



12<sup>th</sup> January 2015  
Ref: DSG(2015)C003

Shona Robison  
Cabinet Secretary  
for Health, Wellbeing and Sport  
St Andrew's House  
Regent Road  
Edinburgh, EH1 3DG  
:

**Please respond to:**

**June Love  
DSG Secretariat  
Dounreay.com  
Traill House  
7 Orlig Street  
Thurso, Caithness, KW14 7BJ**

**Tel: 01847 890886  
Fax: 01847 893459  
Email: [info@dounreaystakeholdergroup.org](mailto:info@dounreaystakeholdergroup.org)**

Dear Ms Robison

I am writing to you, on behalf of the Dounreay Stakeholder Group, to add our concerns to those that have already been muted in December regarding the reduction of services at Caithness General Hospital by stopping 24 hour surgical cover.

The Dounreay Stakeholder Group (DSG) is represented by over 20 organisations and therefore this response is one that is generally agreed by most organisations.

Since our last public meeting in December 2014 it would appear (from the Press and Journal of the 12<sup>th</sup> January 2015) that this has now been reconsidered as this option would have been unworkable for a number of reasons.

As community representatives we are delighted to hear that the surgical services will remain in Caithness. Nevertheless, we believed it was still important to write to you to set out the DSG's views and to ensure that when options are being considered other factors, such as economic factors, are taken into account.

By reducing services within our area the impact is far reaching - not only on local patient care but also for the wider community. At a time when the Dounreay site has announced that the decommissioning programme will continue until 2029 and the ongoing work to regenerate our area and attract new inward investment, services such as these are extremely important in supporting a vibrant economy.

The Caithness & North Sutherland Regeneration Partnership (CNSRP) are working to offset the effect of the rundown of Dounreay and ensure we have a vibrant economy for the future. This work is carried out in partnership with a number of organisations including the Scottish Government.

While recognising the services in Caithness will continue it was disappointing that the timing of the original announcement was made two weeks before Christmas giving people very little time to respond before the festive break and as lessons should be learnt along the way we would respectfully suggest that due consideration needs to be given to the timing of any such announcements going forward.

We would also request that when considering any options these should start with the premise that surgical cover remains 24/7 and that account is taken of the HIE socio economic impact study (published in 2004) which is still relevant today as it was then. We would also request that any new announcements should not be publicly released until full consultation with our community has been undertaken.

Yours sincerely

**David Flear**  
DSG Chairman

cc. **Gary Coutts**  
**John Thurso, MP**  
**Rob Gibson, MSP**  
**Eann Sinclair, CNSRP Programme Manager**  
**DSG members**  
**Gordon Calder, John O' Groat Journal**