

SUBMISSION FROM KILTARLITY COMMUNITY COUNCIL

CONSULTATION AND RELATED CONCERNS

The Planning etc (Scotland) Act 2006 states that "the public at large" are to be involved in the preparation and review of the National Planning Framework. However, various concerns regarding lack of public involvement and consultation have been expressed in the media of late, and no doubt in evidence submitted to the Committee. We would add to these with further comment as follows :-

1) No communication was sent to this community council to alert us to the imminent publication of the January 2008 Discussion Draft and series of related meetings around the country. It was a matter of luck that we became aware of both.

2) There is no copy of either the January 2008 Discussion Draft or the December 2008 Proposed Framework in the reference department of Inverness Library, one of the "Partner Libraries" of the Scottish Government.

3) Our response to the Discussion Draft suggested the need for both a Glossary of terms not in everyday usage by the public e.g. biodiversity, sustainability, connectivity ; also an Index giving acronyms in full. As yet neither of these suggestions, which would improve the accessibility of the document which is otherwise quite readable, has been adopted.

4) Three of the National Developments listed in the Proposed Framework were not included in the earlier Discussion Draft. While two of these may well not be controversial, the third for a new fossil-fuelled power station and transshipment hub at Hunterston is extremely controversial from every point of view. Yet the Scottish Government has blatantly disregarded the requirements of their own legislation for prior public consultation under Section 3A (10) of the 2006 Act. Hunterston in North Ayrshire may be a long way from Inverness-shire, but anything which increases public disillusion with and apathy towards the planning process is of concern to all community councils.

TRANSMISSION GRID REINFORCEMENTS

In 2007 Kiltarlity Community Council took part in the Public Local Inquiry into the proposed Beauly to Denny overhead transmission line. The first major concern in our response to the Discussion Draft was therefore the National Development relating to Electricity Transmission Grid Reinforcements. Both Framework documents have stated clearly that "no assumption is made about the need for transmission or transmission routes between Beauly and Denny", this being a matter for Scottish Ministers who will shortly receive the Report and resulting Recommendation on the Public Inquiry. However, the relevant National Development includes several Ofgem base-line projects which reinforce the importance of planned expansion of Balblair sub-station near Beauly as a major hub in the transmission system. Taken together with Map 8 Transmission System Reinforcements, this can be interpreted as regarding

the Beaully to Denny power line as just the missing part of the jigsaw, due to fall into place following completion of the planning process.

Discussion directly or indirectly about the Beaully to Denny power line may well be ruled out-of-order during consideration by the Committee. Therefore, as Kiltarlity Community Council will also be pursuing their continued objections through other channels, only the following brief comments are made:-

1) During the public inquiry, Kiltarlity and the other local community councils at the northern end of the proposed route, argued that if the proposed Beaully to Denny power line goes ahead, it should be underground through our inhabited countryside.

2) We support the evidence by such experts as Professor Andrew Bain, and also Sir Donald Miller, former chairman of Scottish Power that there is no need for additional transmission capacity over the next ten years : that to meet capacity requirements in the medium-term, the East Coast grid via Keith could be upgraded at lower cost both financially and to the environment : and that the utmost priority should be given by Government, Ofgem and the electricity generation and transmission companies to the proposed subsea cable super-grid round the coast of Scotland to connect both to Europe and the rest of the UK.

3) The Committee wished views on "Whether the correct balance has been struck between economic development and environmental protection". In general at a time of recession, it seems likely that environmental imperatives could be sacrificed on the altar of recovery. Approval to the proposed overhead Beaully to Denny power line would mean ignoring environmental imperatives, ignoring the health and amenity of the numerous communities along the route, but also ignoring the effect on tourism, the film industry and other aspects of the economy. Scotland in general and the Highlands in particular would lose out both in terms of the economy and the environment.

INVERNESS-NAIRN CORRIDOR

The second major concern in our response to the Discussion Draft, the wider implications of future population growth in the Inverness-Nairn Corridor, has not been addressed in the latest Framework document. It would seem to have "potential impact on local authority development planning and development management", one of the issues on which the Committee has requested views. However, Highland Council should be well aware of this potential impact.

Several proposed developments in the Inverness-Nairn Corridor, potentially leading to an increase of around 30,000 people over the next 35 years, will require massive infrastructure investment, much of which will require to be in place prior to residential and related development going ahead. Other communities including Kiltarlity may well have good reason to be concerned their needs will suffer because of the investment needed before growth in the

Inverness-Nairn Corridor can really take off. For instance, what chance would there be of a new secondary school to serve Muir of Ord/ Beaully/Kiltarlity and adjoining communities?

Expansion in the Inverness-Nairn Corridor would seem to represent acceptance of the inevitability of centralising development close to Inverness to the detriment of the Highlands as a whole. Outwith Inverness the political focus is often on the needs of remote areas, yet this can be at the expense of communities around Inverness, including Kiltarlity, increasingly seen by developers and possibly planners as little more than dormitory villages for commuters.

On behalf of Kiltarlity Community Council