land remaining (0.6 hectares) 8 plots undeveloped
<b>Dornoch</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Business Park</li> </ul>	One of five sites developed with three small units built and occupied.	Four sites from Phase 1 remain undeveloped. Phase 2 is undeveloped.
<b>Lairg</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Old Laundry</li> <li>Old Church Road</li> <li>Old Croft</li> </ul>	The Old Laundry building is vacant; also two nearby occupied business units. Two units occupied  Highland Council Depot	There are various unoccupied buildings and approximately 0.6 hectares of available land. Two units under offer approx. 0.15 ha. of allocated land remaining.
<b>Bonar Bridge</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>South Bonar Industrial Estate</li> </ul>	A food producer, game dealer, coal yard and compound and fire appliance premises all occupy the site, plus vacant unit and derelict filling station.	Development brief agreed for the site, including potential expansion.
<b>Kinlochberrie</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>West of Loch Clash Road</li> <li>Land to the west of the FP Church</li> <li>West of headland Kinlochberrie</li> <li>West of Mackenzie Square (port buffer, expansion lands)</li> </ul>	Five units built, three of them occupied. No take up  Take up includes a helicopter pad, fuel tanks and storage.  Radio station	Approx. 0.5 hectares of land.  The majority of the site is presently used to store boats, creels and nets  Land Remaining
<b>Lochinver</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Culag Industrial Estate/Harbour</li> <li>Glac Mhor Industrial Estate</li> </ul>	Majority of uptake has been businesses related to the fishing industry.	0.3 ha of land available to the South remains undeveloped  The Council is selling unit 2 (1-3)

**Issues for the Local Plan**

- Working with CASE the Local Plan will assess whether there is sufficient land remaining in the main communities to meet likely demand for the next 10 years.
- There is a need to review the effectiveness of existing sites and consider whether they should remain in allocation for business and industrial uses.
- The Plan will also consider whether there is a need to allocate land outwith the major settlements.

### 3. Minerals

3.1 The status of mineral workings in Sutherland is indicated in Table 2 below.

**Table 2: Mineral workings**

Location	Working	Status
<i>Existing</i>		
Inveran No. 2	sand and gravel	Active: permission to February 2042
Hilton of Embo, Dornoch	crushed rock	Active
Ardchronie, Ardgay	crushed rock	Active: 10 years from S50 Agreement
Tirton, Kirkton, Melvich	sand and gravel	Active: permission to March 2009
Loch Awe, Ledmore	Adularie Potash	Active: permission to June 2006
Navidale Farm, Helmsdale	gravel and rock fill	Active: permission for 3 months from start
By A836 road south of Tongue	sand and gravel	Active
Ledmore North	marble	Active: permission to May 2020
Balnapolaig, Dornoch	gravel	Active: permission to February 2006
Uppat, Brora	sand and gravel	Active
Morvich, Rogart	crushed rock	Active: permission to February 2042
Evelix, Dornoch	sand and gravel	Active: permission to May 2008
Achley Farm, Dornoch (amended site)	gravel	Active: permission to December 2012
Cyderhall, Dornoch	sand and gravel	Active: permission to February 2008
Achley Farm, Dornoch	gravel	Active: permission to August 2005
Ben Bhraggie, Golspie	sandstone	Active: permission to October 2010
<i>Proposed</i>		
Balvraid, Dornoch	block sandstone	proposed
Kirkton Farm, Melvich	sand and gravel	proposed
Ferry Road, Golspie	pebbles and cobbles	proposed
Little Assynt, Lochinver	crushed rock	proposed
Balnapolaig, Dornoch	sand and gravel	proposed

3.2 There are strategic deposits of sand and gravel along the Naver and Halladale Rivers. The Strath Halladale sand and gravel deposits are safeguarded in the adopted Tongue and Farr Local Plan. The main interest in developing these comes from Caithness, where a shortage for building purposes exists, particularly in relation to decommissioning work at Dounreay. Elsewhere deposits are largely confined to the south east Sutherland coastal area, with notable current activity around Dornoch and an element of demand from Easter Ross. Working recently ceased at Balblair west of Bonar Bridge.

3.3 The potential for detailed investigation within the provisions of National Planning Policy Guideline 4 of a large coastal quarry based upon the gneiss/pegmatite deposit west of Loch Eriboll and the limestone deposit south of the Durness candidate Special Area of Conservation is indicated in the Approved Structure Plan. However, this does not constitute a presumption in favour of development. Rigorous evaluation against Structure Plan Policy M5 and other relevant policies is required, together with full geological evaluation of the rock character, including borehole drilling, the need to address adverse conclusions of the consultant's report (Ove Arup - 1994) and careful consideration to the reasons for refusal of the application at Lingerbay. Emerging national policy guidance on the potential for large coastal quarries is expected to place more emphasis on local opinion.

3.4 Specific requirements set out in the Structure Plan at paragraph 2.11.18 include, for the gneiss/pegmatite area, the basing of any proposal on a "glory hole" method of working with an underground tunnel towards the shore facility. However, a body of opinion now favours a "cavern" method of working, contained completely underground and with limited impact. Any proposals should be a catalyst for the wider economic development of the whole area in a comprehensive integrated approach including, for example, potential for smaller scale specialist workings of the

pegmatite, limestone and quartzite deposits linked to renewable energy production, aquaculture, tourism, recreation, land management, social and environmental enhancement. The current Aggregates Levy and market factors continue to suggest this potential is more long term. Such potential might also be considered in the context of a community buy out of the Durness Estate.

#### **Issues for the Local Plan**

- The Local Plan will consider whether any site specific provision should be made for mineral developments.
- Should the Local Plan continue to be safeguard strategic sand and gravel reserves at Strath Halladale?
- The Council would expect any future proposals for large coastal quarrying to link mineral extraction with the positive economic, social and environmental wellbeing of the area. The Council would consider any such application against national planning policy and general minerals and other policies of the Structure Plan.

## **4. Renewable Energy**

4.1 The Scottish Executive has set a target that Scotland should aspire to generate 40% of its electricity from renewable sources by 2020<sup>1</sup>. Meeting this depends on Scotland's ability to exploit new technologies, to harness energy from: offshore wind, biomass, and wave and tidal power; in addition to the traditional hydro schemes and onshore wind farms. The impetus to develop renewable energy comes from international commitments to reduce greenhouse gas. However, the benefits of renewable energy also go beyond the ecological arguments. Development of this industry can also help bolster the economy of rural areas, and reduce fuel poverty. UK government research has proved the job creation benefit that comes from renewable energy development. It calculates that for every mega watt (MW) installed ten jobs are sustained.<sup>2</sup> The Council also has a policy which can seek community benefit to offset other impacts and improve local amenities.

4.2 Sutherland has a significant history of harnessing renewable energy. At a small scale: there has been development of individual domestic wind turbines; and in Loch Poll, the Assynt Crofters Trust have developed a 0.24 MW hydro scheme. Also there are further small developments in the pipeline. A scoping opinion has been produced for: the community owned estate in Melness for a 4 turbine, 3 MW development; and for two possible hydro schemes near Kylesku: at the Maldie burn, a 2 MW capacity scheme; and at Gleann Dhubh, a 3 MW capacity scheme. At present applications are being prepared for both the hydro schemes. There is ample potential for further development at this scale and the Local Plan will examine how it can encourage small scale renewable development and whether any specific provisions are required.

4.3 The most notable current large scale renewable energy development in Sutherland is the Shin hydro electric scheme. A consent for 17 wind turbines and associated infrastructure at Beinn Tharsuinn is currently being implemented. There also many onshore wind farm proposals under consideration, including: a 33 turbine development at Cambusmore, north of Loch Buidhe; a 35 turbine development at Gordonbush, north west of Brora; and a 19 turbine development Kilbaur, Strath Brora. Additionally there are scoping opinions for eleven onshore wind farms in Sutherland, notably around Lairg, Melvich and Melness. A number of these are expected to be the subject of planning applications. Furthermore a pilot scheme for a two 5 MW offshore wind turbines off the Caithness coast at Latheron planned by Talisman for the Beatrice field may have implications for Sutherland if this leads to a possible development of 200 turbines.

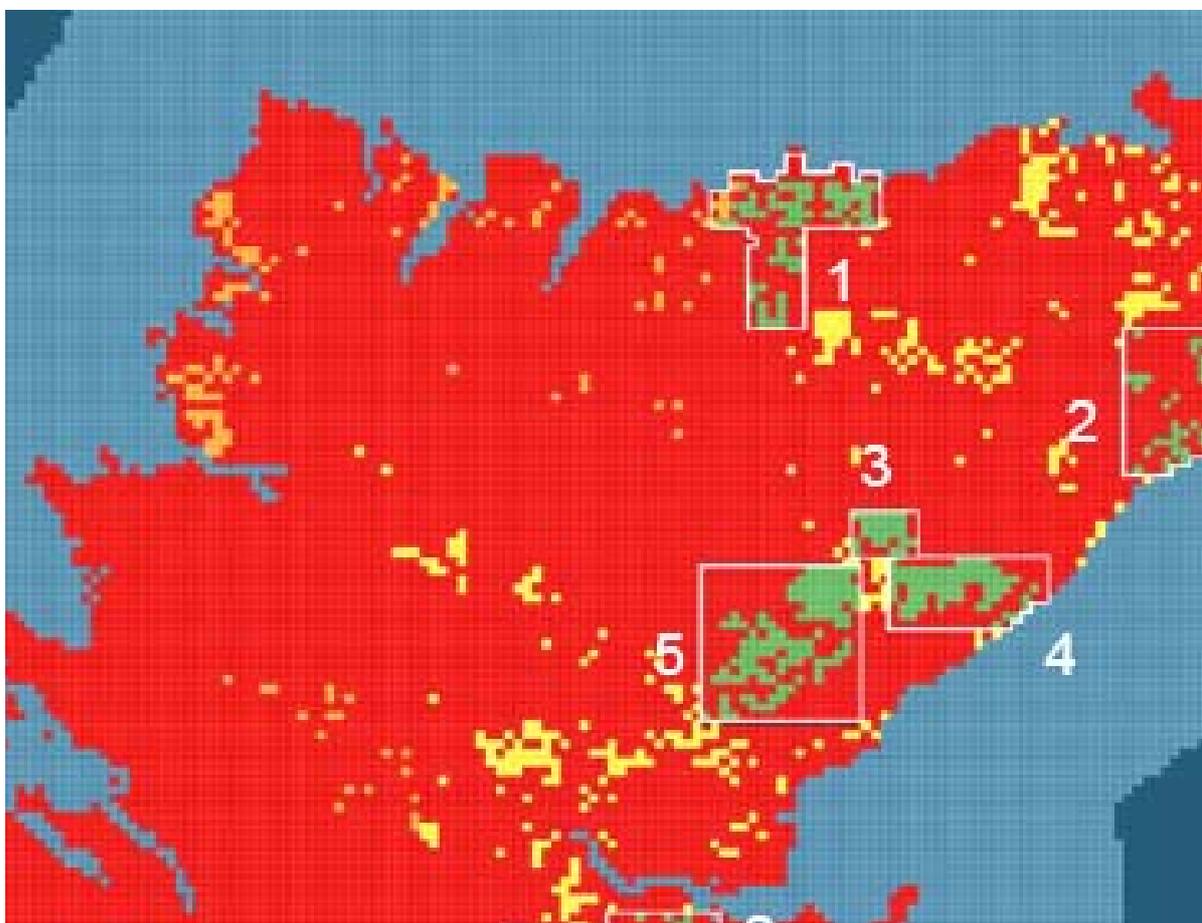
4.4 Reviewing renewable energy planning guidance is not a priority for the Scottish Executive so the Highland Council decided to engage consultants produce its own overarching strategy and guidelines. The Draft Highland Renewable Energy Strategy and Planning Guidelines, together with the supporting; Renewable Energy Resource Assessment, and Strategic Environmental Assessment

<sup>1</sup> Securing a Renewable Future: Scotland's Renewable Energy, The Scottish Executive, 2003

<sup>2</sup> Renewable Supply Chain Gap Analysis, Dept of Trade and Industry, 2004

are currently available for public consultation and comments until 16 December 2005. It is hoped that this will be adopted as supplementary guidance to the existing Structure Plan policy early in the New Year providing a development framework to allow the Highlands to take advantage of the benefits from renewable energy without undue detrimental effects.

**Figure 1: Prospective development zones for major and national onshore wind farms designed for meeting regional/national energy requirements**

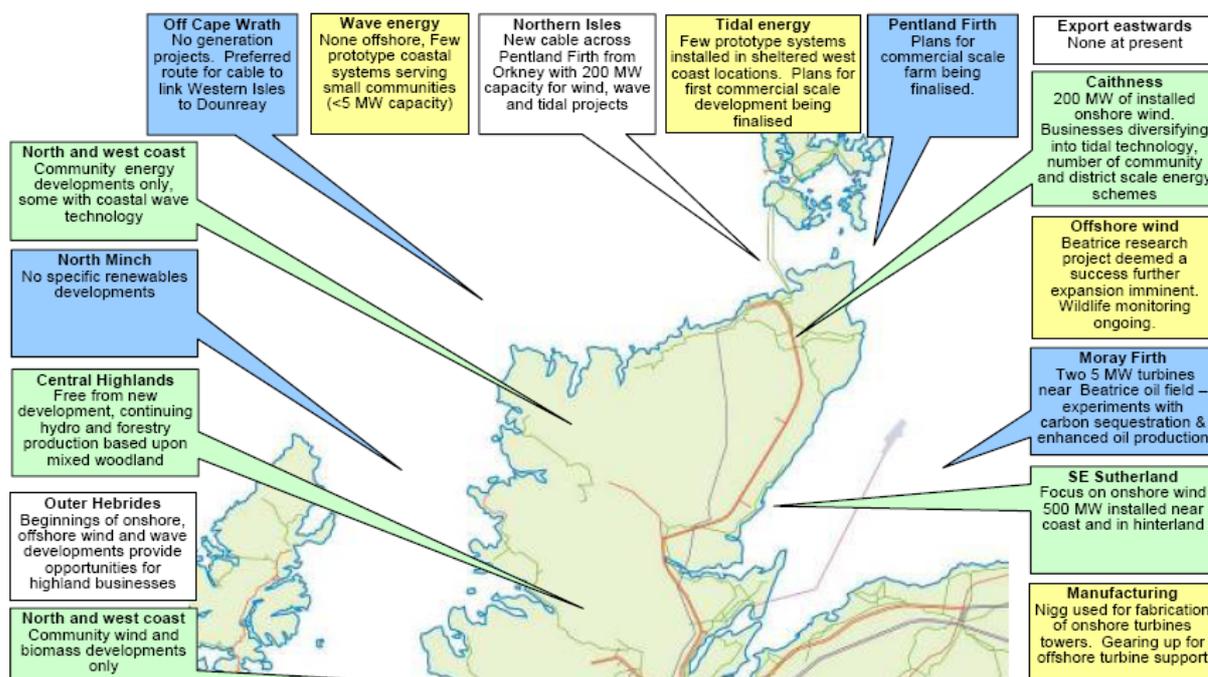


<b>KEY</b>	
<span style="color: green;">■</span>	<b>Preferred development areas</b>
<span style="color: yellow;">■</span>	<b>Primary possible development areas</b>
<span style="color: orange;">■</span>	<b>Secondary possible development areas</b>
<span style="color: red;">■</span>	<b>Areas with presumption against development</b>

4.5 The Draft Strategy identifies significant potential for onshore wind developments particularly in South and East Sutherland, near to the coast and in hinterland areas: specifically Kinbrace, Helmsdale and Strath Brora; and on the North coast of Sutherland, at Strathy Forest. Offshore wind developments are perceived to have longer term prospects due to cost and technology constraints. The preferred areas identified include off the coast at Melvich where development could potentially return around 680 MW. The Draft Strategy also identifies potential for small scale community developments in the north and west including the use of coastal wave technology. However, as with off shore wind, the resource assessment model indicates that at a commercial level offshore wave power generation is unlikely to be productive in the short term due to technology and infrastructure constraints. In particular, the proximity to the higher voltage transmission grid network and the need to upgrade this network are major constraints. The significant potential of bio-mass energy in the Highlands is highlighted in relation to commercial forestry plantation covering 13% of land<sup>3</sup> and the prospect that on agricultural land there would be no amenity loss if bio crops were planted.

<sup>3</sup> Highland Forest and Woodland Strategy

**Figure 2: Potential Renewables vision for 2010 – short term development potential**



4.6 In terms of local impact and safeguards, the Council seeks 50% ‘local content’ in approved schemes in future, including employment in construction, use of local industrial land for manufacturing and community benefit through ownership and equity participation. Cumulative visual intrusion is also a major concern which requires careful management to avoid serious damage to the interests of residents, other countryside users, and tourism and media industries.

#### Issues for the Local Plan

- In line with emerging guidance, the Local Plan will support renewable energy initiatives whilst safeguarding important natural and cultural heritage resources.
- Consideration needs to be given as to how to reflect the emerging guidance in the Draft Local Plan. Views are sought on how particular encouragement might be given to small scale schemes.
- The Local Plan should aid the securing of local benefits from proposed development, including identification of suitable industrial land for related manufacturing.

## 5. Agriculture and Crofting

5.1 Crofting and livestock farming predominate in the agricultural sector in Sutherland, with a nationally important venue for livestock sales at Lairg and the locally important abattoir sited in Dornoch. The greatest percentage of the land area of Sutherland comprises large estates where a combination of agriculture, crofting, game rearing/shooting, deer stalking and river and loch fishing are still significant in terms of local employment.

5.2 There are over 2,000 crofts in Sutherland, located mostly in the west and north and covering 1,048km<sup>2</sup>, over one sixth of the total land area. The greater part of this is hill ground used as common grazings, but there is a narrow fringe of more fertile ground along the coast, which was more widely cultivated in the past. Farmland is virtually confined to the south east and some of the more fertile straths throughout the county. Opportunities for future action include a project to enhance the links between agriculture and biodiversity through tourism and produce marketing; the provision of business advice tailored to the needs of crofters and farmers; the enhancement and increased entry into the Rural Stewardship Scheme; encouraging more local people to rear cattle through the use of demonstration sites; and the provision of training courses on the management of boundary features. There is scope to encourage small farmers and crofters to continue to work the land by strengthening

their businesses through enhanced marketing of crofting produce, diversification and adequate payments for agri-environment works. These measures could help make farms or crofts more viable, thus strengthening the remainder of the agricultural enterprise.

5.3 In many areas crofters are also facing pressure to release land for housing to meet increasing demands and need for affordable housing. Careful management of this pressure and minimising the loss or avoiding development the better in-bye land are key issues for the Local Plan. This must be balanced with the maintenance of settlement pattern and landscape impact. Training in land management skills, particularly for young crofters will help to foster the increasing attractiveness of this activity and way of life for new croft entrants. The industry is considering the scope for development of new crofting settlements with areas such as Strath Naver, Ledmore and South Assynt suggested for further investigation, including the potential for forest crofts.

#### **Issues for the Local Plan**

- In line with national guidance and Structure Plan policies the Local Plan will encourage agricultural diversification.
- The Local Plan will seek the views of agriculture, crofting and land owning interests over the safeguarding of the better agricultural and croft land from development.
- Views are sought on whether the Local Plan should consider the potential for new crofting settlements and where these might be located.

## **6. Forestry and Woodlands**

6.1 Forests cover 13% of the land area making it a significant resource for the region.<sup>4</sup> They are an important resource in terms of their significance as a natural habitat, their amenity and recreational importance for both local people and tourists, and their economic value. Forestry is an important sector of the Highlands economy, coming only after tourism and agriculture, in terms of income generation and employment.<sup>5</sup> In Sutherland there are over 74,200 hectares of forest of which the ancient woodland inventory identifies approximately 11,700 hectares.<sup>6</sup> Most of Sutherland's forests are coniferous and of a relatively recent heritage, but there are some deciduous woodlands which occur mainly on the west coast and in the sheltered straths, and also some ancient pine forests. The significance of this resource in terms of biodiversity and amenity value vastly outweighs its coverage.

6.2 The extraction of timber from forests in southern Sutherland is relatively unconstrained and there is considerable scope for additional planting and redesign in replanting. In the North the threat of forestation of the blanket bog of the Flow Country is no longer an issue, and through various initiatives including the LIFE project some of the inappropriate planting has been felled. There is the possibility that the smaller areas of commercial woodland which are presently regarded as uneconomic for extraction could be used as building material for small scale housing and business developments in the future.

6.3 Various community woodland schemes have emerged, notably at Borgie and Naver forests in the north and for the Culag woodland by Lochinver. The Culag Community Woodland Trust has a 50 year lease from Assynt Estate and successfully secured additional funds for management. This has enabled local people to develop skills in timber harvesting and footpath construction, and has enhanced the scenic value, management and public access. Scope may exist for similar approaches elsewhere in the county to help derive recreational and economic benefit for communities.

6.4 At a national level the Scottish Forestry Strategy provides a framework for taking forestry forward. This guides the Regional Indicative Forestry Strategies (IFS), which interpret and form local priorities based on the character and geography of the area. The Highland Forest and Woodland

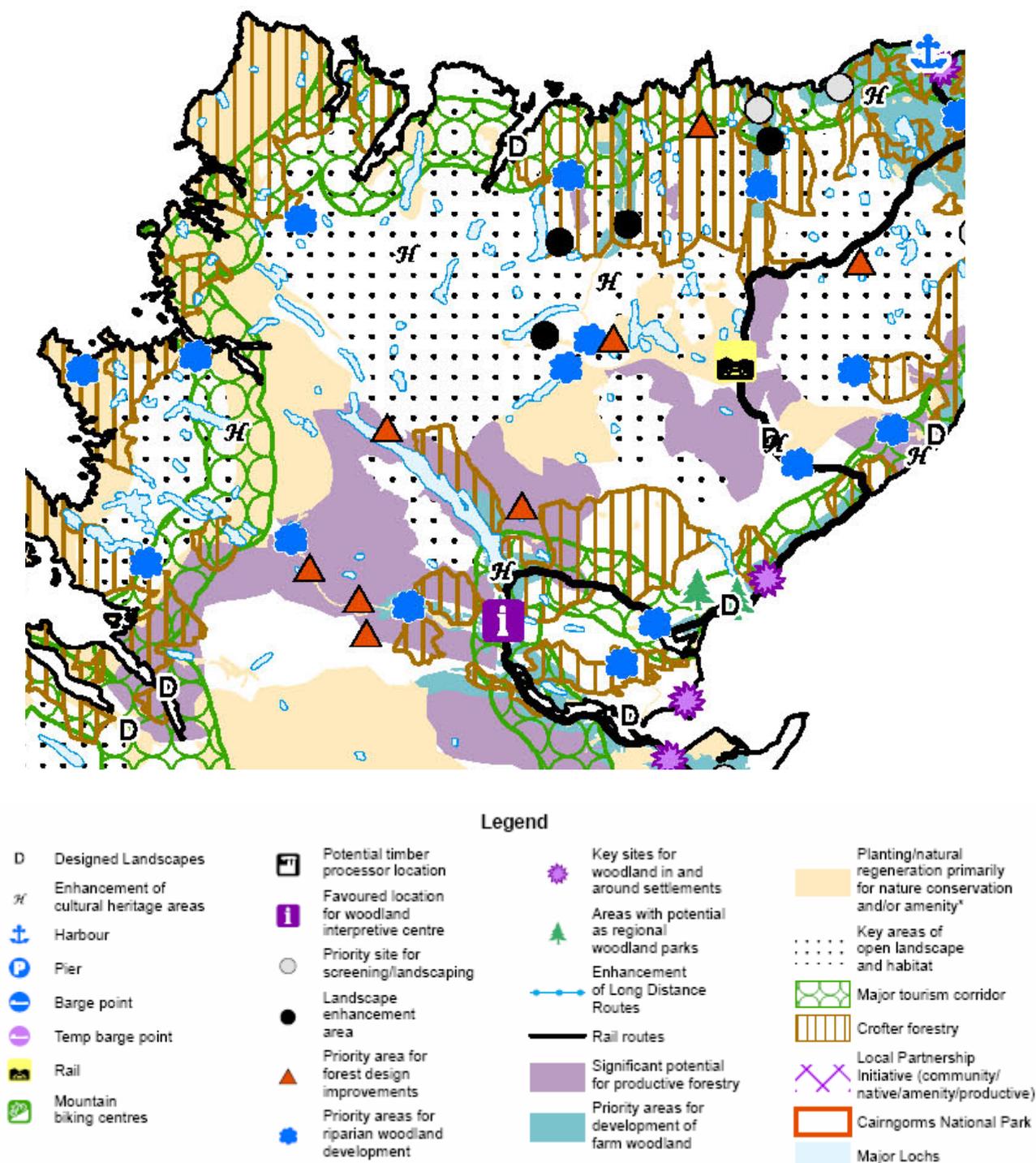
<sup>4</sup> The Highland Forest and Woodland Strategy

<sup>5</sup> The Highland Structure Plan

<sup>6</sup> The Sutherland Biodiversity Action Plan, 2003

Strategy (HFWS) is informed by the present national strategy which is currently under review. The HFWS was produced on a partnership basis, has endeavoured to build synergy with other interests, and was approved by the Council in September 2005.

**Figure 3: Highland Forest and Woodland Strategy - Key Themes and Priorities for Implementation**



6.5 The main function of the strategy is to guide the development and management of forests. It is important to expand the coverage of both productive forestry and native woodland in appropriate locations. For potential development it identifies: a large proportion of central Sutherland and some land around Kinbrace as having significant potential for productive forestry; land in South and East Sutherland in mainly inland areas for crofter forestry; the majority of the west coast as suitable for conservation or amenity planting; various sites throughout Sutherland for riparian woodland

development; and Brora and Dornoch as key areas for woodland in and around settlements. It also identifies priority areas for improvement or enhancement including: several areas of forestry in central Sutherland for forest design improvements; and Beinn Strumanadh, Ben Hope and Lairg for enhancement of cultural heritage. It also looks to safeguard where necessary. An example of this being the large area of Northern Sutherland identified as of limited potential for sensitive woodland development with preference to the retention of open space.

6.6 The Local Plan it will seek to reflect opportunities identified in the HFWS and make any appropriate provisions. The development of woodland could enable the provision of: interpretative facilities, affordable housing, or rural businesses whether led by communities, estates or the Forestry Commission. There potential for forest crofts is already under consideration by various interests, notably by the Forestry Commission. This would provide housing, give locals a chance to manage forests and offer potential for rural business in terms of fencers, furniture makers and biomass energy schemes.

#### **Issues for the Local Plan**

- The Council will consider how the Highland Forest and Woodland Strategy should be reflected in the Local Plan.
- The Local Plan has a duty to safeguard and promote the enhancement of woodland areas important for their amenity value and biodiversity.
- The Local Plan will consider the scope for provision of recreation and interpretation facilities in forests and woodland areas.
- Are there specific areas that the Local Plan should identify for business development relating to timber production and local wood processing?
- Which areas should be considered for the establishment of forest crofts?

## **7. Aquaculture and fishing**

7.1 The aquaculture and fishing sector takes in a wide range of businesses from game fishing which is important for tourism in the area, to inshore fishing, deep sea fishing, fish farming and ancillary industries. Despite job losses in the past this sector provides relatively stable employment locally in recent years, and is particularly vital to the west coast. However, new legislation being phased in for the registration of buyers and sellers may affect the amount of fish and shellfish being landed with a knock-on effect on employment.

7.2 Local based boats fish mainly in inshore waters and operate from a range of harbours and slipways around the Sutherland coast. Boats engaged in deep water fishing landing white fish at Kinlochbervie and Lochinver are largely based outwith Sutherland - the majority of which French and Spanish. However, the industry still supports local employment through support activities such as transportation and primary processing.

7.3 The aquaculture industry is well established in Sutherland, principally through shellfish farms but also by way of fin fish farms. Aquaculture framework plans have been produced for Loch Inchard, and Loch Eriboll, and one will be prepared soon for the wider area from Kylesku to Eddrachillis Bay. These help guide development to appropriate areas and minimise any conflicts of interest. Planning controls exist for onshore fish farm development and for fresh water lochs, while the Crown Estates Commission (CEC) currently consults with the planning authorities on marine fish farms. Any proposals are assessed against the policy contained in the aquaculture framework plans and will need to comply with the Structure Plan Policy G2, Design for Sustainability. At the moment seabed leases are still issued by the CEC. However, this function is due to be passed to local authorities once legislation is in place.

7.4 Loch Laxford and the Dornoch Firth are both covered by natural heritage designations as a marine Special Area of Conservation (SAC). The Dornoch Firth is also an internationally designated wetland RAMSAR site and contains a mussel fishery providing a source of funding for the local Common Good. Loch Laxford has substantial aquaculture development with two large operators: one

for shellfish and one for fin fish. Any aquaculture development in these areas needs to be particularly sensitive to the environment. There are also fresh water aquaculture developments which occur in: Lochs Shin and Migdale and in the Lochs around Tarbet.

#### **Issues for the Local Plan**

- The Local Plan will investigate links with Aquaculture Framework Plans to determine potential opportunities and constraints for fish farm development, including on-shore facilities.

## **8. Harbours and jetties**

8.1 In the buoyant deep water fishing period of the 1980s considerable investment was made by the Highland Regional Council, supported by European Commission funding, to develop Kinlochbervie and Lochinver harbours, related facilities and infrastructure. This included new/extended fish markets, gear and net stores, quays and the servicing of land, as well as in major road improvements to the south and east to enhance access to more distant markets. Considerable areas of back up land for related business and industrial development are identified in the existing North West Sutherland Local Plan, and some remain undeveloped due to the failure of downstream processing industries to materialise. These land allocations will be reviewed in light of changed circumstances with the fishing industry and the prospects for other marine activities such as leisure sailing and inshore fisheries development.

8.2 Sutherland has a range of smaller harbours, piers and jetties maintained by the Council. Most of these support inshore fishing and fish farm activities. Existing Local Plan provisions safeguard and encourage improvement together with the provision of back up land for related development at Culkein jetty (Drumbeg), the Kylesku fishery jetty, Brora harbour, Golspie pier, Portskerra and Talmine (Melness). At south Meikle Ferry on the Dornoch Firth, the slipway and associated land support the local mussel fishery. However, access limitations may force relocation to the north side of the Firth.

8.3 The PESCOS scheme for upgrading of small harbours has proven beneficial in facilitating diversification away from fishing and is set to be extended for 2006/07. HHelmsdale has already benefited in this respect and is now attracting a number of visiting yachts with local spin offs.

#### **Issues for the Local Plan**

- The Local Plan will review the existing allocations of land close to Kinlochbervie and Lochinver harbours presently zoned for harbour related use.
- It will also identify any small harbours, piers and jetties that may be priorities for improvement and diversification of activity.

## **9. Tourism**

9.1 Tourism is an important industry for the Highlands; the Hotel and Catering sector accounts for 16% of all employment compared to 8% nationally. This sector provides the majority of the tourism industry's employment and is a good indicator of its relative health. It is also worth mentioning that in the Highlands the tourism sector is split evenly between full time and part time jobs; this is in contrast to the situation at a national level where part time jobs are predominant.

9.2 Tourism is the most significant employment sector for Sutherland despite its seasonal nature. Hotels, bed and breakfasts, caravan parks, camp sites and self catering accommodate visitors, while there is also indirect employment underpinned by tourist expenditure in shops, restaurants, craft works, garages etc. The standard of service is higher than ever before, with a range of new and upgraded accommodation, ranging from low cost hostels to the exclusive Carnegie Club at Skibo. Good marketing, quality new accommodation and improved standards of service have aided the

substantial growth in golf related tourism. Continued growth will be complemented by courses in golf course management and tourist services now offered at the North Highland College in Dornoch, established as part of the UHI Millennium Institute.

9.3 The main features which underpin tourism in Sutherland are its natural and historic heritage, its sense of space and its wild scenic beauty. This environment offers ample opportunities for outdoor activities such as fishing, deer stalking and walking. The beaches, rated by many as the best in Britain, some of the very finest mountainous scenery and places of cultural and historic interest are internationally renowned. These together with championship standard golf courses, a growing number of annual activity events and fine cuisine using local produce attract many visitors. There may be scope for other local enterprises to help visitors to enjoy the area such as boat cruises and guided walks. The Geopark status for the North West Highlands aims to increase tourism and will aid the development of interpretation and trails related to the geology of Sutherland.

9.4 A key issue is access to the countryside which has implications for the footpath network and for associated car parking. Potential exists for additional laying out of trails in woodland, providing / improving piers or jetties to cater for visiting yachts, parking / picnic area provision at popular stopping points and access points for walks. The Council is to undertake a parallel consultation exercise in preparation of a Core Path Plan within the context of new access legislation (Land Reform Act). This will provide the basic framework of routes sufficient for the purpose of giving the public reasonable access throughout their area. Communities, land managers and access takers are all being encouraged to have their say for suggesting suitable routes, especially those that surround settlements and tourist features, and for general comments about the access provision in their local area.

9.5 The uptake of land allocated for tourism or visitor facilities from the adopted Local Plans is given in Appendix 2. The new Local Plan needs to make adequate provision, reflecting the dispersed nature of Sutherland.

#### **Issues for the Local Plan**

- The Local Plan will assess whether there is a need to allocate land for further tourist facilities.

## **10. MOD land**

10.1 Cape Wrath is the most north westerly point on the British mainland and the MOD base situated there provides important civilian employment. The range is active 140 days in the year closing to accommodate: the tourist season, the lambing and during bird breeding. It has been the focus for military activity since 1993, when it was established as a naval gunnery practice. It then progressed to fleet training, later accommodated the RAF and in the last couple of years has also been used by the army. This has enabled joint warfare training and co-ordinated firings involving more than one of the services.

10.2 The MOD is currently looking to acquire a further 50 acres of land owned by the Northern Lighthouse Board in order to allow further training to the west. A public meeting was held by the MOD to inform the public of their intention to purchase the land. It is envisaged that there would be four civilian posts created if the proposal is brought forward. The proposals are at a very early stage and there are a number of constraints not least the natural heritage designations and listed buildings on the land. It will therefore be important to liaise with the MOD and the relevant consulting bodies on this to consider the land use implications and make any appropriate provisions within the Local Plan.

#### **Issues for the Local Plan**

- The Local Plan will consider the land use implications of the MOD's proposals and after consultation will make any appropriate provisions within the Local Plan.

### APPENDIX 1: Uptake of Business and industrial land allocated in existing Local Plans

Location	Policy reference	Comments
<b>Brora</b>		
Brora Industrial Estate	S4(8)	Ice cream factory, the Essentia Group, Auction services, and the Highland Council's TEC Services all have premises. 4 small vacant units and a small undeveloped area.
Brora Industrial Estate Extension	S4(8)	Highland Council TEC Services have a depot at the east end of the extension. Approx. 3.5 hectares remaining.
Old School	S3(7)	Still vacant
<b>Golspie</b>		
Old Station	S4(6)	Two houses built. Land remaining (0.6 hectares)
Site at High School	S4(8)	Developed as a horticultural/recycling unit.
Golspie Business Park	S6 (21)	Allocated and serviced HIE/CASE business park on 2.6 hectare expansion site South of the A9. One plot developed providing premises for a lithium ion battery recycling plant and another plot has been purchased. 7 remaining plots available range from 0.07 to 0.23 hectares and could be combined. North of the A9, additional land allocated for business and light industrial use north of the former Technical Annex. This category B Listed building identified as suitable for a variety of uses including business or office use. Planning application lodged for refurbishment to form Council office accommodation (under consideration).
<b>Bonar Bridge</b> South Bonar Industrial Estate	S4(5) & Approved Development Brief	A game dealer, food producer, coal yard and compound and fire appliance premises all occupy the site. There is also a vacant unit and a derelict former filling station. Development brief prepared for the site with scope for expansion.
<b>Dornoch</b> Dornoch Business Park	S3(4)	Phase 1 serviced/laid out for five sites of a standard size of 2000 square feet. Three units built on one of these and occupied by retail businesses. Four remaining undeveloped serviced sites. Phase 2 to the south consists of 1.25 ha of land not yet serviced.
<b>Ardgay</b> Station Yard	S4(6)	The whole allocation site is presently being used for material storage.
<b>Helmsdale</b>		
North of the existing industrial estate	S4(7)	Coastguard and Fire Service built on the western side of the allocation leaving 0.65 ha still undeveloped.
Station yard	S4(8a)	No take up
Depot north of Primary School	S4(8b)	No take up
The former fish processing factory	S4(8c)	Converted to form residential/ research library.
The former lobster ponds	S4(8d)	Redeveloped to form a house.
<b>Rogart</b> Pittentrail	62	A hostel north of the road occupies the old station building and converted train carriages. South of the road there are two buildings, one being used as a house and the other is presently derelict.

<b><i>Lairg</i></b>		
Old Laundry	IN 44	Old Laundry building in residential use. Two other occupied units, a blacksmith and a Vehicle Operator Service Agency depot. Various unoccupied buildings and approximately 0.6 hectares of available land.
Off Old Church Road	IN 44	CASE built four units. ILM (Highland) Ltd and Blythswood Care occupy two of the units and the other two are presently under offer.
Ord Croft	IN 44	Highland Council depot
<b><i>Scourie</i></b>		
	IN 4.10	Site occupied by garage, no remaining land.
Former Post Office	IN 4.11	Fish and chip van sited on the edge of A894. A house and local medical practice.
<b><i>Kinlochbervie</i></b>		
West of Loch Clash road	IN 5.22a	Five units built, three of which are occupied.
East of Loch Clash road	IN 5.22b	E +M engineering premises.
Land to the west of Free Presbyterian church	IN 5.22c	Land waterlogged in places and no take up.
West Headland	IN 5.27c	A helicopter pad at the north end and elsewhere: a small storage premises for North Minch Shellfish, fuel tanks, glass recycling facilities, creel and net storage.
West of Mackenzie Square (port buffer, expansion lands)	IN 5.30	A radio station occupies part of the site.
<b><i>Lochinver</i></b>		
Culag Industrial Estate	IN 3.22d	Mix of residential and office units at Culag Square, plus storage facilities for a fork lift truck and fuel.
Culag Industrial Estate	IN 3.25	Storage facilities at north end and Lochinver Fish Selling Co premises. 0.3 ha of land to the South is managed by Culag Community Woodland Trust with interpretation and a small sawmill.
Glac Mhor Industrial Estate	IN 3.25	Fire Station occupies large area. Unit 2 (1-3) is surplus to the Highland Council's requirements and is about to be sold. Unit 3 (1)+(2) are available to let and unit (3) is taken by Norkot.
Brackloch Roads depot	TR3.26	Roads Depot remains.
<b><i>Tongue</i></b>		
Outbuildings at the former manse	2.7(a)	The Kyle day centre is located here
Outbuildings adjoining the Tongue Hotel	2.7(b)	The store room of the Tongue Hotel has been converted into staff accommodation
Outbuildings at Burr's Stores	2.8	Burr's stores has its petrol station reinstated and Tongue garage has premises on the allocated land. Former bakery converted for use as an artist's workshop space.
<b><i>Melvich</i></b>	4.10	Unmanned coast guard station and Sutherland Partnership training/ recreation centre.
<b><i>Melness</i></b> Land at roads depot	5.3	No take up
<b><i>Armadale</i></b> 0.1 hectares of land	8.2	Village hall
<b><i>Skerray</i></b> Land adjoining the fank to the north of Borgie	9.2	No take up

## Appendix 2: Uptake of land allocated for tourism in existing Local Plans

Tourism and leisure	Policy ref.	Comments
<i>Bonar Bridge</i> : Extension of chalet park	S5(6)	Application approved for housing on this site
<i>Brora</i> : Former Radio station (identified as suitable for a variety of uses including tourism and craft workshops)	S5(11)	Outline planning application under consideration for 25 houses. This covers the majority of the allocated site.
<b><i>Golspie</i></b> Former station Macleod House Hostel  Former Drill Hall	S5(11) S5(12) S5(15)	Converted to house Converted to residential & business use No take up
<i>Dornoch</i> : Country Club and Golf Driving Range	S5(5)	No take up
<i>Embo</i> : Allocation for heritage/interpretive centre incorporating craft/light industrial workshops	S5(4)	No take up
<b><i>Rosehall</i></b> Rosehall/Altass area (small chalet development)	S5(4)	No take up
<b><i>Helmsdale</i></b> Land at West Helmsdale for caravan/camp site Vacant railway station building Land at Shore Street	S5(11) S5(12) S5(9 & 10)	No take up No take up No take up
<i>Kylesku</i> : Land adjacent to the A894	3.29	No take up
<i>Tongue</i> : Adjacent to former Manse	2.9	No take up
<b><i>Bettyhill</i></b> Existing caravan site Expansion of Farr Bay Inn	3.6(a) 3.6(b)	Extended down the slope Two semi detached properties built
<b><i>Melvich and Portskerra</i></b> Small chalet schemes: Expansion of existing site at Melvich  Adjoining Melvich Hotel: Conversion of cottages for tourist accommodation	4.6(a) 4.6(b) 4.7	Halladale Inn extended to provide restaurant Two houses built at the North end of site and planning permission for another.
<b><i>Melness</i></b> Rear of Craggan Hotel Within the existing caravan park or land adjacent to west or north	5.4(a) 5.4(b)	No take up No take up
<i>Altnaharra</i> : Land adjoining the hotel	6.2	No further expansion, allocated land belongs to Altnaharra Estate
<i>Strathy</i> : Land adjacent to Strathy Inn	7.2	No take up
<i>Lochinver</i> : Hill ground east of village	3.27	Inver Lodge Hotel completed.
<b><i>Kinlochbervie</i></b> Loch Innis and along Northern flank of Loch Inchard (self catering accommodation)	5.35	No take up.
<b><i>Balnakeil – Durness</i></b> : Vacant land and buildings further craft / light industries associated with established enterprises	6.14	A restaurant and bookshop in one of the units and further car parking area created by removing one unit. Vacant units still remain.
<b><i>Durness</i></b> : Area between camping site and tourist information centre	6.16	A house and craft shop built between the Sango Sands Hotel and the car park