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From:
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To: NPF Team
Subject: Response to NPF2 from Croy Community Council
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Response to consultative draft NPF2 from Croy and Culloden Moor Community Council

Consultation

Members of Croy and Culloden Moor Community Council attended the NPF2 meeting in Inverness at which Jim MacKinnon Chief Planner was the main speaker.

He emphasised the importance of the NPF2 draft document and also emphasised the significance that the final document would have and how essential it was that the public should make their views known.

Our concern is how well has this consultation been publicised. Figures issued by Louise Kowalska in response to a query (13.02.08) illustrate this.

Economic argument

In the Highland Region it is being portrayed that Inverness and its immediate surroundings must increase dramatically in population - the reason for this being an economic argument. This could well lead to further depopulation of the rest of the Highlands as labour will be attracted and local town/village services e.g. village shops will no longer become viable. (note the number of rural petrol stations that are closing) ref para 78,80, 101, 105, 148 is contrary to what is actually happening.

It appears that one of the main attractions and economic drivers of the Highlands is Tourism brought about by the Highlands attractive scenery, open spaces and slower pace of life. Why jeopardise this

Population ref para 270and 272

Given the Highland Council projected figure for the A96 Corridor as 30,000 this amounts to about 50% of HIE's population target for the whole Highlands and Islands region. This disregards the need for economic regeneration in rural areas.

Where are the anticipated 30,000 people going to come from? Given that there are areas of high unemployment in different parts of Scotland, surely the economic argument is to provide them with work locally.

We have recently communicated with Turnberry Consulting who are dealing with the application for Inverness Airport Business Park for the developer and asked questions about where they expected the workforce to come from.

Their reply was 'IAPB is well located within the Inner Moray Firth near the Highlands main population centre, providing access to a large proportion of the potential workforce in the region and beyond into Moray. The area has also been the subject of significant population growth in recent years, driven largely by in-migration from across the UK and, in recent years, from EU accession countries. Whilst we expect the latter to slow, population growth is expected to continue to expand the existing population to around 100,000 over the next 30 years.'

This implies that at least some of the workforce will be from the rest of the Highlands, potentially creating another Highland Clearance. Ref: para 18, NPF2

The figure of an increase in the population in the Inverness area concurs with the Inverness City Vision document in which it is stated that the area aspires to increase the population by 30,000 to 100,000. There have been no definite figures given as a basis for this increase.

Infrastructure

There are no assurances regarding the following just aspirations:

1. Transport: the A9 north of Inverness needs to be dramatically improved bearing in mind this is the only main road north. The A82 is clearly in need of upgrading. The A96, the main east to west road, which services many of Highland Council's proposed developments in the A96 Corridor Document, is inadequate at present and there are no firm proposals to upgrade any of these. No credibility should be given to the Highland Council Plans until firm dates for these upgrades are in place.

In the recent planning application from Inverness airport Business Park it is clear that the developer feels they have no requirement, at present, to address properly the effects of high transport usage to and from the business park but state 'Reasonable assumptions, consistent with the Growth Corridor Framework, are required to be made at this stage. Monitoring will subsequently be undertaken, on an ongoing basis, to provide the information for review, and permit such adjustments as may be identified as necessary to reflect changing circumstances, as the business park develops in the future' this does not concur with para 196, NPF2

2. Rail: Given fuel costs and climate change why are there not more fully developed plans to drastically improve rail travel for commercial and public use.

3. Social Infrastructure: There are no assurances that all the support services needed in the future for communities will be provided i.e. police, medical services, school places, fire, elderly care etc particularly where large increases in population are proposed. We have had discussions with representatives of the police and health service who were unable to give assurances regarding the additional resources needed for the proposed increase in population.

4. Water and Sewage: ref para 188. The plans for expansion clearly place tremendous demands on these two services. As yet there appears no evidence as to the practical delivery of these and the cost. This is apparent in Highland Council's Masterplan for the A96 Corridor.

Natural Environment.

Ref Map1. The Moray Firth, Cromarty Firth and associated coastlines are designated as Natural Heritage sites. Given that the Highland Council proposes a huge increase in population over the next 25 years, the sewage produced will enter this site. Para 20 refers to the importance of marine resources as they affect economic activities e.g. natural wildlife and tourism.

Agriculture:

As part of the A96 Masterplan involved the removal of 200 acres of prime agricultural land, which we are led to believe (as yet to be confirmed) was agreed by The Highland Council and the Scottish Rural Affairs Committee a considerable time ago, we would argue that the case for growing local food has increased tremendously given the increases in the price of food, the world shortage of food and the cost of transporting food. Ref para 150 (points 1,4 and9),152,155,172,177

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