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Date: 22<sup>th</sup> June 2007

Dear Madam

## **Statutory Guidance on Planning and Sustainable Development – Scottish Executive Consultation**

Shetland Islands Council welcomes this consultation on the guidance relating to planning and sustainable development. In response to the consultation we make the following observation.

It seems apparent that what is being advocated is a logical sequence to the development of new planning policy and that Strategic Environmental Assessments and public participation are key elements in this approach.

Shetland Islands Council is concerned that the principles advocated in the consultation paper are more applicable to Local Authorities that have large urban centers (cities and towns) and that these principles will be difficult to achieve in their truest form in rural areas where the population is located in scattered settlement pattern where there are no towns. We look forward to the development of guidance that is more appropriate to rural areas. It is a concern to the council that guidance is developed that is flexible and fully applicable to the rural authorities of Scotland. In rural island communities development has to take place that will have an environmental impact and it is investment in rural areas that is required to be sustainable.

However, Shetland Islands Council welcomes the approach taken in the legislation and the guidance as it confirms the existing commitment that the Council has to sustainable development. This commitment is confirmed by our Energy policy, climate change declaration, priorities and targets, waste strategy as established by the Council. The new emphasis on design is welcomed by the Council as it contributes to the Quality of Life of the area and contributes to the sense of place and addresses social inclusion.

What is missing is a sufficient definition of sustainability and we suggest that the Scottish executive attempt to define it. We suggest that you describe sustainability as the "three

legged stool" i.e. community, economic progress and environment. For sustainability to work properly all three legs need to be in place. As it stands there is an over emphasis on economic development at the expense of the other two legs – at a later time the emphasis may shift in an attempt to redress this imbalance and as such perpetuate the cycle. It is recommended that there should never be an over emphasis on one element – all three should be treated equally.

If you need further assistance please contact the Head of Planning on the above telephone number.

Yours sincerely



PP Head of Planning