



11th October 2016
Ref: DSG(2016)C036

Mr Roy Kirk
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Please respond to:

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Dear Roy

I read with interest the article in the P&J on Wednesday (13th Oct) about Western Isles Council looking to develop a vertical satellite launch facility in their area. Having attended a CNSRP Advisory Board where we were told that HIE was looking at a site in Sutherland I am somewhat confused that another part of the Highlands and Islands is also making a play for this potential opportunity.

Given that the CNSRP was formed to mitigate the rundown of the Dounreay site and the fact that HIE are a major partner within this group I would have thought that the HIE leaders would have been putting their weight behind the Sutherland offering as the county (North Sutherland and beyond) would benefit greatly from this sort of activity. I can only conclude two things have happened:

1. The Sutherland site is no longer an option, and/or
2. The Western Isles (in the HIE area) is now competing with the Sutherland site (both in the HIE area)

While I understand that the HIE area covers a number of areas it would be useful to clarify if there are a number of areas within HIE that are developing their potential for such a facility. I would also imagine that HIE cannot make the decision for the best potential site and that the industry that will want to use it will determine the most appropriate location.

That said, I am somewhat concerned over the possible confusion that this may lead to within the market place and believe it is incumbent on HIE to ensure that if there are competing areas within HIE it is resolved quickly and timely to ensure the industry is getting one clear and consistent message. Obviously, from the DSG's point of view we will be supporting the

Sutherland site as the best option to take such a project forward. As a result it is disappointing to see press coverage from the Western Isles while the Sutherland option has gone quiet in terms of public information. It would also be useful to understand any financial support HIE is putting into the Sutherland site (along the same lines as what was reported via the Western Isles press article).

As the DSG representative on the CNSRP Advisory Board I will be raising this at the next meeting recommending that the Advisory Group ask for clarity on this.

I would appreciate a clear response to this letter which outlines whether Sutherland continues to be marketed as an area for a vertical launch facility and ask that you clarify why HIE are not looking at this strategically when it comes to fragile areas such as North Sutherland.

I look forward to your response.

Yours sincerely

Electronically sent without signature

David Flear
DSG Chairman

cc. Charlotte Wright, Acting Chief Executive, HIE
Eann Sinclair, CNSRP Programme Manager