

**GREEN NETWORKS: SUPPLEMENTARY GUIDANCE  
POST-ADOPTION SEA STATEMENT**

**PART 1**

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or

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**PART 2**

**A post-adoption SEA statement is attached for the PPS entitled:**

Green Networks: Supplementary Guidance

**The Responsible Authority is:**

The Highland Council

**PART 3**

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08/09/2011

## POST - ADOPTION SEA STATEMENT

### Post-adoption SEA statement for:

Green Networks: Supplementary Guidance

### Adopted on:

26<sup>th</sup> May 2011

### Responsible Authority:

The Highland Council

## POST-ADOPTION SEA STATEMENT INTRODUCTION

This document (referred to here as the post-adoption SEA statement) has been prepared in accordance with Section 18 of the Environmental Assessment (Scotland) Act 2005.

## POST-ADOPTION SEA STATEMENT AVAILABILITY OF DOCUMENTS

### WEBSITE

The full PPS as adopted, along with the Environmental Report and post-adoption SEA Statement are available on the Responsible Authority's website at:

<http://www.highland.gov.uk/yourenvironment/planning/developmentplans/localplans/GreenNetworksDraftSupplementaryGuidance.htm>

### OFFICE ADDRESS

The PPS, as adopted, along with the Environmental Report and post-adoption SEA Statement may also be inspected free of charge (or a copy obtained for a reasonable charge) at the principal office of the Responsible Authority:

### **Contact name, address and telephone number**

Simon Hindson, Planning and Development Services, The Highland Council, Glenurquhart Road, Inverness, IV3 5NX 01463 702261

### **Times at which the documents may be inspected or a copy obtained:**

Monday-Friday 0900-1700

## POST-ADOPTION SEA STATEMENT KEY FACTS

The key facts relating to this PPS are set out below:

### **Title**

Green Networks: Supplementary Guidance

### **Name of Responsible Authority**

The Highland Council

### **Purpose of the Guidance**

The purpose of the guidance is to raise awareness of the concept of green networks and facilitate the delivery of a green network in the Highland Council area.

### **What prompted the Guidance**

The supplementary guidance was prompted by Scottish Planning Policies focus on Green Networks and the Highland Council's commitment from their Main Issues Report for the Highland wide Local Development Plan to include policy and create supplementary guidance on Green Networks

### **Subject**

Town Planning

### **Period covered by Guidance**

2011 onwards

### **Frequency of updates**

As required

### **Area covered by Guidance**

The entire Highland Council area except that where planning is delegated to the Cairngorms National Park Authority

### **Summary of Nature/Content of the PPS**

The guidance contains the key principles of the Highland Green Networks and sets out how these should be considered. The guidance also contains specific mapping of the A96 Green Networks and identifies delivery frameworks and priorities for delivery of these.

### **Date Adopted**

25<sup>th</sup> May 2011

### **Contact point**

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## **Strategic Environmental Assessment Process**

The Green Networks: Supplementary Guidance has been subject to a process of Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA), as required under the Environmental Assessment (Scotland) Act 2005. This has included the following activities:

- Taking into account the views of the Scottish Environment Protection Agency, Scottish Natural Heritage and the Scottish Ministers (Historic Scotland) regarding the scope and level of detail that was appropriate for the Environmental Report
- Preparing an Environmental Report on the likely significant effects on the environment of the draft PPS which included consideration of:
  - the baseline data relating to the current state of the environment;
  - links between the PPS and other relevant strategies, policies, plans, programmes and environmental protection objectives;
  - existing environmental problems affecting the PPS;
  - the plan's likely significant effects on the environment (positive and negative);
  - measures envisaged for the prevention, reduction and offsetting of any significant adverse effects;
  - an outline of the reasons for selecting the alternatives chosen;
  - monitoring measures to ensue that any unforeseen environmental effects will be identified allowing for appropriate remedial action to be taken.
- Consulting on the Environmental Report
- Taking into account the Environmental Report and the results of consultation in making final decisions regarding the PPS
- Committing to monitoring the significant environmental effects of the implementation of the PPS. This will also identify any unforeseen adverse significant environmental effects and to enable taking appropriate remedial action.

## How Environmental Considerations Have Been Integrated Into Green Networks: Supplementary Guidance and How The Environmental Report Has Been Taken Into Account

ENVIRONMENTAL CONSIDERATIONS AND FINDINGS FROM ENVIRONMENTAL REPORT	INTEGRATED INTO PLAN (YES/NO)	HOW INTEGRATED/TAKEN INTO ACCOUNT OR REASON FOR NOT BEING TAKEN INTO ACCOUNT
<p><b>Biodiversity, flora and fauna</b>            Less stress on biodiversity and loss of habitat resulting from development. Modification of conflicts between designated areas and economic development. Vulnerability of rare and endangered flora and fauna to changes in climate should be reduced in the longer term. Likelihood of detrimental impact on local landscape character should be reduced. Reduced risk of loss of native woodland cover. Fragmentation of habitats.</p>	YES	The guidance provided guidance through the general principles on how development could integrate with habitats and the stage at which this should be considered.
<p><b>Population</b>            Increasing population putting increased pressure on the natural environment in terms of increased recreational access to the outdoors.</p>	YES	The guidance provided information on how the green network can be used to reduce the cumulative impact of development on recreational access to the outdoors. It also proposed and prioritised new access routes in an area where recreational access is likely to significantly increase given the potential growth of residential development in the area.
<p><b>Human Health</b>            Increased opportunity for recreation. Green spaces can offer benefits in terms of social and mental health.</p>	YES	The guidance included a section on the benefits of a green network to highlight the benefits of green networks to a number of areas including human health.
<p><b>Water</b>            Green networks will reduce surface water run-off, increase the lag time of rainfall entering the watercourse, reduce risk of flooding by providing integration with natural drainage solutions such as SuDS.</p>	YES	The adopted guidance included significant water features as part of the green networks given the contribution they can make to species movement and also to habitat integration.
<p><b>Climatic Factors</b>            Green networks can highlight opportunities for active travel both within and outwith settlements. In green networks can help species</p>	YES	The guidance raised these issues and also set out where new routes could be promoted or existing routes upgraded in areas where

adapt to climate change		existing active travel routes may come under pressure from additional development.
<b>Material Assets</b> Green networks can enable the development of additional active travel links	YES	The guidance promotes the existing routes and the aspiration routes within the A96 corridor and mapped these as part of the “social” element of the green network.
<b>Cultural Heritage</b> Reduced risk of impact on the setting for cultural heritage features.	YES	Cultural heritage features were included in the green network to raise the awareness of these and the impact developments may have on the setting for cultural heritage features.
<b>Landscape</b> Avoid the degradation of local landscape character which may occur through new development.	YES	The landscape character assessment for the area was a key consideration in identifying the priorities for the A96 Green Network and has been built into the methodology for identifying a green network in the rest of Highland.

## How opinions expressed during the consultation have been taken into account

The table below sets out the comments made by the Consultation Authorities in response to the Environmental Report which was published for consultation in October 2010.

SUMMARY OF COMMENTS	HOW THE COMMENT WAS TAKEN INTO ACCOUNT IN MAKING THE DECISION TO ADOPT THE FINAL PPS
<b>Scottish Environment Protection Agency</b>	
<p>We are generally satisfied with the assessment presented. We agree that the SG would have small positive effects on the water environment but consider that with slight modifications significant positive effects could be achieved. We make suggestions for these modifications in our response to the SG itself, which is provided separately.</p>	<p>These comments have been taken on board in the final version of the guidance. You can view the report of consultation which responds to the comments made by SEPA on the guidance online at: <a href="http://www.highland.gov.uk/NR/ronlyres/66ABA549-4DD5-465A-B16E-AD5FE599EB29/0/Consultationreport.pdf">http://www.highland.gov.uk/NR/ronlyres/66ABA549-4DD5-465A-B16E-AD5FE599EB29/0/Consultationreport.pdf</a></p>
<b>Scottish Natural Heritage</b>	
<p>We do however have significant concerns about the approach taken to assessing the cumulative (and individual) impact of expanding the path network with reference to the protection of designated sites and protected species vulnerable to disturbance by recreation. These could be more thoroughly assessed by the report.</p>	<p>Noted. While this has been covered at a very high level in the SEA it is covered in some detail by the HRA and the mitigation proposed by this has been included in the final version of the guidance.</p>
<p>The primary example of this is the proposed Coastal Trail, the route of which will run alongside the Inner Moray Firth SPA and Ramsar site. This proposal has already been assessed as likely to have a significant effect on the SPA and Ramsar interests and, as you will be aware, early discussions indicate that without adequate mitigation (which is still to be discussed with us) this proposal could adversely affect the integrity of this site. You are reminded that this Supplementary Guidance is subject to the provisions of regulation 85B of The Conservation (Natural Habitats, &amp;c.) Regulations 1994, as amended (The Habitats Regulations).</p>	<p>See comment above.</p>
<p>This means that the guidance cannot be adopted until the Council has concluded, following consultation with us, that its provisions will not have an adverse effect on the integrity of any European site, both alone and in combination with other plans and projects. Thus as part of the appropriate assessment, the consequences of the proposals within the HwLDP Proposed Plan for growth in the A96 Corridor must be considered in combination with this aspect of the Green Networks Supplementary Guidance.</p>	<p>Noted. The HRA Record has been signed off by SNH.</p>

<p>We note that the ER on page 37 and Appendix 3 (page 6) acknowledges that the Green Networks Supplementary Guidance will require an appropriate assessment under the Habitats Regulations Appraisal with particular reference to the proposed Inverness-Nairn Coastal Trail. We believe the ER should be more cautious in its assessment regarding the SEA Objective for the maintenance and enhancement of designated wildlife sites/biodiversity/valuable habitats and protected species pending the outcome of the appropriate assessment. The outcome of this assessment should also feed back into the supplementary guidance itself and also potentially into the HwLDP Proposed Plan so that any necessary mitigation measures are incorporated.</p>	<p>Noted. Both the SEA and the HRA have had significant influence over the final version of the document.</p>
<p>In addition to this specific example, there are likely to be other instances brought about by the general principle of enhancing path networks in specific areas where valuable habitats or species may be disturbed. It would have been useful for the ER to set out generic mitigation measures to reconcile social and environmental goals. One such measure might be for paths to seek to avoid disturbing areas of high environmental and species value in the first instance, but if there is no alternative route and there is an imperative need for the path link, then adequate mitigation measures should be incorporated.</p>	<p>Noted. General mitigation measures have been included in the supplementary guidance related to a number of issues but specifically the paths and trails in the A96 Corridor.</p>
<p>In addition, regarding Natura sites, you are reminded that if a Habitats Regulations Appraisal (HRA) of the proposal fails to conclude that there would be no adverse effect on the integrity of a Natura site, that there are no alternative solutions and that the proposal must go ahead for imperative reasons of overriding public interest, then the Highland Council must notify Scottish Ministers of this. If the proposal is given effect in such circumstances then any necessary compensatory measures must also be taken to ensure the overall coherence of the Natura 2000 network is protected, (regulations 85C and 85E of the Habitats Regulations).</p>	<p>Noted. The HRA Record has now been signed of by SNH.</p>
<p>The assessment in Appendix 3 and summarised on pp39-40 takes the guidance as a whole and considers it against the 10 SEA Objectives. While it may not be necessary to go down to the level of detail of the 19 green network principles in the guidance (pp7-8) individually, perhaps some issues could have been teased out more clearly if the assessment was based on the 3 sets of general, environmental and social principles, i.e. if each SEA Objective was considered against headings of 'General principles', 'Environmental principles' and 'Social principles'.</p>	<p>Noted. In producing the SEA we felt that the method used would lead to a partial assessment of cumulative impacts and therefore would have led to an improved result. However we take on board the comment and we will consider further for other SEA work.</p>
<p>Page 7 5th para – The HRA re the Coastal Trail will inform whether or not there is a significantly adverse affect on the Natura sites adjacent to the proposed route.</p>	<p>Noted. This has been reflected in the guidance.</p>
<p>Page 11 1st para – typo – refers to Highland wide LDP rather than this supplementary guidance</p>	<p>Noted.</p>
<p>Page 11 Context – it may have been worth saying a few words too about the A96 corridor, for which this SG provides more detail</p>	<p>Noted. Further detail on why the SG focuses on the A96 Corridor is now included within the guidance. The guidance is now accompanied by an action programme to bring forward other elements of the network.</p>
<p>Page 12 1st para – typos re 'policies' instead of 'programmes'</p>	<p>Noted.</p>
<p>Page 15 Note the EU Wild Birds Directive (79/409/EEC) should now be referred to as the European Birds Directive (2009/147/EC)</p>	<p>Noted.</p>



Page 16 The UK Protection of Badgers Act 1992 should be referred to as: Protection of Badgers Act 1992 (as amended by the Nature Conservation (Scotland) Act 2004).	Noted.
Page 20 WEWS – RBMPs will help maintain and improve water quality.	Noted
Page 21 Note the Nature Conservation (Scotland) Act was 2004	Noted
Page 21 Note the Scottish Climate Change Bill should be updated to the Climate Change (Scotland) Act 2009	Noted.
Page 22 The Scotland River Basin Management Plan was approved in December 2009.	Noted.
Page 23 With reference to golf courses it would be worth referring to the Scottish Golf Environment Group who have produced best practice advice on a number of topics including Nature Conservation and Golf Course Development. See <a href="http://www.sgeg.org.uk/advice.html">http://www.sgeg.org.uk/advice.html</a> for further information.	Noted. This will be referred to in any future SEA work which may involve golf courses.
Page 28 It would be helpful if the Natural Heritage Futures series was included here – these are listed in the ER for HwLDP or see our website – <a href="http://www.snh.gov.uk/about-snh/what-we-do/nhf/">http://www.snh.gov.uk/about-snh/what-we-do/nhf/</a>	Noted. This will be referred to in any future SEA work.
Page 28 The River Basin Management Plans listed here have all been approved now.	Noted
Page 29 2nd para – we recommend that Special Landscape Areas are included here.	Noted.
Page 30 2nd para – peatland is also one of the most prominent habitat types in Highland.	Noted.
Page 30 3rd para – typo re repeat of the phrase negative trends.	Noted.
Page 30 Table 2, Biodiversity, flora and fauna - remove ref to landscape character.	Noted.
Page 30 Table 2, Human Health – change green space to green network.	Noted.
Page 37 'Effect on Natura 2000 sites' – this section is noted, and some tightening up of wording would be useful. We recommend 'The Habitats Regulations Appraisal will be completed separately and will include an appropriate assessment of the likely significant effects, alone and in combination, of the provisions of this guidance on the conservation objectives of nearby Natura sites with a view to ensuring that there would be no adverse effects on the integrity of the sites upon adoption of this guidance'. The Moray Firth SAC can be removed from the list of sites. There is no likely significant effect on the qualifying features of this site re the Green Network Supplementary Guidance.	Noted. This has been reflected in the mitigation which has been built into the guidance (especially the A96 Corridor Section) and also into the HRA itself.
Page 38 Map – add designation types (SAC, SPA and Ramsar) to the site names. Add an OS backdrop or grid lines and major settlements as a point of reference to the map.	Noted. Our baseline data has now been updated for future SEA work.
Page 42 SEA Objective 1 - re the coastal trail the text for this objective should be informed by the HRA process.	Noted. The HRA process had significant influence on bringing forward mitigation measures which were built into the guidance.
Page 47 Monitoring – Biodiversity – 1. It is more accurate if the indicator was the number of applications that affected designated nature conservation sites. 2. For species, an indicator could be the number of applications that required a protected species survey – and of that number, how many needed a mitigation plan in order to be acceptable.	Noted. The monitoring framework has been updated. Please latter table in this Post Adoptions Statement.
Appendix 2 – Page 5 Cultural Heritage Row 1 - Refer also to Special Landscape Areas. Also it is important to note that Historic Scotland leads on Gardens and Designed Landscapes and are now the data source for information about these sites.	Noted.

Appendix 2, Page 7, Biodiversity, Flora and Fauna This should be changed to reflect that up to date Site Condition Monitoring data is available from SNH on request.	Noted. This information is currently being sought from SNH to inform other work of the responsible authority.
Appendix 2 Map – p22 SPAs – this needs updating to include the recently classified SPAs.	Noted. Out baseline data has now been updated for future SEA work . The additional SPAs were considered in bringing forward the final version of the guidance.
Appendix 2 Maps A map of Special Landscape Areas needs adding. Also perhaps a map of inventoried woodland could be added. Reorder maps so that all the designated sites maps are together. With reference to protected species refer to online species sightings data maps such as our interactive map which is based on the NBN Gateway – <a href="http://www.snh.gov.uk/publications-data-andresearch/environmental-data/map/">http://www.snh.gov.uk/publications-data-andresearch/environmental-data/map/</a>	Noted. Our baseline data has now been updated but all of the information from this comment was used in bringing forward the final version of the guidance.
Appendix 3 Preferred Option, Sea Objective 1: Biodiversity A ++/- score under short, medium and long term and under regional would be useful to identify the potential risk of a new path having an adverse effect on an area of high biodiversity value, especially species vulnerable to disturbance by recreation. The case of the Inner Moray Firth SPA and Ramsar is quoted here, but the conflict could arise elsewhere and so an approach to resolve this would be helpful to set out in the guidance. See comment in covering letter.	Noted. See response above to how this was taken into consideration.
Appendix 3 Preferred Option, SEA Objective 9: Landscape and scenic values Add National Scenic Areas.	Noted. The contribution of national scenic areas was considered in finalising the guidance.
<b>Historic Scotland</b>	
Overall I thought that the ER was clearly written and comprehensive and I'm content that generally the comments we made at scoping have been taken into account during its preparation. With regard to our earlier comments on the assessment methodology I still have some concerns about the inclusion of the column on 'sensitivity'. My understanding is that this column identifies the 'relevance' of the SEA objective to the purpose or aims of the guidance. My concern is that SEA should treat all environmental topics as equal and should not be used to 'rank' these in order of importance. Were this taken into account in identifying the scorings of the assessment you could see how it might result in the downplaying of effects for the 'less relevant' topics. In this case however there is no evidence to suggest that the rating has had any bearing on the findings. One other point on methodology is that generally we recommend caution in using a calculation to determine the effects of the guidance such as that used in the cumulative assessment. This is because it essentially balances topics against each other and can mask significant effects.	Noted. It should be noted that following this comment we have now adjusted our methodology and assessment matrix used for SEA to reflect the concerns raised.
In terms of the assessment findings I agree that the inclusion of listed buildings, locally important archaeological sites, conservation areas and gardens and designed landscapes in the green network could result in positive effects for these aspects of the historic environment by providing better protection for them and their settings. For those assets not included in the framework, specifically scheduled monuments, the effects will be neutral. Perhaps there is scope to improve the performance of the guidance by also including scheduled monuments within the framework.	Noted. Scheduled monuments were included in the "Environmental Network" following this comment.

## **Reasons For Choosing The Green Networks: Supplementary Guidance As Adopted, In The Light Of Other Reasonable Alternatives**

The Green Networks: Supplementary Guidance has enabled the Council to take a proactive and consistent approach to the promotion, protection and enhancement of the Highland Green Network. The Environmental report identified the potential for significant positive effects if certain small changes were made to the guidance. Significant positive effects were envisaged on the following SEA objectives either in the long term (10years+):

- Maintain and enhance designated wildlife sites, biodiversity, valuable habitats and protected species, avoiding irreversible losses;
- Maintain, enhance and create green networks for wildlife and people;
- Provide opportunities for people to come into contact with and appreciate nature/natural environments;
- Protect and enhance human health;
- Retain and improve quality, quantity and connectivity of publicly accessible open space;
- Increase opportunities for recreational access to the outdoors and active travel;
- Conserve and enhance landscape character and scenic value.

No negative affects are anticipated through this approach.

If the alternative approach of “do nothing” was brought forward the affects were likely to be uncertain in most circumstances and in others likely to be a mix of negative and positive affects. This would be due to the lack of a co-ordinated approach to the protection and enhancement of the green network. More than likely the green infrastructure connections between development proposals would be sought on an ad-hoc basis and there would be limited opportunity to avoid further fragmentation of habitats, with almost no opportunity to ensure that the defragmentation of habitats could occur.

## **Measures that are to be taken to monitor significant environmental effects of the implementation of the PPS**

It is considered good practice for monitoring:

- fit a pre-defined purpose, help to solve problems, and address key issues;
- is practical and is customised to the PPS;
- is transparent and readily accessible to the public;
- is seen as a learning process and a cyclical process relating closely to the collation of the environmental baseline.

For this monitoring to be effective it will need to be linked to both the SEA Objectives and the Green Networks Objectives. The baseline data set out earlier in this report sets the scene for any monitoring which is to take place. Below is a monitoring framework, which replicates many of the monitoring indicators of that proposed for the Highland wide Local Development Plan. This is to ensure that the monitoring carried out on the Development Plan (including Supplementary Guidance) is practical and proportionate to facilitate effective review of the development plan in due course.

The monitoring proposed in the environmental report for the Green Networks: Supplementary Guidance has received road agreement. The table below includes some modifications to what was included in the Environmental Report following comment from the Consultation Authorities:

SEA Topic	What the guidance seeks to achieve	Monitoring Indicator	Responsible for Data Collation	Publication of Monitoring	Remedial Action
Water Quality	Improve Water Quality	Number of rivers "C" classification or below	SEPA	Annually	Review guidance and priorities and principles.
Biodiversity	Protection and enhancement of biodiversity in Highland	Number of applications that affect designated nature conservation sites.	THC (Information and Research)	Annually	Review guidance and priorities and principles.
	Protected Species are not significantly disturbed	Applications that required a protected species survey	SNH/ THC (Information and Research)	Annually	Review guidance and priorities and principles.
		Number of applications which required a mitigation plan in order for the proposal to be acceptable.	SNH/ THC (Information and Research)	Annually	Review guidance and priorities and principles.
Climatic Factors	Reduction in Travel	% travelling to work/study by car	THC (Information and Research)	Biennially	Review guidance and priorities and principles.
		% travelling to work/study by public transport	THC (Information and Research)	Biennially	Review guidance and priorities and principles.
		% travelling to work/study by active travel	THC (Information and Research)	Biennially	Review guidance and priorities and principles.
Human Health	Improve accessibility to open space	Provision of open space (m <sup>2</sup> )	THC (Information and Research)	Annually	Review guidance and priorities and principles.
		% of households within 1200m of open space	THC (Information and Research)	Annually	Review guidance and priorities and principles.
Cultural Heritage	Reduce number of buildings at risk	Number of buildings at risk	THC (Information and Research)	Annually	Review guidance and priorities and principles.
Landscape	Impact on quality of landscape	Number of planning applications granted within NSA and SLA in last 12 months	THC (Information and Research)	Annually	Review guidance and priorities and principles.
Material Assets	Protection and enhancement of public access	Number of planning applications granted which affect path identified in the core path plan	THC (Information and Research facilitated by access officers)	Annually	Review guidance and priorities and principles.

**Conclusion**

It is considered the SEA process has added significant value to the adopted Green Networks: Supplementary Guidance. The guidance and its associated SEA documents will be made available online and at Highland Council Headquarters in due course.