

DURNESS DEVELOPMENT GROUP

DURNESS TOURIST INFORMATION AND VISITOR CENTRE

INTERPRETIVE PLAN



**by Rowan Tree Consulting, Inverness
in association with Cuan Design**



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1 **INTRODUCTION**

- 1.1 This Interpretive Plan has been prepared by Rowan Tree Consulting on behalf of Durness Development Group.
- 1.2 The overall aim of the Plan is to provide a framework for the development of thematically-co-ordinated interpretation at the Durness Tourist Information Centre and Visitor Centre. As part of the process of preparing the draft Plan, we have looked at existing interpretive provision and how it might be refreshed or improved as well as at options for new interpretive provision.

2 INTERPRETIVE PLANNING PROCESS – OBJECTIVES AND METHODOLOGY

- 2.1 The client's objective in commissioning an Interpretive Plan for the site was to provide thematically-coordinated guidance for the refreshment of the interpretation at the Durness Tourist Information Centre (TIC) and visitor centre.
- 2.2 Although this Plan focuses on the TIC/visitor centre building, we have also looked at how provision there might tie in with the wider provision of interpretive facilities in the Durness area.
- 2.3 The methodology applied to the preparation of the Plan was as follows:
- a. we identified the area's natural and cultural heritage resources, and assessed the significance of these.
 - b. we looked at the wider context for the development of interpretive resources in the Durness area, particularly by reviewing various strategic documents relating to heritage, tourism and economic development locally.
 - c. we carried out consultation to find out what stakeholders wished to achieve from investing in new interpretation.
 - d. We carried out a survey of visitors to the TIC and using this, and other relevant research, analysed the likely profile of visitors to Durness in order to identify their likely needs and interests.
 - e. we identified interpretive objectives for the Centre – ie what visitors might know, feel and do as a result of experiencing the interpretation.
 - f. we identified an over-arching interpretive theme and sub-themes appropriate to the natural and cultural heritage resources and interpretive objectives we had identified.
 - g. we reviewed current provision on-site against the interpretive objectives, over-arching theme and individual sub-themes identified. As part of this stage of the exercise, we also considered wider issues such as accessibility and foreign language provision, and looked at feedback on the TIC gathered by means of recent surveys at the Centre.
 - h. we identified and proposed suitable media provision for interpretation at the Centre, and in consultation with all parties produce a design concept linking together the themes and sub-themes.
- 2.4 As well as drawing on a range of information available in printed form or on the internet, we also:
- undertook an inception meeting and site visit with the client and other stakeholders on 28th June 2007. (Please see Appendix One for details).
 - carried out a survey of visitors to Durness Tourist Information Centre between 6th – 17th August 2007. (Please see Appendix Five for details).
 - carried out telephone interviews (and face-to-face interviews) with a number of stakeholders identified by Durness Development Group. (Please see Appendix Two for details)
 - prepared a draft report which was circulated for comment by e-mail and also discussed at a meeting held in Durness on 6th September 2007. (Please see Appendix Seven for note of meeting)
 - prepared a second draft report taking on board comments on the first draft report.

3 NATURAL AND CULTURAL HERITAGE RESOURCES

3.1 An inventory of the natural and cultural heritage resources we have identified in the Durness area as a result of research and consultation is attached at Appendices Three and Four.

3.2 Natural heritage

3.2.1 Durness is the most north-westerly inhabited area of Britain and comprises a collection of scattered townships and farms. It has a diverse economy based primarily on tourism, fish farming, sheep farming and crofting. The population stands at around 350 (150 households). The local primary school's roll has been declining and currently stands at 24.

3.2.2 This area has great UK and European importance for a range of geological, freshwater, marine and botanical interests. This is made clear through EU designation of the Durness SAC, which lists the following primary habitats:

- fixed dunes with calcareous vegetation
- hard oligo-mesotrophic waters with benthic vegetation of stonewort (*Chara*) species
- alpine and sub-alpine calcareous grasslands
- limestone pavement

3.2.3 Durness is part of the North West Highland Geopark. The Geopark is one of 25 partners in the European Geopark Network (endorsed by UNESCO). The North West area has outstanding geology – including the Moine Thrust – when the impact of two ancient continents colliding created many of the distinctive Scottish Mountains (evidence of which can be seen in the rocks of Sango bay). The Geopark starts in The Summer Isles in Wester Ross and continues northwards through west Sutherland to the north coast, it extends to the east of Durness, beyond Loch Eriboll, and onto the Moine. The Durness limestone was created directly or indirectly from bacteria and alga in an ecosystem vastly different from any known today. The story of the Geopark also links directly to the Victorian geologists who first tried to understand and explain the complex geology of the area – this controversy and debate led to a scientific revolution in how we understand geology today.

3.2.4 The area's unique geology limestone can be seen at Smoo Cave (a major local tourist attraction). Smoo is a very large sea cave, but the rear part of a karst cave (carved out by waters flowing down in the limestone from the impermeable rocks surrounding it). The cave was formed over many thousands of years, carved along a line of a weak fault, both by the river (which flows through it) and by the sea. Caves are a key feature of the limestone landscape and can be seen through-out the Geopark.

3.2.5 Durness is also the extreme north-west location for limestone pavement in the UK. Limestone pavements are outcrops of rock, typically horizontal or gently inclined, the surface of which has been dissolved by water over millions of years into "paving blocks" known as clints. These special habitats create an area is rich in flora and fauna.

3.2.6 A plant which thrives on the limestone is the mountain avens. Within Britain and Ireland, the principal extensive areas of mountain avens on limestone are in the Co. Clare, Eire. Not only is the extent of mountain avens at Durness impressive, but the

plants can often be accessible. In other places, you might need to climb hills to see mountain avens. Here, you can find them both near sea level and at greater altitudes.

- 3.2.7 Some other very attractive plants grow together with the avens. These include common plants such as wild thyme, bird's-foot trefoil and various orchids. Added to these assets is the presence of Scots primrose. Found only along the north mainland and in Orkney, but nowhere else in the world.
- 3.2.8 Though small in comparison with the huge machairs of the Hebrides, the Durness machair is one of the best in the north mainland.
- 3.2.9 The area also supports an impressive array of birdlife. Puffins, to be found in May, June and July in the area around Faraid Head, are a major draw for visitors, and there is an impressive range of seabirds to be found along the cliffs, including guillemots. A further bonus for on the croftland in general is the corncrake. This bird is now high on the wish list of birdwatchers and Durness is the key site for the species, being the only breeding site on mainland Britain.
- 3.2.10 Local mammals include otter (UK Priority Species), badger, fox and red deer, while offshore, there is potential for occasional sightings of porpoise, dolphins (various species), whales (especially minke whale) and seals (common and grey).
- 3.2.11 Another key local species is the great yellow bumble-bee (UK Priority Species). This species has undergone a dramatic decline in range and abundance through-out the UK, probably due to habitat loss to modern agricultural practices.
- 3.2.12 Loch Caladail, and nearby Lochs Borrallie and Croispol are the northernmost 'marl' lochs in the UK and among the best in Scotland. The deep waters of Loch Eriboll have diverse marine habitats, including beds of marl, and on the surface of Loch Eriboll, part of the interest comes from the use of the loch by red-throated divers in summer, and from its use in autumn and winter by great northern, red-throated and black-throated divers.

3.3 Cultural heritage

- 3.3.1 The unusual limestone geology and fertile land have made Durness an attractive place to settlers since early times and its archaeological landscape has a fascinating and distinctive story to tell.
- 3.3.2 Early settlement of the area has been highlighted by an ongoing project of research and excavation by Glasgow University Archaeological Research Division (GUARD). At Balnakeil, on the hillside above Loch Croispol are the remains of pre-historic settlement evidenced by Bronze-Age hut circles and cairn fields. Archaeological excavation of Smoo Cave (a Scheduled Ancient Monument) has resulted in the identification of several occupation/ activity horizons. The cutting back and recording of an eroding shell midden identified it to be Iron Age, although earlier deposits at lower level are thought to represent Mesolithic activity with in the cave. A large area of pre-historic settlement including hut circles, field systems and chambered cairns can also be found in the area around Keoldale Farm (many of which are Scheduled Ancient Monuments).
- 3.3.3 Durness was also an important place in the Viking era, as these early sailors visited and settled in the fertile farmlands. This is evidenced not only by a range of Viking place

names (Durness means “deer point” in Old Norse) but through archaeological evidence. The “Balnakeil Viking” is a 9th or 10th Century burial of a boy, found in the dunes at Balnakeil. A range of Viking-Age grave goods were also discovered, including a sword, shield, spear, brooch and gaming pieces.

- 3.3.4 Medieval activity is represented by Balnakeil Church which is said to have been founded in 722AD by St Maelrubha. The present unroofed church, which was abandoned in 1847, dates from 1619. Early monastic hermitages or cells along the coast are also recorded on the National Monuments Record. The Church and graveyard, along with Seanachaisteal promontory fort and monastic settlement are designated as Scheduled Ancient Monuments. The remains of medieval townships have also been identified in the area (including at Loch Croispol).
- 3.3.5 Balnakeil House was built in 1744, reputedly on the site of a monastery that served the church. It is believed that an early house on the site was used as the summer residence of the Bishop of Caithness and that it later belonged to the chiefs of the Clan Mackay. The chief of Mackay, Lord Reay, spent part of the year in Durness holding criminal courts in the house. The condemned were hanged at the nearby Loch Croispol, the “Loch of the Gallows”. Adjacent to the house are the remains of Balnakeil Mill and Farm. The province of Strathnaver (now absorbed into what is known as the County of Sutherland) was the traditional homeland of the Mackay clan. It was also known as Dùthaich Mhic Aoidh (Mackay Country), and the name is still common today.
- 3.3.6 Religion would have played an important part in the lives of Mackay Country people. The now ruined parish school building at Balnakeil was built in 1774 with the help of the Scottish Society for the Propagation of Christian Knowledge (SSPCK), a body founded in 1709 to establish schools in the Highlands and Islands in order to promote Christian learning. (However, with the opening of schools in Durine (1844) and Sangomore (1846), the school ceased to be attended and was eventually closed in 1861).
- 3.3.7 Durness also had a part to play in the Disruption of 1843 (the split with the established church which led to the formation of the Free Church of Scotland).
- 3.3.8 Before the Clearances of the 1840s, the area around modern Durness was made up of many small townships. These included Durine, Lerin, Sangomore, Smoo, Sangobeg, Balnakeil, Keoldale, Hope, Eriboll and Ceannabeinne. Old artefacts representing the crofters’ lifestyle can still be found in the area.
- 3.3.9 The importance of the area was shipping is demonstrated by the Cape Wrath Lighthouse, which was built by Robert Stevenson in 1828 and is situated on the most north-westerly tip of the Scottish mainland. The name of the headland derives from the Norse “turning point”. The old buildings by the lighthouse are the remains of a signal station used in the 1930s. As with many of the areas around Durness, Cape Wrath once had a thriving community, but the area is now abandoned. A bell, from a ship that ran aground in Balnakeil Bay in the mid 19th Century, is said to have been given to the women of Durness who helped to rescue the crew.
- 3.3.10 Ceannabeinne, a township cleared in the early 1840s, has an important story to tell of the Highland Clearances – particularly its role as the location of the Durness Riots, when the townsfolk resisted eviction from their lands. (See Appendix Four) Today it consists of several ruined structures situated by the side of the A838 Durness to Tongue road. Plans are currently being taken forward to open this site to the public with

interpretation. However, prior to the enforced clearances, there had been voluntary emigration as Durness people searched for a better life in the new world. In the early 1800s, a whole community from Hope emigrated to Price Edward Island, while in the “People’s Clearance” of 1772, families from Loch Eriboll made the journey to North Carolina.

3.3.11 Durness’s strategic location is shown by 20th Century WWII radar stations remains (including bunkers and look-out posts). The Balnakeil Craft Village complex was built in the late 1950s as an early warning station against nuclear attack. The site was never commissioned and in 1964 the buildings were put to use as accommodation for a craft village. The Durness area continues to be used by the MOD for training.

3.4 Cultural Heritage - People and Stories

3.4.1 In addition to the natural and cultural heritage resources, there are a number of stories relating to the people who have come from, or been inspired by the area.

3.4.2 The Gaelic poet Rob Donn was born in Strathmore in the parish of Durness in 1714. He never learned to speak English or to read and write, but was known for this satirical oral verses. These verses are now recognised as supreme examples of Celtic verse-forms. He is buried at Balnakeil Churchyard in Durness.

3.4.3 The MacDonald Collection of piping music was compiled by Joseph MacDonald, the son of Rev Murdo MacDonald, an influential minister of Durness. Joseph was the first musician to commit bagpipe music successfully to paper. His brother, Patrick, published the collection in Argyll in the 1760s. Although known as the Argyll Collection, much of the music was inspired by the province of Strathnaver and many of the tunes have a direct link to Durness.

3.4.4 There is a local story that James Munro, 5th President of the United States of America (1817-1825), was of Durness ancestry, and that the mother of famous philanthropist, Andrew Carnegie was born in the Durness area.

3.4.5 John Lennon was a visitor to Durness, spending his childhood holidays in the area with his cousin Stan at Sangomore. Stan’s stepfamily owned a croft in Durness where the family would spend the summer. The John Lennon Memorial Garden was opened at the new village hall in 2002.

3.5 Significance of natural and heritage resources

3.5.1 Appendices Three and Four gives full details of the natural and cultural heritage resources identified on the sites and in the surrounding area.

3.5.2 Assessing the significance of resources can be a subjective process, based partly on the views of stakeholders, which are, of course, a very valid part of the overall picture. Column Two in the table below shows a score reflecting the views of stakeholders in terms of the resources they consider to be most important.

3.5.3 However, it is also important to look at any objective measures which can be applied – notably official designations which help build a picture of the importance of resources in local, regional, national or international terms. Where a resource has been national

and regional/local designations, this is reflected in the score given. Column Three below shows a score for those resources which carry an official designation.

3.5.4 We have also scored resources which can otherwise be easily interpreted on the TIC, higher than resources which cannot be seen by visitors or easily interpreted at the TIC.

3.5.5 These individual scores have then been aggregated (in Column Five) to show an overall score for each resource. The table below shows the resources ranked in descending order of their aggregate score.

Resource	Importance accorded by consultees. Scored 1-5 (5 = very important) 5=top story 3=story (should be told) 1= mentioned	Official designation. Scored 0-2. (2 = officially designated of national importance; 1 = designated as of local importance; 0 = no official designation)	Located on, visible from, or able to be easily interpreted on site? Scored 1-4, 4= on-site/very visible/easy to interpret/ link with existing interpretation	Aggregate score (Columns 2-4)
Geology (general) - Geopark – including limestone (and limestone fields/lochs/vegetation etc in Balnakeil/Keoldale Farm area), fossils “oystershell rock”, caves, Moine Thrust and 19 th Century geologists.	5	2 (European Geopark Status)	4	11
Smoo Cave (Geology and archaeology)	5	2 (Scheduled Ancient Monument)	4	11
Balnakeil Church and graveyard	5	2 (Scheduled Ancient Monument)	3	10
Ceannbeinne Township – Durness Riots (Story of the Clearances)	5	1 (recorded on National Monuments Record)	4	10
Puffins	5	1 (Local Priority Species recorded in Sutherland Biodiversity Action Plan)	4	10
Seabirds (all species)	5	1 (Local Priority Species recorded in Sutherland Biodiversity Action Plan)	4	10
Balnakeil Beach	5	0 (no official designation)	4	9

Resource	Importance accorded by consultees. Scored 1-5 (5 = very important) 5=top story 3=story (should be told) 1= mentioned	Official designation. Scored 0-2. (2 = officially designated of national importance; 1 = designated as of local importance; 0 = no official designation)	Located on, visible from, or able to be easily interpreted on site? Scored 1-4, 4= on-site/very visible/easy to interpret/ link with existing interpretation	Aggregate score (Columns 2-4)
Cape Wrath (Lighthouse and most North westerly point)	5	1 (recorded on National Monuments Record)	3	9
Corncrake	5	2 (UK Priority Species recorded in Sutherland Biodiversity Action Plan)	2	9
Dolphins	5	2 (UK Priority Species recorded in Sutherland Biodiversity Action Plan)	2	9
Mackay Country	5	0 (no official designation)	4	9
Old Schoolhouse	5	1 (recorded on National Monuments Record)	3	9
Otter	5	2 (UK Priority Species recorded in Sutherland Biodiversity Action Plan)	2	9
Porpoise	5	2 (UK Priority Species recorded in Sutherland Biodiversity Action Plan)	2	9
Scots Primrose	5	1 (Local Priority Species recorded in Sutherland Biodiversity Action Plan)	3	9
Vikings – Balnakeil Viking burial	5	1 (recorded on National Monuments Record)	3	9
Whales	5	2 (UK Priority Species recorded in Sutherland Biodiversity Action Plan)	2	9
Great Yellow Bumble Bee	4	2 (UK Priority Species recorded in Sutherland Biodiversity Action Plan)	2	8
John Lennon	5	0 (no official designation)	3	8
Limestone/ Limestone pavements (and limestone fields/lochs/vegetation etc)	3	2 (Part European Geopark Status/ Durness SAC/ UK Priority Habitat)	2	8
Loch Croispol – prehistoric settlement remains	4	1 (recorded on National Monuments Record)	3	8
MacDonald Collection	5	0 (no official designation)	3	8
Rob Donn	5	0 (no official designation)	3	8

Resource	Importance accorded by consultees. Scored 1-5 (5 = very important) 5=top story 3=story (should be told) 1= mentioned	Official designation. Scored 0-2. (2 = officially designated of national importance; 1 = designated as of local importance; 0 = no official designation)	Located on, visible from, or able to be easily interpreted on site? Scored 1-4, 4= on-site/very visible/easy to interpret/ link with existing interpretation	Aggregate score (Columns 2-4)
Balnakeil House	3	1 (recorded on National Monuments Record)	3	7
Craft Village	3	1 (recorded on National Monuments Record)	3	7
MOD (activity and influence in area)	3	0 (no official designation)	4	7
Mountain Ravens	3	1 (Local Priority Species recorded in Sutherland Biodiversity Action Plan)	3	7
Wild Orchids	3	1 (Local Priority Species recorded in Sutherland Biodiversity Action Plan)	3	7
General emigration	3	0 (no official designation)	4	6
Seals (common and Grey)	3	0 (no official designation)	3	6
Keoldale Farm area - prehistoric settlement remains	1	2 (Scheduled Ancient Monument)	2	5
Seanachaisteal promontory fort and monastic settlement	0	2 (Scheduled Ancient Monument)	2	4
WWII remains	1	1 (recorded on National Monuments Record)	2	4
James Munro	1	0 (no official designation)	2	3
Red and black-throated divers	0	1 (Local Priority Species recorded in Sutherland Biodiversity Action Plan)	2	3

3.4.6 We would suggest that the interpretation in the sites concerned should concentrate on resources scoring 6 or more in the table above. This does not mean that lower-scoring resources should not be interpreted but rather that their coverage in the sites in question should focus on them as additional opportunities for things to see and do in the local area rather than as part of the key theme and sub-themes.

4 STRATEGIC CONTEXT

4.1 Area Tourism Partnership Plan

4.1.1 The Highland Area Tourism Partnership (ATP) comprises representatives from the tourist industry and key public bodies involved in delivering tourism in the Highlands, including VisitScotland, Highland Council, the Highlands and Islands Enterprise network, Scottish Natural Heritage, Forestry Commission Scotland, Cairngorms National Park Authority and Hi-Trans. The group was established in 2005, in order to work together to develop and deliver plans and programmes to grow tourism in the Highlands. The Highland ATP has agreed an *Area Tourism Partnership Strategy and Plan*¹, which covers the period 2006- 2015 and which replaces the previous Area Tourism Strategy (2000–05). The Plan describes some of the key issues that need to be addressed in order to grow tourism in the Highlands, and to contribute to the national vision and aspiration, outlined in the new national tourism strategy, *A Tourism Framework for Change* (March 2006), of making Scotland one of the world’s foremost visitor destinations by 2015 and growing tourism revenues by 50%.

4.1.2 The Strategy contains a vision for 2015 where:
“... visitors will enjoy an authentic Highland experience, in which the outstanding natural heritage and friendly local people provide a unique sense of place. The natural heritage and environment of the Highlands will be fully recognised as being central to the tourism experience and the Highland tourism industry will make a significant contribution to the protection and enhancement of the communities and the natural environment that are the centre of its attraction”.

4.1.3 It goes on to envisage a situation where:
“The heritage experience and message in the Highlands will be well focused and will be promoted in a clear, distinctive and co-ordinated way. The number and range of attractions will have widened, with a programme of promotion and special events and the development of new interpretation and facilities, including at GeoParks and the Cairngorms National Park. There will be a more comprehensive approach to signage and interpretation, including the use of Gaelic, and visitor attraction and facilities staff and volunteers will participate in a shared programme of training, with a high standard of commitment to customer care being evident.”

4.1.4 Specific targets within the strategy which may be relevant to the Centre include:

- to give our visitors an authentic experience that meets or exceeds their expectations and provides good value for money
- to increase the number, availability and quality of facilities to ensure that visitors have ready access to basic amenities throughout the Highlands and are able to easily find out about them.
- To increase the range of things to do and see in the Highlands, particularly focusing on the development of
- landscape/natural heritage attractions.
- to identify opportunities for new visitor attractions and activities, and develop plans for delivering these by 2009.
- To put in place opportunities to experience local heritage, including Gaelic where this has cultural roots, in every part of the Highlands, by 2010.

¹ http://www.scotexchange.net/highland_strategy_final.pdf [Accessed 1st September 2007]

- to further develop single portal access to Gaelic and genealogy facilities, services and attractions across the Highlands by 2008, building on existing initiatives and linking to similar services in the rest of Scotland.
- to promote the quality and diversity of the natural heritage of the Highlands.

4.2 Highland Interpretive Strategy – Sutherland Area Framework for Interpretation

4.2.1 This report, produced by the Highland Interpretive Strategy Project² in 1998, was based on the findings of an audit of interpretive resources in Sutherland. The report found that existing provision was patchy and of variable quality, and recommended, amongst other things, that new interpretation in the area should:

- focus particularly on culture and the arts, fisheries and marine sciences, industry and crafts, and weather and climate, genealogy, ornithology, geology, golf, trout fishing and beaches.
- consider other forms of interpretation as well as traditional panels and print items – for example, first-person interpretation (including encouraging local people to become involved in, for example, providing guided tours), “new technologies” (including audio tours), special events etc.
- improve interpretive provision for people with disabilities.
- increase the amount of Gaelic content in interpretation
- increase foreign language provision and use graphics etc where possible to reduce the amount of text requiring translation.

4.2.2 Although the framework document is now nine years old and there has been investment in new interpretive provision in the meantime, many of its findings and recommendations are still valid.

4.3 Highland Council Local Plan

4.3.1 The current local authority *North West Sutherland Local Plan*³ (adopted May 1987) contains the following strategic objectives and statements relevant to environmental improvements and interpretation in the Durness area:

- *The local must therefore be directed towards: - conserving the area’s outstanding scenic qualities and achieving significant environmental improvements; upgrading the promoting visitor facilities.*
- *The Council will encourage the MOD to continue to investigate ways in which to enhance public safety and awareness....*

4.3.2 A new draft Local Plan for the area is currently in preparation. A consultation exercise *Sutherland Futures*⁴, which included a public meeting in Durness, ended on 15th December 2006. Comments from the Durness consultation focused on the identification of sites for housing and business development. However, the draft Local

² *Highland Interpretive Strategy Project*, established in 1994 and joint funded by the Highland Council, Highlands and Islands Enterprise, Scottish Natural Heritage and the Highlands and Islands Partnership Programme (ERDF Objective 1 funding).

³ *North West Sutherland Local Plan May 1987*, Highland Regional Council.

⁴ *Sutherland Local Plan, Sutherland Futures* <http://www.highland.gov.uk/NR/rdonlyres/73F7C95D-0D5A-4770-8AFD-E934AC74FB44/0/northwest.pdf> [Accessed 1st September 2007]

Plan will also look at a wider of topics, including the development of tourism infrastructure⁵.

4.4 Local visitor attractions

4.4.1 The major built visitor attractions in the Durness area⁶ are:

Visitor Attraction	Visitor numbers 2004	Visitor numbers 2005	Visitor numbers 2006
Falls of Shin Visitor Centre (Lairg)	225,000	N/K	N/K
Knockan Crag Visitor Centre, Elphin	40,000	10,500	11,250
Durness Visitor Centre (Durness)	26,707	23,494	19,948
Assynt Visitor Centre (Assynt)	22,448	18,623	20,028
Ferrycroft Visitor Centre (Lairg)	9,721	8,885	10,210
RSBP Forsinard Reserve	5,016	4,552	3,827

At free entry sites, visitor numbers range from around 225,000 at the Falls of Shin near Lairg, to just over 20,000 at the Assynt Visitor Centre and around 11,000 visitors at Knockan Crag, near Elphin. However, specifically at Falls of Shin, although there is no charge to visit the Falls, the site generates significant income through its restaurant and its retail outlet (now significantly enhanced by the Harrods badge).

The Durness tourist information centre recorded around 20,000 visitors in 2006, a decline of almost 6,000 (31%) in comparison with 2004. Like the Durness Centre, Assynt Visitor Centre and Ferrycroft Visitor Centre both offer TIC and visitor centre services but neither of these saw numbers fall as much as Durness: Assynt Visitor Centre recorded a fall of 12% while numbers at the Ferrycroft Centre in Lairg actually increased). While we cannot say why numbers at Durness should have fallen more in the period, issues which may have contributed may include lack of refreshment of interpretation, opening hours in need of review etc. Regionally and nationally, there was a slight rise in visitor numbers over the period 2004-2006 (Please see para 5.4.2 below for further details).

4.5 Existing local interpretive provision

4.5.1 Existing interpretation within the TIC is discussed further in Section 8 of this report.

4.5.2 Other interpretation locally includes:

⁵ Sutherland Local Plan, Background Papers <http://www.highland.gov.uk/NR/rdonlyres/E523B629-26C4-4B24-9948-410A3E251F7C/0/bgecdev.pdf> [Accessed 1st September 2007]

⁶ *Visitor Attraction Monitor, 2004-2006*, produced by Glasgow Caledonian University for VisitScotland.

Location	Interpretation	Description
Smoo Cave		Interpretation Panel – The Highland Council is planning to update these panels shortly.
Smoo Cave		Interpretation Panel – The Highland Council is planning to update these panels shortly.
Balnakeil Beach		Ranger Interpretation Panel which gives details of the birds to be seen in the area.
Balnakeil Beach		MOD information board giving details of activity in the area.
Durness TIC		Notice Board by beach. Mix of information displayed– typed sheets.

Keoldale		Interpretation panel – part of series of Caithness and Sutherland “Coastal Trail” panels.
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4.5.3 In addition:

- Durness Development Group is currently undertaking a project to interpret a pre-clearance township on the Ceannabeinne site east of Durness.
- The Highland Council is planning to update and refresh the interpretation at Smoo Cave. We understand that a project to design new interpretive panels is now underway.

5 POTENTIAL TARGET AUDIENCES

5.1 Identifying the likely target audience for interpretation helps in the process of identifying suitable objectives, themes and interpretive media.

5.2 *Highlands Visitor Survey*

5.2.1 Visitor profile data is not available for the Durness area specifically. In the absence of local data, the most recent comprehensive survey is the *Highlands Visitor Survey 2002*⁷ which contains information for the Caithness and Sutherland Enterprise area.

5.2.2 This report contains data drawn from 611 face-to-face interviews carried out in Caithness and Sutherland over the period May 2002 to April 2003. Half of the surveys were undertaken in Sutherland. Most data is analysed separately for Caithness and Sutherland, although some information is only available for the combined areas.

5.2.3 ***Origin of visitors:*** The survey findings indicate that visitors to Sutherland typically:

- are likely to be from the UK. (44% were from Scotland and 36% were from elsewhere in the UK, meaning that 80% in total were domestic visitors).
- if from overseas, are more likely to be from continental Europe, particularly Germany (14% of those surveyed in the combined Caithness and Sutherland areas were from continental Europe, of whom 5% were from Germany). Non-European visitors accounted for 9% of those surveyed in the combined area, with 4% of these being from the United States of America).

5.2.4 ***Age of visitors:*** the survey found that visitors are fairly likely to be aged 55 or over (43%). 35% were aged between 35 and 54 years, while 21% were between 16 and 34 years old. *Age profile information is only available for Caithness and Sutherland combined.*

⁷ *Highlands Visitor Survey 2003, Full Year Report, May 2002 to April 2003, Caithness and Sutherland*, commissioned by Highlands and Islands Enterprise, The Highland Council, The Highlands of Scotland Tourist Board and others.

5.2.5 **Socio-economic groupings:** Visitors to Sutherland are likely to be in the ABC1 socio-economic categories (50%). *This information is only available for Caithness and Sutherland combined.*

5.2.6 **Visitor profile:** Visitors surveyed:

- were slightly more likely to be on a secondary holiday (52%) rather than their main holiday of the year (48%).
- stayed an average of 4.2 nights in Sutherland during their visit.
- were most likely to be travelling without children (83%). 56% of those surveyed were accompanied by one other adult and no children while only 16% of those interviewed had children in their party.
- were likely to be repeat visitors to the area (but 36% are likely not to have visited the area at all before). The mean number of visits to Sutherland in the previous ten years among those surveyed was 4.6 visits. 20% of those surveyed in Sutherland had visited the area nine times or more.
- were likely to be travelling in their own car (70%) or in a hire car (15%).
- were likely to be staying in a hotel (28%) or Bed and Breakfast (26%). The use of self-catering accommodation, while lower than serviced accommodation, was higher in Sutherland than the Highlands overall (18% versus 12%). 14% of those interviewed in Sutherland were staying with friends and relatives.

5.2.7 **Main reasons for visit:** The main reasons people visit Sutherland are for scenery/views (25%), peace and quiet (17%) or walking/hillwalking (10%). Only 3% mentioned history as the main reason for their visit to Sutherland while numbers citing archaeology failed to register a score in the survey.

5.2.8 **Activities/interests:** Data from the survey indicates that visitors to Sutherland:

- are very likely to take part in general sightseeing activities (90%)
- are relatively likely to go for short, low-level walks of 2-8 miles (51%); 21% of those surveyed had gone or intended to go hillwalking while 16% said they were interested in low-level walks of more than 8 miles.

5.2.9 **Natural heritage activities:** The survey findings indicated that almost a quarter of visitors (23%) had watched or intended to watch birds, while 17% said they had watched or intended to watch land-based wildlife or to visit woodland/forests.

5.2.10 **Cultural heritage activities:** The table below shows participation rates in various heritage-related activities recorded in the survey for Sutherland then compared with participation rates in the Highlands as a whole. (Visitors were asked whether they had participated, or intended to participate, in a list of activities which included those listed below).

	Visit castle/monument etc	Visit museum/art gallery etc	Visit an archaeological site
Sutherland	45%	25%	15%
Highlands	46%	36%	14%

These figures indicate that:

- visits to castles/monuments in Sutherland (almost half of all visitors) is broadly in line with those in the Highlands as a whole

- figures for visits to museums/art galleries in Sutherland (30%) are lower than for the Highlands as a whole.
- visits to archaeological sites in Sutherland (14%) are broadly in line with the figure for the Highlands as a whole, but, at fewer than one in six visitors, are still very low when compared with the highest-scoring activities of general sightseeing (89%) and low-level walking (44%). *However, it is interesting to note that visitors generally appear to have a higher propensity to visit a site perceived as place for general sightseeing rather than as an archaeological site. This is borne out by research in Orkney⁸ which suggested that some of the visitors visiting Skara Brae and other high-profile archaeological sites on the islands did not perceive them as archaeological sites but rather simply as places to visit. Equally, given the popularity of short walks, promoting visits to local archaeological sites as short walk opportunities rather than as archaeological trails, may attract a wider audience. These factors should be borne in mind when encouraging visitors to the Centre to explore archaeological sites in the Durness area – the manner of presentation and the way sites are perceived by visitors may have an effect on the numbers of visitors they attract.*

5.2.11 **Key points:** The Highlands Visitor Survey provides some important pointers in terms of understanding the potential market for new interpretive facilities in Sutherland. In particular, the findings suggest that:

- most visitors will be from the UK
- most will be travelling with one other adult
- almost half will be aged over 55 years of age
- few visitors will have children with them
- the majority of potential customers for new interpretation are likely to be interested in general sightseeing while a substantial proportion will also be interested in short low-level walks. Only a minority will be likely to have a special interest in heritage or the natural environment, and this should be borne in mind when developing materials for the TIC.

5.3 Visitor numbers: Durness Tourist Information Centre and Visitor Centre

5.3.1 Visitor numbers for the TIC have been taken from the *Visitor Attractions Monitor 2004⁹ and 2006¹⁰*

Year	Total
2003	32,858
2004	26,707
2005	23,494
2006	19,948

5.3.2 Comparative figures for admissions to visitor attractions over the period 2002-2006 are not available. However, looking at trends over the period 2005-2006, which are available via the *Visitor Attractions Monitor 2006*, most visitor attractions generally in the Highlands experienced a slight rise (1.6%) in visitors, and this was also the case at

⁸ *Orkney Visitor Survey 2000*, commissioned by the Orkney Tourist Board

⁹ *Visitor Attraction Monitor, 2004*, produced by Glasgow Caledonian University for VisitScotland

¹⁰ *Visitor Attraction Monitor, 2006*, produced by Glasgow Caledonian University for VisitScotland

national level (1.5% - excluding Kelvingrove Museum and Art Gallery which increases figures to 6%). Figures for the specific sector of heritage/visitor centres Scotland-wide were more static over the two years, showing an increase of 1.6%. From this data, it appears that Durness TIC admissions may be dropping against regional and national trends.

5.4 **Tourist Information Centre: Face-to-face visitor survey findings (August 2007)**

5.4.1 In August 2007, Rowan Tree Consulting undertook a survey to gather information on visitors to Durness, visitors' views on the existing interpretation at the Durness Visitor Centre and how to improve the experience of visiting the Centre. The face-to-face surveys were undertaken in and around the TIC over 5 days in August 2007. In total, 60 visitors were surveyed. The full findings of the survey are detailed in Appendix Five. It should be noted that the results give a "snapshot" of the profile of visitors over the survey period and for this reason we have highlighted any major differences between our survey findings and the findings of the Highlands Visitor Survey 2002. The results can be summarised as follows:

5.4.2 **Origin of visitors:** The survey findings indicated that visitors to Durness Tourist Information Centre in August typically:

- are likely to be from overseas (60%), particularly continental Europe (14% of those surveyed were from Germany, 8% from Italy and Switzerland and 6% from France).
- if from the UK (40%), are likely to be from England (26%). (26% were from England and 12% from Scotland).

Note: The Highlands Visitor Survey found that 80% of visitors were from the UK.

5.4.3 **Age of visitors:** the survey found that visitors are fairly likely (43%) to be aged between 25-34 years old (17%) or 35-44 years old (26%). Over 55s accounted for 18% of visitors.

Note: The Highlands Visitor Survey found that 35% of visitors were aged 25-44 years, and that over 55s accounted for 43% of all visitors, suggesting that the profile of visitors to Durness is younger than for Sutherland and Caithness as a whole.

5.4.4 **Visit profile:** Visitors surveyed:

- were typically on holiday away from home (100%)
- travelling with a friend/ relative or partner (58%) ie in a group of two. *In all, 70% were travelling alone or in a group of two people, compared with a corresponding figure of 56% in the Highlands Visitor Survey.*
- 13.7% of those surveyed had children aged under 18 in their party.

5.4.5 **Main reason for visit:** The main reason people cited for visiting Durness was for general sightseeing (90%) with many visiting Durness as part of a tour around the North West Coast of Scotland. This figure of 90% is exactly the same as the corresponding Highlands Visitor Survey, and reinforces the fact that very few visitors have been influenced to visit the area as a result of a strong interest in its natural and cultural heritage.

5.4.6 **Activities/interests:** Data from the survey indicates that visitors to Durness:

- are likely to go for short, low-level walks of 2-8 miles (55%); watch birds and /or wildlife (40%); buy gifts and souvenirs (35%) or visit a museum/ historic building/ archaeological site (33%). *Corresponding figures from the Highlands Visitor Survey were 51%, 23%, 23% and 45% respectively. This suggests that, in comparison to visitors to Sutherland as a whole, visitors to Durness are:*
 - *marginally more likely to go for short walks*
 - *much more likely to watch birds and/or wildlife*
 - *less likely to buy gifts and souvenirs*
 - *less likely to visit historic/archaeological sites.*
- are most likely to visit the beaches (45%); visit Smoo Cave or Balnakeil Craft Village (35%); and go to a tearoom/restaurant/pub (33%).
- are fairly unlikely (only 25%) to want to see or find out about the area's geology.
- are likely to visit two or more sites in the local area (43%).

The Durness survey findings highlight the potential to encourage visitors to go on short walks or watch birds/wildlife while also flagging up the need to take an imaginative approach to promoting the area's historic/archaeological sites and geology to visitors who are less likely to have a particular interest in these. It is interesting to note the lower proportion of visitors to Durness saying they had bought/ were going to buy gifts and souvenirs locally, particularly given that this survey was undertaken in the peak season: the Highlands Visitor Survey found that peak season visitors tended to spend more generally during their visit (as per the findings of the Highlands Visitor Survey), and there consequently appears to be an opportunity to promote local opportunities for buying gifts/souvenirs more actively.

5.4.7 ***Length of Visit:*** The survey findings indicated that almost half (46%) of visitors surveyed intended to spend fewer than 4 hours in Durness, with a further 12% saying that they would be spending a day or less in the area – ie 58% of those surveyed (almost six visitors out of every ten surveyed) were staying a day or less. There is clear potential for encouraging longer dwell-times, with knock-on benefits for the local economy.

Visitors surveyed were also spending fewer nights overall in Sutherland than visitors surveyed in the Highlands visitor survey (3.48 nights as opposed to 4.2). As the Highlands Visitor Survey was undertaken five years ago, it is impossible to know whether this is due to a declining length of stay in Sutherland overall since 2002 or if it is a general feature of visitors to Durness. In either case, however, the findings suggest that working to increase length of visit in Durness should be seen as important.

5.4.8 ***Likelihood of return visit to Durness.*** Data from the survey indicates that visitors to Durness:

- are very unlikely to return to Durness during their current holiday (68%); but, are fairly likely to return to Durness again in the next 2 years (33%).

5.4.9 ***Enjoyment of visit to Durness:*** Data from the survey indicates that visitors to Durness:

- found their current visit to be better than expected (38%); 33% thought it was the same as expected and 28% did not know what to expect.

5.4.10 ***Satisfaction with current TIC:*** Data from the survey indicates that visitors to Durness TIC used many of the facilities:

	No.	%
Displays of free information leaflets/brochures/posters	54	90
Items for sale (books, postcards etc)	44	73
Exhibition about history/geology/culture of area	42	70
Display of local craft items	41	68
Countryside ranger display	40	67
Millennium embroidery panels	38	63
Advice/information from member of staff	33	55
Accommodation booking	17	28

- Nearly one quarter of visitors found the TIC/ Visitor Centre better than expected (23%); 35% thought it was the same as expected and 40% did not know what to expect.

5.4.11 Suggestions as to how the interpretation at the Centre might be improved are as shown below. As can be seen, many requests were for coffees and teas etc to be available; consideration should perhaps be given to this although it would be important not to threaten the business of existing local businesses offering refreshments. However, as many visitors to the Centre are staying a very short time in Durness (29% said they were staying for less than two hours), it could be that offering such a facility would generate income which would otherwise be lost totally to the area.

Suggestions as to information and interpretation have been incorporated into the suggested interpretation where applicable. There appears also to be a clear demand for more local print items (maps and leaflets).

- *Café*
- *Café - hot and cold drinks*
- *Camper vans- have places for water and waste water*
- *Coffee and hot drinks*
- *Coffee and JL info*
- *Coffee and Tea available*
- *Coffee shop - waiting 3hrs for bus in rain*
- *Coffee shop (x3)*
- *Events board with info for the week, bigger shop and local crafts*
- *Geology map of Scotland*
- *Good as it is!*
- *Have a coffee shop*
- *Have a leaflet of the panel info to take away - toilets - open all year round*
- *Have maps and copies of maps of the area*
- *Have more gifts, things to buy and presents plus tea room with light snacks*
- *Looking for a B&B in the area*
- *Looking for maps*
- *Looking for toilets*
- *Make leaflet of information from panels*
- *More books in German, more on animals and wildlife*
- *More detailed weather forecast*
- *More family history and clans*
- *More geology info - basics for kids*

- *More gifts - including whisky in shop*
- *More info of archaeology and history*
- *More info of flowers, birds/ wildlife and guide to daily walks*
- *More leaflets on local attractions and local crafts*
- *More of John Lennon connection, walks and wildlife info and coffee and food*
- *More of things to See and Do - plus the Hood Memorial*
- *More stones and minerals to buy*
- *Not easy to find info in Italian*
- *Offer activities for kids to keep them busy*
- *OK as is! (x2)*
- *Pretty good as it is!*
- *TIC very useful*
- *Toilets (x3)*
- *Toilets and café*
- *Toilets and café would be good*
- *Toilets and tea/ coffee*
- *Better gift section - with local goods*
- *A warm fire and cup of coffee*

5.5 Conclusions

5.5.1 In terms of interpretation, the main conclusions from the survey seem to be:

- visitors will be primarily adults, travelling in groups of adults but with a reasonable proportion (20%) of groups with children, indicating that facilities for children may enhance the experience of visiting the Centre or, even, help attract more family groups (if actively promoted to these groups).
- fairly likely to be from outwith the UK – even if the August 2007 survey findings show an abnormally high proportion of overseas visitors compared with the Highlands Visitor Survey, the chances are that a minimum of around 40% of visitors will be from abroad (mainly Europe), with implications for the way in which interpretation is presented.
- the majority of potential customers for new interpretation are likely to be primarily interested in general sightseeing (90%) while a substantial proportion will also be interested in going for short, low-level walks of 2-8 miles (55%); watching birds and /or wildlife (40%); buy gifts and souvenirs (35%) or visit a museum/ historic building/ archaeological site (33%);
- the majority of visitors are likely to be interesting in visiting one or more sites in the local area (82%) – suggesting that there is scope to use interpretation to encourage visits to local sites of interest.
- only a minority will be likely to have a specific interest in sites of historical/archaeological or geological interest - suggesting that interpretation should be designed to appeal primarily to the general public rather than those with a special interest, and that promotion of local sites in the area might attract more visitors if they are promoted as destinations for short walks and as places where you can also enjoy bird/wildlife-watching.

6 INTERPRETIVE OBJECTIVES

6.1 General comments

6.1.1 Effective interpretive plans have clearly-defined objectives which are used both to plan interpretive content and media and to create a framework for monitoring their effectiveness.

6.1.2 When identifying interpretive objectives, it is useful to list them under the headings of “*learning*” objectives, “*emotional*” objectives, “*behavioural*” and “*promotional*” objectives as this process helps not only to define each specific objective exactly but also to help define quantifiable targets so that the effectiveness of the interpretation can be assessed at a later date.

6.2 Suggested interpretive objectives

6.2.1 The suggested objectives outlined below take account of:

- the client’s objectives re the provision of interpretation (please see Section 1 above)
- the area’s natural and cultural resources and the scoring process applied to assess their relative significance (please see Section 3 above)
- the likely profiles of visitors to the site (see Section 5 above).

6.2.2 The objectives are aimed at achieving defined outcomes amongst the people who experience the interpretation. This framework of desired outcomes will allow the effectiveness of the interpretation installed to be assessed on an objective, quantitative basis. Where relevant, we have drawn on baseline information gathered from the survey of visitors to the centre carried out during August 2007 in order to set targets for the new interpretation.

6.2.3 The interpretive objectives outlined below are aimed primarily at the main types of visitors likely to visit the centre. However, well-designed interpretation should be able to cater for a visitors with varying degrees of knowledge and interest, and, if designed in keeping with best practice standards, should be accessible to people with a wide range of backgrounds in terms of age, origin etc.

6.3 Learning objectives

6.3.1 The majority of people who experience the interpretation will:

- be aware that the Durness area offers a range of places to visit and activities for people interested in general sightseeing, short walks, or finding out more about the area’s natural and cultural heritage. (Target: 95%)
- be aware of the specific special stories which the Durness area has to tell (see interpretive sub-themes detailed in Section 7 below). (Target: 75%).

6.4 Emotional objectives

6.4.1 The majority of people who experience the interpretation will:

- feel that the Durness area has an interesting and special heritage (natural and cultural) which they would like to find out more about, either during their current visit or a future visit to the area. (Target: 75%).
- feel that their visit has been better than expected to 50%. (*The visitor survey showed that 38% of visitors felt that their visit to Durness had been better than expected*).
- feel that the Visitor Centre is better than they expected. (Target: 50%, currently 23%).
- feel that they them want to visit the Durness area again and to recommend it as a place for family and friends to visit. (Target: 75%)

6.5 Behavioural objectives

6.5.1 The majority of people who experience the interpretation will:

- visit two or more of the sites in and around Durness promoted in the interpretation and/or undertake one or more of the activities promoted (for example, walking, bird-watching etc). Target: 60%. (*The visitor survey showed that 43% of visitors visited two or more sites in and around Durness*).
- make repeat visits to the Durness area. Target: 20% (current trip), 65% (future trip – within two years). *The visitor survey showed that 20% of visitors where fairly or very likely to return to Durness during their current stay away from home and that 55% of visitors where fairly or very likely to return to Durness during the next 2 years*).
- stay longer in the Durness area during their current visit, or a future visit, than would have been the case prior to the installation of the new interpretation. Target: achieve longer dwell time trying primarily to convert very short stays into half days or longer, day stays into overnights, and single overnights into two-night stays: the exact percentage targets are difficult to set but could look something along the lines shown in the table below.

Length of stay	Current %	Target %
30-60 minutes	12	5
1-2 hours	17	8
2-4 hours	17	8
4-7 hours	5	12
7-12 hours	5	12
12-24 hours	12	15
24-48 hours	13	15
2-4 days	12	15
More than 4 days	7	10

- explore other sites in Mackay Country. (Target: 40%)
- recommend visits to the Durness area to their family and friends. (Target: 80%)

7 CURRENT INTERPRETIVE PROVISION

7.1 On our visit to Durness Visitor Centre on 28th June 2007, we reviewed existing provision in the centre.

7.2 In addition, the survey of visitors to the centre undertaken during August 2007 asked for opinions on existing interpretation.

7.3 In general terms, the overall impression when entering the Centre is quite positive, with a variety of materials. Feedback from visitors surveyed was also generally positive, with a lot of people commenting particularly on the hands-on natural history exhibits in the Countryside Ranger display and saying that the panels (on the left hand side as you enter the centre through the side-door from the car-park) were interesting.

7.4 However, closer inspection shows that there is room for improvement.

- the current displays are rather dated and disjointed. There is a lack of cohesive design - individual elements of the display do not tie in together in terms of presentation.
- the interpretive panels to the left as you enter, although visually attractive, are very “word-heavy”. Observation of visitors looking at them suggested that many just scanned them quickly rather than reading them in their entirety. They may be particularly difficult for children or people whose first language is not English to understand. In terms of content, there was a feeling amongst some consultees that the information on crofting gave a false impression of life in Durness during the winter.
- the free-standing carved plinths in the central aisle, though attractive at first sight, do not carry much in the way of interpretive material.
- the puffin remote viewing screen was out of order at the time of our visit. Non-working audio-visual equipment is a common problem in visitor centres and it is important not only that equipment works reliably but also that centre staff are able to fix problems (or have access to technical support which can be called in at short notice). A new location for the screen offering seating for visitors watching live or recorded footage should be considered, and consideration should also be given to incorporating the screen within a purposed-designed stand with accompanying interpretation (perhaps in the form of a 3-D relief model of a cliff where puffins nest).
- the hands-on exhibits within the Countryside Ranger display generated a lot of positive comment but could perhaps be refreshed and incorporated within a display with a strong interpretive theme.
- the Millennium Quilts on display in the centre attracted positive comment in our survey of visitors. They do, however, currently take-up a relatively large wall area, and consideration could therefore be given to displaying them in a way which takes up less space.
- the centre is set in a stunning coastal location with views out over cliffs and sea. However, when inside the centre, visitors cannot see these views except at one

window. Opening up more window space should be considered, especially on the seaward wall of the building, to allow the interpretation inside the centre to link directly to the landscape outside. This would also have the added advantage of allowing visitors to enjoy the view inside when the weather is bad!

- the free-standing showcases of local crafts standing in the exhibition area do not tie in with the exhibition overall. They should perhaps be moved into the Tourist Information Centre part of the centre, or else tied in more closely with the exhibition content.
- there is currently a lack of seating within the centre – provision of some seating may be appreciated by older visitors or those with disabilities.
- there is scope to provide an area for children’s activities tied to the content of the interpretation. Although families with children are a minority of overall visitors to the centre, provision of children’s activities will enhance the experience of those families with children who do visit, and could be promoted to encourage more visits to the centre by families.
- there is a lack of orientation information within the centre – ie a display map showing visitors the location of local sites of interest and activities. Likewise, there is a lack of orientation material which can be viewed from outside the centre when it is closed.

7.5 The elements of the Centre which proved most used by visitors surveyed during August 2007 were as follows (in descending order):

<i>Elements used</i>	<i>No.</i>	<i>%</i>
<i>Displays of free information leaflets/brochures/posters</i>	54	90
<i>Items for sale (books, postcards etc)</i>	44	73
<i>Exhibition about history/geology/culture of area</i>	42	70
<i>Display of local craft items</i>	41	68
<i>Countryside ranger display</i>	40	67
<i>Millennium embroidery panels</i>	38	63
<i>Advice/information from member of staff</i>	33	55
<i>Accommodation booking</i>	17	28
<i>Other (please give details)</i>	0	0

7.6 In terms of surpassing visitor expectations, the Centre does not currently perform particularly well according to our survey, with fewer than 25% saying that it was better than they expected. However, no-one said it was worse than they expected.

<i>Did the Centre meet your expectations?</i>	<i>No.</i>	<i>%</i>
<i>Didn't know what to expect</i>	25	42
<i>About the same as you expected</i>	21	35
<i>Better than you expected</i>	14	23
<i>Not as good as you expected</i>	0	0
TOTAL	60	100

8 INTERPRETIVE THEME/ SUB-THEMES AND PROPOSED EXHIBITS

- 8.1 During the consultation process, one of the key messages which came from consultees was the desire to show through interpretation that Durness has links to a range of fascinating stories linked to geology, archaeology, plants and wildlife, Mackay Country and The Highland Clearances. Durness’s position as the most northerly settlement in the North-west Highland Geopark provides particular opportunities for a revamped and expanded centre to provide geological interpretation to visitors, especially if the geology can be tied in to the wider stories of the Durness area’s natural and cultural heritage.
- 8.2 There was also a desire to overcome perceptions amongst visitors that Durness was remote, isolated from the rest of the world, with not much going on. There was a view that the new interpretation should show Durness as a modern community where crofting, though important, is only one of the strands of local life.
- 8.3 The focus should be on exciting and enthusing visitors about what is special to the Durness area, while at the same time showing that, far from being a backwater, Durness has made an important contribution in some areas at a national or international level.
- 8.4 Wherever possible, opportunities should be taken to explore the overall theme and sub-themes from a local perspective – ie “giving local people a voice” –by finding opportunities to involve local people in the preparation of interpretive material. The Mackay Country initiative has already generated a wealth of material which could be drawn upon, but we have also identified other potential opportunities for involving local people. Incidentally, this approach ties in well with the 'Live It. Visit Scotland' campaign, which has been running since Spring 2002, which aims to capture the true spirit of Scotland by promoting its “awe-inspiring rural and urban scenery; an ever-present sense of history; and welcoming people, passionate about and proud of their country”¹¹.
- 8.5 Taking these ideas into account, we would suggest that the main interpretive theme for the Durness Visitor Centre should be:

Amid ancient rocks: discover Durness’s special stories - past, present and future.

- 8.6 Sub-themes under the umbrella of this main interpretive theme could include the following.

8.6.1 *Sub-theme 1: Welcome to Durness*

This would set the scene for the exhibition overall, introducing a “sense of place” for the village by giving an overview of its natural and cultural heritage resources while also placing Durness within the overall Geopark and “Mackay Country” contexts.

	Interpretive media	Indicative content
1	Interpretive panels (at entrance to exhibition)	Introducing the theme and sub-themes of the exhibition, and encouraging people to visit the wider exhibition. Should be “snappy” and highlighting “amazing facts” drawn from various sub-themes eg Did you know?

¹¹ VisitScotland Marketing Strategy available at http://www.visitscotland.org/marketing_opportunities_main/vs-branding/vs-branding-promise.htm [Accessed 29th August 2007]

		Potential to use light and sound to create a dramatic entrance to the wide exhibition.
2	<p>Orientation panels (at exit from exhibition)</p> <p>Could be linked with display space for local promotional/interpretive publications and relevant saleable publications.</p> <p>In addition to orientation panels within the centre, we would recommend installing orientation panels outside the visitor centre (to provide information when it is closed) and, if possible, at other key points in the area – eg Balnakeil Church car-park, Ceannabeinne car-park, Cape Wrath ferry slip, village centre, etc.</p>	<p>Showing location of sites of interest in Durness and wider Mackay Country.</p> <p>To tie in with sub-themes of exhibition, and to promote local path network in Durness (to encourage visitors to walk/cycle around the area to find out more about the sub-themes).</p>

8.6.2 *Sub-theme 2: Ancient rocks, famous rocks ...*

This sub-theme would interpret the geology of the area, tying in with the North-west Sutherland Geopark. It would aim to stress how special the geology of the area is – both in absolute terms and also in terms of the breakthroughs in geological understanding that have occurred from geologists studying it from the 19th Century to the present day.

As geology is a difficult subject for most people to understand, it is important that the interpretation of this sub-theme is made accessible, with facts that people can relate to, hands-on exhibits, interactive models (for example, illustrating the Moine Thrust and the “oystershell rock” which can be in the rocky pillars on the beach straight at the back of the TIC) and encouragement for visitors to go out to sites in the local area where they can see good examples of geological formations and processes. Input from geologists currently undertaking research in the area would allow the interpretation to be current, and, highlighting individuals involved in research would also help put a “human face” to geological content. It would be important to convey, in layman’s terms, what makes geologists get excited about geology in this area.

The local limestone landscape could also be interpreted - including looking at caves, carved out by waters flowing down into the limestone from the impermeable rocks surrounding it. Caves are a key feature of the limestone landscape and can be seen through-out the Geopark. The interpretation could also look more generally at the influence of limestone in the Durness area – for example, the limestone lochs/soil around Balnakeil/Keoldale and the special habitats they provide – particularly plants and also the special nature of Durness’s limestone lochs in angling terms. Interpretation of fossils would also tie in with the limestone story.

There might also be opportunities under this sub-theme to include interpretation tying together geological resources and cultural heritage – for example, interpreting place-names relating to local geological features, showing how the landscape influenced the way of life of local people in the past, or including stories/poems etc (traditional and new) showing the feelings/interactions of local people (past and present) with the

landscape. (There could be potential for a community project aimed at generating this material).

	Interpretive media	Indicative content
1	Interpretive panels	<p>Formation of local landscape and the geological clues which can be seen in the local landscape today. (including Moine Thrust, limestone formation and influence on local landscape and vegetation/wildlife, “Durness as a tropical paradise” etc).</p> <p>Stories of 19th Century geologists in NW Sutherland and the breakthroughs they made to geological understanding.</p> <p>Durness as a modern-day centre for geological research.</p> <p>Interpretation of Gaelic place-names for mountains and other local geological features.</p> <p>Suggested walking/cycling/touring routes to allow visitors to see geology for themselves.</p>
2	Hands-on puzzles/touch-table with examples of local rocks/fossils to handle	Formation of local landscape and the geological clues which can be seen in the landscape today.
3	Interactive model/puzzle	Showing formation and extent of Moine Thrust. Model would allow visitor to replicate movement of Moine Thrust.
4	Audio post.	<p>Geologist speaking about what makes the Durness area so interesting, and about current research.</p> <p>Potential also for local project aimed at collecting/producing stories, songs and poems (traditional and new) about local mountains and other geological landmarks which could generate further material for audio exhibit.</p>
5	Viewing area	The provision of a large windowed seating area with interpretation would allow visitors to see and learn about excellent examples of the area’s geology from within the centre.

Note: Professor Paul Smith, Director, Lapworth Museum of Geology (University of Birmingham) and Marten Krabbendam, British Geological Survey, have shown great

interest in the idea of new geological interpretation in the visitor centre and have offered to provide input and ideas re exhibits.

8.6.3 *Sub-theme 3: Wonderful wildlife*

This sub-theme would look at the outstanding plants and wildlife to be found in the local area and off its coast. Links should be made between the landscape and the habitat it provides for various species – looking especially at the geology of the area (see above).

There should be a particular emphasis on species of plants, birds and animals in the Durness area which have special stories – perhaps because of their rareness, local prevalence, life-cycle etc (although in the case of rare species, care should be taken not to promote sites where increased visits may cause conservation problems).

Conveying a sense of excitement at the rich wildlife of the local area would be important. This could be achieved perhaps by interpretation of what makes it exciting for local or visiting naturalists and/or perhaps by including passages/quotations from local people or visitors who enjoy particular aspects of the local natural heritage.

Opportunities to tie in local wildlife with local stories/poems etc (traditional or new) should be explored to tie natural heritage with local people (past and present). There may be an opportunity for a community project to help gather material of this kind.

Our survey of visitors and comments in the visitor centre comments books show that the current Countryside Ranger display of natural history exhibits is very popular – and not only with children. We would suggest building on this by creating an expanded display of items which can be handled by visitors, and would also suggest that the Countryside Ranger Service play an active role in assembling and maintaining a hands-on display of natural heritage artefacts in the revamped centre.

In addition to hands-on natural history artefacts, we would suggest hands-on/interactive puzzles suitable for adults and children.

The current puffin remote viewing equipment should be reviewed to ensure that it can be operated reliably and easily, and set into a wider exhibit in interpreting puffins and their habitat etc. A 3-D surround suggesting cliffs and sea could be particularly effective.

The existing binocular viewing area could be developed further to provide expanded interpretation of the species (and geological features) which can be seen from the centre. Consideration might be given to providing a new window to the rear of the building (where the current Countryside Ranger display is housed) to open up further views of the sea. Alternatively, if an extension to the building were to be built, a panoramic window overlooking the sea could be incorporated.

A bulletin board should be provided to display weather reports, recent wildlife viewings, seasonal wildlife news, topical advice on wildlife watching etc, and could include a facility to allow visitors to record their own wildlife sightings. The Countryside Ranger Service could perhaps look after this facility as well as logging the Ranger's own wildlife sightings and hints about wildlife to look out for at different times of the year.

	Interpretive media	Indicative content
1	Interpretive panels	Overview of plants, animals, birds and marine wildlife in Durness area, including “amazing” facts eg rare/interesting species found locally – and advice on where/when to see them. The Countryside Ranger Service will be a good source of local information.
2	Touch-table with, for example, skulls/bones, feathers, fossils, seashells, dried plants.	If you look out, you can find clues left by the amazing wildlife in this area. The Countryside Ranger’s current display of wildlife artefacts is very popular with visitors, and the Ranger Service could be involved in providing and maintaining a new touch display in the revamped centre.
3	Puzzle exhibits	Aimed at interpreting interesting facets of local flora and fauna in a fun, hands-on way.
4	Puffin remote viewing station – screen plus 3-d surround based in idea of cliffs and water. (Existing screen). Consider also providing seating.	Puffin life-cycle, nesting, eating, behaviour etc.
5	Binocular viewing area (existing) – add more info/illustrations on what can/might be seen from window.	Birds, seals, cetaceans etc. Could also include interpretation on rock formations on view.
6	Audio post	Recordings of naturalists talking about what is so special about local wildlife. Sound tracks of wildlife could also be included. Potential also for community project aimed at collecting/producing stories, songs and poems (traditional and new) about local wildlife which could generate further material for audio exhibit.
6	Bulletin board.	For displaying weather reports, recent wildlife sightings, topical advice on wildlife watching etc. Visitors could be encouraged to record their own wildlife sightings. Note: It would be important for information provided on the bulletin board to be kept up to date, and the commitment of visitor centre staff and/or the Countryside Ranger to achieving this will be important.

8.6.4 *Sub-theme 4: Hidden history*

This sub-theme would focus on the rich archaeology of the Durness area - looking particularly at pre-historical features as sub-themes 5 and 6 (see below) will look at the historical period.

There should be a special focus on the range of sites from different eras which can be seen in the local area, stressing that the Durness area has an unusually rich archaeological record. There is particular potential to tie in with the survey work which has been undertaken by (GUARD) Glasgow University Archaeological Research Division in the Loch Croispol area. As is the case with the geology and natural heritage

sub-themes, it would be important to convey, in layman's terms, what makes archaeologists so excited about archaeology in the Durness area.

It would be desirable to display artefacts from local archaeological sites in the visitor centre. However, curatorial advice would be required to ensure that artefacts could be displayed safely and in a way which would not cause their deterioration.

	Interpretive media	Indicative content
1	Map-based panel/relief map.	Range of types of different archaeological sites which can be seen/visited in local area (eg chambered cairns, hut circles, settlement remains).
2	Set of interpretive panels.	Looking at different periods of prehistory – from hunter-gatherers to Norsemen and pre-clearance settlements – and how people would have lived in each period.
3	Audio post	Archaeologist and local enthusiasts talking about sites in area (esp Loch Croispol), survey work/research (and findings) and about their significance. Local children talking about how their lives differ from those of children who lived in the Durness area in the past (eg the Balnakeil Viking) – potential school project – to generate additional material for audio post.
4	Interactive model/puzzle	Possibly timeline-based – ie puzzle where you try to fit sites/structures from different eras into chronological order.
5	Models under the floor (with glass/perspex panels over)	Bird's eye views reconstructing Durness area at specific periods (eg Neolithic, Iron Age, Norse) showing reconstructions of settlements/buildings. Note: This could be extended to include bird's eye views of later periods in the area's history – eg pre-clearance, post-clearance, 20 th Century and current day showing how the village has developed.
6	Display of artefacts linked to local archaeological sites.	What these artefacts tell us about life in the Durness area when they were in use.

8.6.5 *Sub-theme 5: Mackay Country*

This sub-theme would look at Durness in the wider context – past and present – of Mackay Country. In keeping with the overall approach to the Mackay Country initiative, the focus would be not just on the Clan Mackay but on the people generally who lived or live on the north coast.

We have suggested indicative content below, but would suggest that those involved in the Mackay Country initiative should look in more detail at the key messages to be interpreted. The emphasis should be placed on a broad-brush introduction to key messages aimed at general visitors. However, the provision of a research space/access to materials on pc would allow visitors with a more in-depth interest to see in more detail the wealth of Mackay Country material which has been collected.

It would be desirable to display artefacts from local archaeological sites in the visitor centre. However, curatorial advice would be required to ensure that artefacts could be displayed safely and in a way which would not cause their deterioration.

	Interpretive media	Indicative content
1	Set of interpretive panels	The emergence of the Mackays, and how their history reflects the wider history of Durness and the north coast. Mackay military history – their role in campaigns outside Sutherland. Local sites/buildings associated with the Mackays/Lords of Reay. Music and poetry – Rob Donn, the Argyll Collection (pipe music)
2	Audio post	Choice of tracks including Clan Mackay stories (read by local people), excerpts of Rob Donn poetry (Gaelic and English), excerpts of Argyll Collection pipe tunes etc.
3	Interpretive panel – Rob Donn’s Durness	Linking excerpts of his poems with places in the Durness area.
4	Display of artefacts from Mackay period.	What these artefacts tell us about life in the Mackay Country when they were in use.
5	Research desk/pc access	Access to local genealogy and Mackay Country materials (hard copy/on pc as appropriate). Would also be useful facility in relation to sub-theme 6 below.

8.6.6 *Sub-theme 6: The Clearances and the Durness Riots*

This sub-theme would look at how the Highland Clearances affected the Durness area. Interpretation of the Durness Riots, an early example of resistance to evictions, would add a unique local slant to the story. Extracts from first-hand accounts should be used where possible – again, to give a “human face” to the stories of the Riots and the effects of the Clearances (for example, evidence given by local people to the Napier Commission). This sub-theme also provides scope to look at the story of emigrants from the Durness area – where they went and what they did.

	Interpretive materials	Indicative content
1	Set of interpretive panels	The Durness Riots and their significance (early example of resistance to Clearances). The Clearances – causes and effects, especially in the context of Durness and the North Coast. Emigration – where people went and what they did.
2	Model/inter-active exhibit reconstructing Ceannabeinne site (scene of the Durness Riots)	Allowing visitors to see the houses, field systems, corn kiln etc, and to understand what they tell us about life in the area prior to the Clearances.
3	Audio post	Using extracts from writings of Rev Findlater, Inverness Courier, and Napier Commission statements etc. Opportunity to involve local schoolchildren in

	Interpretive materials	Indicative content
		recording project work they have done about the Riots.
4	Research desk/pc access	Access to local genealogy and Mackay Country materials (hard copy/on pc as appropriate). Would also be useful facility in relation to sub-theme 6 below.

8.6.7 *Sub-theme 7: Changing times*

This sub-theme would look at life in the Durness area after the Clearances up until the present day. Again, the emphasis should be on aspects special to Durness.

Recent publicity about John Lennon's visits to the area when young could perhaps be used to show how people have liked to come to this area – on holiday or more permanently - as an escape from life further south.

	Interpretive media	Indicative content
1	Interpretive panels.	<p>How life changed in Durness during the 18th and 19th Centuries, for example:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Development of crofting/the crofting life • Ongoing emigration (where Durness people went) • Growth of fishing/stalking • Tourism • Newcomers to area – why they came, what they did • Inspired by Durness – eg John Lennon • Military installations/presence eg, listening station at Balnakeil, bombing range, Loch Eriboll in WWII etc <p>These panels could draw heavily on material collected by the Mackay Country project.</p>
2	Audio post	Extracts/readings from Mackay Country collections possibly supplemented with interviews with different members of the local community contrasting “then” and “now”.

8.6.8 *Sub-theme 8: 21st Century Durness*

This sub-theme would present Durness as a modern community and focus on people living here today and their aspirations for the future.

	Interpretive media	Indicative content
1	Interpretive panels.	Durness today – how people make a living (including opportunities for visitors to make purchases from local businesses and artists etc), hobbies/pastimes, why they like living here, community projects and initiatives etc.
2	Audio post - or could be short audio-visual presentation/multimedia exhibit.	Extracts of interviews with variety of people living in Durness area – telling about their lives here, issues/challenges/achievements, hopes for the future etc.

	Interpretive media	Indicative content
		Potential for a community project to generate material.

8.7 **General suggestions**

8.7.1 Other elements which could be considered, subject to space, could include:

- a children’s play/puzzle area with activities drawing on the various sub-themes of the exhibition.
- a reading/browsing area – where visitors could perhaps look through more detailed information relating to the various sub-themes, or just plan their activities using materials available in the Tourist Information Centre (for example, paths network leaflet, places to visit information). Provision of a self-service coffee area could be considered here.
- new way of displaying the Millennium quilt panels, perhaps with accompanying interpretation linking it into the various proposed sub-themes outlined above.
- “what’s on” notice board – which could be updated daily as required.

8.7.2 A review of local print items (for example, free maps and guides) should also be considered to ensure that visitors who would like to explore the local area for themselves to find out more about topics covered in the interpretation have access to materials which they can take with them.

8.7.3 Appendix Eight contains design concepts for new interpretation in the centre. These are intended to illustrate what might be created and are not set in stone. If desired, firms tendering in due course to design interpretation could be asked for their design concepts based on the theme and sub-themes contained within these interpretive plan.

9 ACCESSIBILITY ISSUES

- 9.1 The TIC has all-abilities access to the buildings (and potential car-park view-points). However, the length of texts and font sizes on the current interpretive panels mean that some content may be inaccessible to people with learning difficulties or visual impairment.
- 9.2 When designing and implementing the new interpretation, appropriate guidelines should also be followed in terms of the design of interpretive materials on-site, including construction, height/angle, font sizes, colours/contrast etc. Those guidelines set out in the *BT Countryside for All* publication available from the Fieldfare Trust provide a very useful starting point.
- 9.3 The suggested interpretive media outlined in Section 8 above include provision for people unable to access the sites themselves. The incorporation of tactile elements in interpretive features will make them more accessible to people with visual impairment or learning difficulties. Good design of interpretive content (text and illustrations etc) should ensure that the content is intellectually accessible to people from a wide range of backgrounds and abilities.

10 GAELIC AND FOREIGN LANGUAGE PROVISION

- 10.1 Gaelic is an important part of the Durness area's heritage and, as such, should be reflected in the Centre's interpretation. The Highland Council's policy on the use of Gaelic in interpretation is that all headings, sub-headings and key words/phrases should be translated into Gaelic. As the Highland Council has a high degree of involvement in the Centre (it runs the Service Point and part-funds VisitScotland services in the building), we would suggest that this policy should be followed in the Centre's new interpretation.
- 10.2 Gaelic songs, poems or stories relating to the area should be incorporated within the interpretive materials (particularly those relating to Rob Donn). Exploration of the meanings of local Gaelic place-names should also be considered.
- 10.3 In terms of foreign language provision, visitor figures for Sutherland (Highlands Visitor Survey 2002) suggest that at least 80% of visitors will have English as their first or "official" language. The same survey suggests that the largest single group of visitors whose first language is not English will be German (6%). In the August 2007 face-to-face survey, 60% of visitors were from overseas, with the largest single overseas group (14%) coming from Germany. However, anecdotal information from the face-to-face survey suggests that the majority of the German visitors had good English skills and did not feel that translation into German was required.
- 10.4 In view of the above, we do not consider that it is necessary to incorporate a high degree of foreign language translation in on-site interpretation – particularly if best practice guidelines are followed in terms of length and clarity of texts and inclusion of visual content. However, there would be merit in translating key orientation information as well, perhaps, as "welcome" information, main headings and captions on main illustrations. We would suggest that translations should be provided in German at a minimum, with French and Italian also to be considered if space permits.

11 **MARKETING**

- 11.1 As noted in Section 4 of this report, the number of recorded visitors to the visitor centre in Durness fell by 31% between 2004 and 2006, against an overall trend of slight rises in visitor numbers regionally and nationally over the same period. Dwell time and average spend figures for visitors to Durness also compare poorly with other parts of the Highlands.
- 11.2 Investment in new interpretation in the centre should help increase numbers of visitors (and thereby also extend dwell-time and local spend) but the true benefits of this kind of investment are unlikely to be achieved unless there is also investment in marketing.
- 11.3 If there is to be any significant investment in the centre – ie if there is to be anything other than a minor upgrade/refreshment – we would strongly recommend that a properly-resourced marketing plan be implemented. This will require not only adequate funding but also the identification of an organisation willing to take responsibility for marketing the centre.
- 11.4 Marketing of an enhanced centre could “piggy back” on to existing initiatives – for example, as part of ongoing wider promotion of the North-west Highland Geopark and Mackay Country, via www.durness.org etc. Joint marketing initiatives tend to be a cost-effective way of marketing, both in terms of cash and human resources. Although some joint promotional activity may be free of charge (for example, listings on existing websites/in existing marketing print), other joint marketing may have cost implications (for example, taking advertising space in joint brochures) for which funding will be required.
- 11.5 In order to maximise visitor numbers, however, we recommend that the marketing of the centre should extend beyond existing marketing initiatives for the area. Marketing priorities should include:
- 11.5.1 **Production and distribution of a promotional leaflet:** as well as aiming for blanket distribution locally (for example in local accommodation establishments, shops and cafes etc to ensure that visitors already in the Durness area are aware of the centre), there should also be systematic distribution of the leaflet in key locations likely to be frequented by potential visitors to Durness – in particular:
- Inverness
 - Bonar Bridge - Lairg - Tongue
 - Dornoch (and main settlements north to Thurso/Wick)
 - Ullapool (and main settlements north of Ullapool en route to Durness)
 - Thurso/Wick (and main settlements west of Thurso/Wick en route to Durness)
 - Other TICs and main visitor attractions in the Highlands but not in the settlements/routes listed above.

The content of the leaflet should include details of driving times to Durness from key locations in the Highlands (to encourage planned day-trips with ample stopping-off time in Durness) as well as stressing the range of activities to enjoy in the Durness area (to encourage potential day-trippers to convert to overnight stays).

Using a commercial leaflet distributor such as Landmark or PPD should ensure thorough and consistent distribution in these areas – a check should be made of their exact coverage/outlets to ensure that they can offer the distribution needed.

Indicative cost inclusive of design, production and distribution of 20,000 A4 folded to 1/3A4 leaflets: £5,000 - £7,500 exclusive of VAT

- 11.5.2 **Standalone website:** an overview/taster of what the centre has to offer as well as information on planning visits (day-trips or longer). This should have reciprocal links with as many other suitable/relevant websites as possible to encourage traffic onto the site.

Indicative cost inclusive of website design and hosting: £2,500 - £5,000 exclusive of VAT. Includes provision for production of website content although most of this would be based on interpretation in the centre and information compiled for the leaflet (see above). There would be an ongoing cost for hosting the website (around £300 exclusive of VAT per annum).

Consideration might also be given to paying for ongoing professional optimisation of the site to ensure traffic to the site is maximised. Indicative cost: £3,500 per year exclusive of VAT.

- 11.5.3 **Advertising budget:** to be targeted particularly at high-volume publications aimed at visitors to the Highlands of Scotland in general and the North-west Highlands in particular – for example, VisitScotland accommodation and what to see/do listings, other relevant VisitScotland publications (and internet promotions as appropriate), publications produced to promote the North-west Highland Geopark and Mackay Country, participation in collaborative Caithness and Sutherland visitor attraction promotions etc..

Indicative cost: minimum provision of £2,000 exclusive of VAT per annum but a larger budget (for example, £5,000 per annum) would allow the centre to be promoted more widely – for example, in targeted publications such as walking magazines, Scottish interest/history publications etc.

- 11.5.4 **“Thistle” road signposting (brown signposts):** under the present Thistle scheme, we understand that the centre would be eligible for Thistle signposting if it met VisitScotland visitor attraction and grading criteria (which should not be a problem in itself). However, as the centre lies beside the route of a main road, thistle signing would be limited to signposting from the main road into the centre car park, which, though useful, would not give touring visitors advance warning of the centre. It would probably be more useful to consider “welcome to ...” signposting teamed with good external signage at the entrance to the car-park and on the centre itself. (See below).

- 11.5.5 **“Welcome to ...” road signposting:** Two “Welcome to Durness” signs at the main approaches (south and east) to the village listing the centre (and other local visitor attractions/facilities as desired) would help raise awareness of the centre and encourage stop-offs by touring visitors.

Indicative cost inclusive of design and installation: £1,500 exclusive of VAT (one-off cost for lifespan of initial signs).

- 11.5.6 **Site signage:** Signposting from the main road into the centre car-park and on the centre itself.

Indicative cost inclusive of design and installation: depends on design/materials chosen but allow £2,500-£5,000 exclusive of VAT (one-off cost but likely to require refreshment after 5-10 years).

- 11.5.7 **PR/special events:** a budget for regular press releases and small-scale special events (including promotion of these) at the centre should be identified.

Indicative cost: minimum provision of £2,000 exclusive of VAT per annum but a larger budget (for example, £5,000 per annum) would generate more coverage. Assumes that the production of press releases would be contracted out. However, PR and special events are both activities where the Highland Council and VisitScotland might be able to provide assistance in-kind.

- 11.6 In addition to identifying financial resources to implement marketing for the centre, the question of who will undertake the marketing will need to be considered. The answer is likely to tie in with the overall issue of who will be responsible for running the centre if it is substantially revamped and expanded.

12 OTHER CONSIDERATIONS

- 12.1 The visitor centre is currently run by VisitScotland, who operate the tourist information centre, in conjunction with the Highland Council, who operate their local service point and Registrar's service in the building. The Highland Council's local Countryside Ranger also has a small office and a small display area within the building.
- 12.2 If the visitor centre element is to be substantially revamped and extended, this should sit well with TIC operations, although consideration should be given to providing separation between the TIC area and the exhibition to minimise noise disturbance between the two activities (particularly relevant if the new exhibition has a significant audio content).
- 12.3 A small private room is currently used for the registration of births, deaths and marriages. Any altered layout of the visitor centre exhibition should take account of the need to ensure privacy for people coming in to register these events, and it should be possible for the registrar and her clients to access the room without going through the exhibition area.
- 12.4 The Countryside Ranger base within the centre currently provides a valuable facet to the overall display and it would be good for this to continue in a revamped centre. There is particular scope to involve the Ranger in producing and maintaining hands-on exhibits (for example touch tables of wildlife artefacts) relating to natural heritage, and the Ranger Service could also look after the proposed wildlife sightings bulletin board. There should also be provision within the centre for the Ranger to promote guided walks etc. The new centre should provide for a private Countryside Ranger office space, and, ideally, the Ranger should not have to pass through the exhibition area to access this private office area.
- 12.5 Storage, especially for TIC operations, is currently a problem in the centre. The new design should include storage (perhaps behind exhibits and displays). If the building is to be extended, consideration should be given to providing a dedicated store room accessible to the TIC area of the building.
- 12.6 Our survey of visitors to the centre showed demand for café facilities, and we think that such a facility would help both to attract visitors to the centre and to encourage them to stay longer and spend more money in the Durness area. (Current dwell time and spend is low). Although it is important not to displace business from local cafes etc, our research indicates that many visitors to the centre are currently not staying long enough to patronise any café businesses locally. One solution which might be acceptable would be the provision of a self-service coffee counter, which perhaps could be situated in the proposed seating/browsing area. This would allow a basic hot drinks service to be provided without competing with local businesses offering a more extensive menu. Mobile self-service coffee counters (incorporating water storage facilities) are now available which would avoid the requirement to provide a kitchen or catering staff.
- 12.7 Consideration should also be given to providing public toilet facilities. We understand that the building originally offered these but that problems to drainage led to the facility being closed. If the building were to be extended, new solutions might make the provision of public toilet facilities feasible again.

- 12.8 Our consultation process revealed a view locally that visitors would use the centre in the evening if it were open then. Discussions should take place with VisitScotland to see if extended opening hours could be trialled. If this is unfeasible, an alternative might be for the exhibition area only to be opened up and “staffed” in the evening by local volunteers co-ordinated by the Durness Development Group. If this could be arranged, the design for the revamped centre would need to include a facility to close off access to the TIC area outwith its opening hours and to ensure the security of the Ranger and Registrar offices within the building.
- 12.9 The centre is currently privately owned and is occupied by VisitScotland and the Highland Council on a lease basis. The permission of the owner may be required prior to any alterations being made to the current building (the lease agreement will specify what may and may not be done) and would definitely be required if any extension were to be built. We have not been able to identify the current owner of the building but would suggest that a search is made via the Register of Sasines in Edinburgh where the transfer of ownership will have been recorded. Likewise, the situation regarding ownership of adjacent land which may be needed for an eventual extension will need to be determined.
- 12.10 Depending on the scale of revamp/extension of building (which is likely to be dependent on funding available), it may be appropriate to review the current ownership and lease arrangements for the building. For example, funding for major works may only be available to an organisation owning the building (rather than leasing) or holding a long-term lease. As a first step, we would recommend obtaining advice on what development the current lease permits.
- 12.11 Equally, building if a major re-development were to go ahead and the visitor centre were to become the main activity in the building, it may be appropriate to review current arrangements for the management of the building or, at least, the part of the building used for the visitor centre. Although it may be possible to operate the building on the same basis as it is currently operated, discussions should be held with VisitScotland and The Highland Council to clarify whether this will be possible or if some other arrangement, perhaps via the Durness Development Group, will be necessary.
- 12.12 There may currently be some issues regarding the maintenance of the building. For example, during our survey visits, a leak in the roof caused problems. Before investment in new interpretation is made, confirmation of responsibilities (and budgets available) for day-to-day maintenance should be clarified. We would also recommend that the existing building be thoroughly surveyed to identify existing or potential problems so that these can be addressed as part of a wider redevelopment/extension project.

13 INDICATIVE COSTS

13.1 Building costs

13.1.1 We have been advised that typical costs for an extension to a visitor centre are estimated at around £2,000 per square metre, exclusive of VAT and professional fees. We estimate that an additional space of 108 square metres approximately would be required for an extended exhibition. In addition, we estimate that the extension should include provision of around 40 square metres for a new Registrar's office, Countryside Ranger office, toilets and storage etc. (This latter figure is a very approximate estimate: further design work would be required from architects).

13.1.2 Exact costs will, of course, depend on exact requirements: this figure does not include, for example, provision of a catering kitchen and costs may also increase if ground conditions are difficult. In addition to the £2,000 per square metre quoted above, a further allowance should be made for professional fees – a minimum provision of 15% is advised. Provision should also be made for the costs of fittings such as seating, mobile self-service coffee servery etc as required – we have not attempted to cost these items at present.

13.1.3 In approximate terms, it appears that an extension of around 150 square metres may be required. Using the average figures quoted above, this would indicate that a budget of £345,000 (inclusive of professional fees but exclusive of VAT) could be justified.

13.1.4 There may also be a requirement for alterations and repairs to the existing building. These will be less than the cost of a new-build extension but will depend on the scale and nature of the work required.

13.1.5 There may be a requirement to purchase land for the extension.

13.1.6 We would recommend, as a first step, engaging architects to draw up an outline plan and costing for the proposed extension and to assess the condition of the current building/cost any structural alterations/repairs required.

13.2 Interpretation costs

13.2.1 An extension of the size proposed would provide an overall exhibition space of 11.5 metres x 18 metres ie 207 square metres. To provide an exhibition of high-class museum/visitor centre standard which incorporates the mix of exhibits proposed (ie panels, models, inter-active displays etc), a figure of around £400 per square metre exclusive of VAT should be allowed. This would indicate that a budget of around £82,800 exclusive of VAT would be necessary.

13.3 Revenue costs:

13.3.1 Section 11 above details indicative costs for marketing activities. It may also be necessary to consider funding a person to co-ordinate marketing work, either on an employee or sub-contractor basis.

13.3.2 Depending on the scale and nature of activities agreed for the revamped/extended centre, there may be additional staffing costs – for example, cleaning, additional staff to cover extra hours of opening/larger centre, etc.

13.3.3 An expanded centre will also generate additional costs for heat and light, insurance, rates etc, and provision should also be made for day-to-day maintenance of the building and exhibits etc.

13.4 **Next steps**

13.4.1 If the concept of building an extension looks feasible in terms of land availability and ground conditions, we would recommend that the next step should be to commission the preparation of a Business Plan to explore in more detail how the project could be taken forward and to look at likely funding arrangements. The Business Plan should look both at capital funding and ongoing revenue funding arrangements, as well as wider operational matters.

13.4.2 A Business Plan is unlikely to be required if the redevelopment of the centre is limited to the revamp of interpretation in the current building.

14 ACTION PLAN

14.1 We recommend the following steps to take the project forward.

	Task
1	Consult with main potential local funders (SNH, Highland Council, HIE/CASE) about the possibility of obtaining financial support from them for a major revamp/extension of the current centre. Identify likely levels and timescales re funding which may be available from them.
2	If attracting funding for extended centre seems feasible, commission architects to provide outline plan and costing for extension, and to assess condition of current building. Plan and costings should take account of the interpretation proposed for the building as well as the requirements of the other occupants (eg office space for Countryside Ranger, facilities for Registrar's Service, requirements re TIC and Highland Council service point, storage space, public toilets, visitor refreshments etc).
3	<p>Engage consultants to prepare Business Plan looking at capital and revenue costs of proposed works and likely sources of funding, including likely implications in terms of the management and staffing of the building etc (including possibility of extending the current opening arrangements). This will require further discussions with the other occupants of the current building.</p> <p>The Business Planning process should also research the ownership and leasing arrangements for the current centre and explore solutions to any issues which may arise in terms of altering or extending it. The issue of acquiring adjacent land to build an extension should also be researched (ie ownership, likely costs, planning permission situation etc).</p>
4	<p>Work undertaken in Steps 1-3 above should provide a firm foundation for preparing formal funding applications and taking forward the process of applying for planning permission for an extension, drawing up and issuing invitations to tender for building works and fitting out etc.</p> <p>The details within this plan should provide the basis for issuing invitations to tender for the design and installation of interpretation in the building.</p>

14.2 It should be emphasised that there is potential at Durness to build a high-quality visitor centre, set amid stunning location, which could be a worthy focus for the North-west Highland Geopark while also interpreting the rich natural and cultural heritage of the Durness area itself. Such an investment also offers the potential for a meaningful economic spin-off for a fragile community which appears currently to be seeing a reduction in visitor numbers against regional and national trends.

Note of consultation workshop held with members of Durness Development Group and local stakeholders: Thursday 28th June 2007.

Attendees: Ronnie Lansley, Durness Development Group; Graham Bruce, Durness Development Group; Mary Mackay, Durness Community Council; Donald Mitchell, Highland Council Ranger Service; Aileen Cameron, Cuan Design; Helen Smith, Rowan Tree Consulting and Hazel Bews, Rowan Tree Consulting.

1	<p>Interpretative Plan Process HS guided the group through the process that would be used to put together the interpretive plan.</p>
2	<p>Objectives for 2nd October HS advised that the objective of the meeting was to become familiar with the TIC building and the existing provision of interpretation; and to meet with the group to discuss overall aims and timescales of the project and to obtain an initial steer as to possible interpretative themes/sub-themes and media.</p>
3	<p>Group discussion The group discussed a number of key questions:</p>
a	<p><i>What would you like the new interpretation to achieve for Durness? What would you like the interpretation to make people think or feel or do?</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Show that Durness is a vibrant place, looking to the future; • Show what it is like to live here now; • Have the wow factor – interesting for visitors; • Show that Durness has a significant story to tell about people (important world wide) and the landscape; • Illustrate the wildlife, fantastic landscape and natural history of the area; • Establish the heritage of the local people; • Become a must-see destination; • Build up knowledge of the local past – ie. Mackay Country; • Educate and entertain; • Let them know area has once thriving with people; • Encourage people to visit other sites like Ceannabeinne; • Bring economic benefits to the area. <p><i>Gaelic:</i> should be some Gaelic content – possibility for community project with primary school. Mackay Country archive has Gaelic content and Rob Donn is key Gaelic figure.</p>
b	<p><i>How do you feel the success of new interpretation in the TIC should be measured?</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Survey should act as base line measure; • Measure length of stay and other places visited; • Achieve idea of sense of place.

c	<p><i>What are the key stories that you would like to tell about the various sites?</i></p> <p>Key story is that TIC is gateway TIC for Geopark (and this has funding potential). Stories and themes include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Geopark; • Limestone; • History (including Rob Donn – Gaelic poet); • Piping history (the MacDonald Collection); • Local artefacts that tell the Durness story – including the Durness Communion silver (1685) – used but not seen generally; a bell said to have been donated to the women of Balnakeil by a ship grounded in the area; school artefacts and crofting artefacts; waistcoat from Balnakeil House; Viking burial (held at Edinburgh); • Archives/genealogy access point for family history research; • The area in general – places such as Kinlochbervie; • Andrew Carnegie link; • John Lennon link; • The way of life/ activities today – Durness today; • Hands on materials – peat, wool, skulls, shells; • Audio and visual; • Computers and puffin link; • Highlight crafts available locally; • Immigration and emigration.
d	<p><i>Are there any visitor management issues you would like the interpretation to address (eg visitor dwell-time, activities, spend locally, litter, vandalism)?</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Could highlight the MOD firing range and safety information relating to this (get info from MOD); • No real problems with parking, litter, wildlife watching or cliffs; • General point of taking care; • Highlight issues of wild camping (not leaving a mess) and driving on single track roads; • Should be toilets in the building; • Increase TIC opening hours – people looking for information from 8.30am-7.00pm (currently 10.00am-5.00pm daily only); • DDA compliant.
e	<p><i>In terms of the existing information/ interpretation on the TIC?</i></p> <p><i>What works well?</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Location of building – potential to act as hub/catalyst for North-west Geopark, Mackay Country and Rangers. Look into ownership of building – don't rule out community ownership. <p><i>What doesn't work?</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Central space – lack of room to move around – a bus load of people completely fills room – look at options to increase size of building; • Not joined up – all bits of different stories, but no overall theme; • School panels/ quilting – looks good and nice to have in the centre – but takes up a lot of space - could be displayed in another way (or moved elsewhere in village); • Could add window (or patio door) at Ranger end of the building for

	<p>viewing wildlife.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of storage space for materials.
f	<p><i>Is there a need for new interpretation/ information elsewhere in the village or in the surrounding area?</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • something outside for when the building is shut – information notice board/ local information; • Space for interpretation boards outside too; • Walking network boards (TIC, Smoo Cave, village centre and Balnakeil) already being planned/ done by community (could link in with overall design); • 7 display boards planned for Ceannabeinne; • Other areas such as Balnakeil, Cape Wrath Ferry do need interpretation (include indicative costings).
g	<p><i>What types of new interpretation do you think would be appropriate?</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Nothing ruled out; • Audio tours and guided tours both possible; • Shop would sell better, local products (all standard VisitScotland products); • Possibly include Dutch, German and Gaelic.
4	<p>Next Steps HS noted that the next step would be to contact additional consultees by telephone, carry out the survey of visitors and to write up the report to draft stage. It was noted that this would be circulated by email for comment from the group and that a meeting to discuss the draft plan would be held at the TIC on Thursday 6th September.</p>

LIST OF CONSULTEES

APPENDIX TWO

Inception Workshop: Meeting Consultees (28th June 2007)

Mary Mackay	<i>Durness Community Council</i>
Graham Bruce	<i>Durness Development Group</i>
Ronnie Lansley	<i>Durness Development Group</i>
Donald Mitchell	<i>Highland Council Countryside Ranger</i>

Telephone Consultees/ Face-to-Face Consultees

Maarten Krabbendam	<i>British Geology Survey</i>
Mary Mackay	<i>Durness Community Council</i>
Graham Bruce	<i>Durness Development Group</i>
Ronnie Lansley	<i>Durness Development Group</i>
Sheila Frazer	<i>Durness Field Studies Group</i>
Sheila Mather	<i>Durness Tourist Information Centre</i>
Rosie	<i>Durness Tourist Information Centre</i>
Olivia Lelong	<i>Glasgow University Archaeological Research Division</i>
Andrew Puls	<i>Highland Council Archaeology Unit</i>
Donald Mitchell	<i>Highland Council Countryside Ranger</i>
Ian Mitchell	<i>Scottish Natural Heritage</i>
Prof. Paul Smith	<i>University of Birmingham</i>
Elaine MacKay	<i>VisitScotland Highland</i>

Presentation of Draft Plan: Meeting Consultees (2nd November 2006)

Graham Bruce	<i>Durness Development Group</i>
Ronnie Lansley	<i>Durness Development Group</i>
Yvonne MacKay	<i>Durness Development Group</i>
Sheila Frazer	<i>Durness Field Studies Group</i>
Donald Mitchell	<i>Highland Council Countryside Ranger</i>
Elaine MacKay	<i>VisitScotland Highland</i>

Additional Consultees of Draft Plan by Email

Isobel MacPhail	<i>North West Highland Geopark</i>
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INVENTORY OF NATURAL HERITAGE RESOURCES

APPENDIX THREE

Site Name/ Type	Designation	Description
Durness (General)	Durness SAC	<p>The ‘primary’ SAC list, based on habitats that occur here that are listed in Annexe 1 of the EU’s Birds and Habitats Directive, is as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • fixed dunes with calcareous vegetation • hard oligo-mesotrophic waters with benthic vegetation of stonewort (<i>Chara</i>) species • alpine and sub-alpine calcareous grasslands • limestone pavement <p>Other ‘Annexe 1’ habitats (non primary reason for SAC selection):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • shifting dunes • humid dune slacks • Northern Atlantic wet heaths (with <i>Erica tetralix</i>) • European dry heaths • Tall herb fringe communities • Alkaline fens <p>‘Annexe 2’ species:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Otter
Durness geology (general)	European Geopark	<p>The North West area has outstanding geology – including the Moine Thrust – when the impact of two ancient continents colliding created many of the distinctive Scottish Mountains. The Geopark starts in the Summer Isles in Wester Ross and continues northwards through west Sutherland to the north coast, it extends to the east of Durness, beyond Loch Erriboll, and onto the Moine.</p>

Smoo Cave (Geology)	European Geopark	Smoo is a very large sea cave, but the rear part of a karst cave (carved out by waters flowing down in the limestone from the impermeable rocks surrounding it). The cave was formed over many thousands of years, carved along a line of a weak fault, both by the river (which flows through it) and by the sea. Caves are a key feature of the limestone landscape and can be seen through-out the Geopark.
Limestone/ Limestone pavements	European Geopark Status/ Durness SAC/ UK Priority Habitat	Durness is the extreme north-west location for limestone pavement in the UK. Limestone Pavements are outcrops of rock, typically horizontal or gently inclined, the surface of which has been dissolved by water over millions of years into “paving blocks” known as clints. These special habitats create an area is rich in flora and fauna.
Birds	Local Priority Species	<p>Puffin - can be found in May, June and July in the area around Faraid Head Defined as a local priority species by the Sutherland Biodiversity Action Plan (species that are rare or scarce in either Highland or Britain as a whole).</p> <p>Seabirds - there is an impressive range of seabirds to be found along the Cliffs, many of which are defined as a local priority species by the Sutherland Biodiversity Action Plan (species that are rare or scarce in either Highland or Britain as a whole).</p> <p>Red and black-throated divers - on the surface of Loch Eriboll, part of the interest comes from the use of the loch by red-throated divers in summer and from its use in autumn and winter by great northern, red-throated and black-throated divers. The black-throated diver is a rare bird in Britain with only about 150 breeding pairs. Divers have nests at the waters edge,</p>

		<p>breeding success is poor partly because of egg loss caused by flooding or predators. Defined as a local priority species by the Sutherland Biodiversity Action Plan (species that are rare or scarce in either Highland or Britain as a whole).</p> <p>Corncrake -defined as a UK priority species by the Sutherland Biodiversity Action Plan.</p>
Wild Flowers	Local Priority Species	<p>Scots Primrose - found only along the north mainland and in Orkney, but nowhere else in the world, the continued health of this species is linked to careful management (including sheep grazing) of the coastal sward. Defined as a local priority species by the Sutherland Biodiversity Action Plan (species that are rare or scarce in either Highland or Britain as a whole).</p> <p>Mountain Avens - the Durness SAC has the largest expanses of mountain avens and sedge heath in the whole of the UK. Defined as a local priority species by the Sutherland Biodiversity Action Plan (species that are rare or scarce in either Highland or Britain as a whole).</p> <p>Wild Orchids - defined as a local priority species by the Sutherland Biodiversity Action Plan (species that are rare or scarce in either Highland or Britain as a whole).</p>
Wildlife (Sea)		<p>Seals (common and Grey) - no official designation</p> <p>Dolphins - defined as a UK priority species by the Sutherland Biodiversity Action Plan.</p>

		<p>Porpoise - defined as a UK priority species by the Sutherland Biodiversity Action Plan.</p> <p>Whales - defined as a UK priority species by the Sutherland Biodiversity Action Plan.</p>
Wildlife (land-based)	UK Priority Species	<p>Great Yellow Bumble Bee - this species has undergone a dramatic decline in range and abundance through-out the UK, probably due to habitat loss to modern agricultural practices. Defined as a UK priority species by the Sutherland Biodiversity Action Plan.</p> <p>Otter - defined as a UK priority species by the Sutherland Biodiversity Action Plan.</p>
Lochs – Caladail, Borralie and Croispol		Loch Caladail within the Durness, and nearby Lochs Borralie and Croispol are the northernmost ‘marl’ lochs in the UK and among the best in Scotland.
Balnakeil Beach	No official designation	

INVENTORY OF CULTURAL HERITAGE RESOURCES

APPENDIX FOUR

Site Name/ Type	Designation	Description
Balnakeil Church and graveyard	Scheduled Ancient Monument	Balnakeil Church is said to have been founded in 722AD by St Maelrubha. The present unroofed church which was abandoned in 1847 dates from 1619. Early monastic hermitages or cells along the coast are also recorded on the National Monuments Record. The Church and graveyard, along with Seanachaisteal promontory fort and monastic settlement are designated as Scheduled Ancient Monuments.
Smoo Cave (Archaeology)	Scheduled Ancient Monument	Archaeological excavation of Smoo Cave (a Scheduled Ancient Monument) has resulted in the identification of several occupation/ activity horizons. The cutting back and recording of an eroding shell midden identified it to be Iron Age, although earlier deposits at lower level are thought to represent Mesolithic activity with in the cave.
Balnakeil House – Mackay Country	Recorded on National Monuments Record	<p>Balnakeil House was built in 1744, reputedly on the site of a monastery that served the church. It is believed that an early house on the site was used as the summer residence of the Bishop of Caithness and that it later belonged to the chiefs of the Clan Mackay. The chief of Mackay, Lord Reay, spent part of the year in Durness holding criminal courts in the house. The condemned were hanged at the nearby Loch Croispol, the “Loch of the Gallows”. Adjacent to the house are the remains of Balnakeil Mill and Farm.</p> <p>The province of Strathnaver (now absorbed into what is known as the County of Sutherland) was the traditional homeland of the MacKay clan, and the name is still very common today. More information on Mackay Country can be found at www.mackaycountry.com</p>
Vikings - Balnakeil Viking burial	Recorded on National Monuments Record	<p>The “Balnakeil Viking” is a 9th or 10th century burial of a boy, found in the dunes at Balnakeil. A range of Viking-Age grave goods were also discovered including a sword, shield, spear, brooch and gaming pieces.</p> <p>Many local place-names have Viking/ Norse origins.</p>

Cape Wrath Lighthouse	Recorded on National Monuments Record	The importance of the area was shipping is demonstrated by the Cape Wrath Lighthouse, which was built by Robert Stevenson in 1828 and is situated on the most north-westerly tip of the Scottish Mainland. The name of the headland derives for the Nose word for turning point. The old buildings by the lighthouse are the remains of a signal station used in the 1930's. As with many of the areas around Durness, Cape Wrath once had a thriving community, but the area is now abandoned.
Ceannabeinne Township	Recorded on National Monuments Record	<p>This site consists of several ruined structures situated by the side of the A838 Durness to Tongue road. In many cases only the lowest courses of the foundation survive, as the substantial stone enclosure dykes built after the clearance of the settlement in 1842 have re-used much of the stone from the buildings. Overall, the site is well preserved with the visible remains of 10 buildings and their associated enclosures.</p> <p><i>History/ Durness Riots</i> Before the clearances of the 1840s, the area around modern Durness was made up of many small townships. On the eastern outskirts of Durness, Ceannabeinne was a thriving township. It was the biggest farm town on the Rispond Estate with fourteen houses and a school, and the census of June 1841 details ten families living there. Although owned by Lord Reay, from 1788, the leasehold of Rispond and Ceannabeinne was held by James Anderson, the tacksman.</p> <p>James Anderson held a lease on the land for 76 years and although the land became part of the Duke of Sutherland's Estate in 1829, Anderson retained his legal rights over the land and his sub-tenants. From the beginning of his lease Anderson had made money from fishing and fish processing, leasing tackle and fishing rights to his tenants and purchasing their catches. But with changes in the economy after the Napoleonic wars, these industries became less profitable and he decided to become a sheep farmer. To do this he needed to clear the tenants from his land.</p> <p>There had been evictions on Lord Reay's estate from the early 1800s and by the 1840s the nearby townships of Keoldale, Hope and Eriboll had all been turned into sheep farms and the ancient townships of Borralie and</p>

		<p>Croispol had disappeared. The townsfolk had to adjust to these changes. Some worked on the land and, by combining his with fishing and kelp-gathering, made a living; some found jobs as shepherds or labourers on the big sheep farms; some left Durness to work in city factories further south and some emigrated.</p> <p>Anderson started his evictions in 1839 and at first they were carried out in an orderly manner, but in September 1841, the people of Ceannabeinne were told they had to leave. According to local stories and contemporary newspaper reports, a sheriff officer from Dornoch was to serve the eviction notice but in a series of events over several days he, and several other sheriff officers, were physically prevented from doing so. The most serious riot occurred on Saturday 17th September 1841 when a sheriff substitute, the procurator fiscal, police superintendent and fourteen special constables arrived in Durness at the inn at Durine about nine in the evening. Forty-eight men of Durness tried to talk with the sheriff and ask that the eviction not be carried out on the Sabbath day but this was refused. At about ten o'clock the men who had gathered at the well on the Park Hill opposite the inn attacked. How much violence is unclear but the constables were removed and disarmed. The sheriff officer escaped and hid. The procurator fiscal and the superintendent stood their ground but were eventually removed from a room in the inn and escorted to the parish boundaries.</p> <p>Shortly after the riots at the Durine Inn, the Sheriff arrived in Durness and threatened to call upon the 53rd Regiment from Edinburgh to enforce the eviction. The riot had attracted many newspaper reports, and an official investigation was ordered from government officials in Edinburgh. The call for the 53rd Regiment was cancelled and a investigation was initiated. As James Anderson had not broken any law, the people of Ceannabeinne had to leave their homes but an agreement was reached whereby Anderson withdrew the eviction order and the people agreed to remove themselves voluntarily by the following May.</p>
Craft Village	Recorded on National Monuments Record	The Balnakeil Craft Village complex was built in the late 1950s as an early warning station against nuclear attack. The site was never

		commissioned and in 1964 the buildings were put to use as accommodation for a craft village.
Old Schoolhouse – Loch Croispol	Recorded on National Monuments Record	The school lies close to Balnakeil old manse (a listed building) and was built in 1766 with the help of the Scottish Society for the Propagation of Christian Knowledge (SSPCK), a body founded in 1709 to establish schools in the Highlands and Islands in order to promote Christian learning. Supported by the Presbytery of Tongue and the Rev Murdoch MacDonald of Tongue, construction of the schoolhouse began in 1765. The building was completed in 1766. There is little documentation on the running of the school, but sometime during the 1840s, the headmaster and the local minister had a major disagreement. The headmaster was sacked by the Presbytery, but appealed to the Court of Session and was reinstated. However, with the opening of schools in Durine (1844) and Sangomore (1846), the school ceased to be attended and was eventually closed in 1861. The building appears to have fallen out of use at this time.
Pre-historic Settlement	Recorded on National Monuments Record/ Scheduled Ancient Monument	At Balnakeil , on the hillside above Loch Croispol are the remains of pre-historic settlement evidenced by Bronze-Age hut circles and cairn fields. Seanachaisteal promontory fort and monastic settlement Scheduled Ancient Monument Cape Wrath Hotel area - prehistoric settlement remains: A large area of pre-historic settlement including hut circles, field systems and chambered cairns can also be found in the area around the Cape Wrath Hotel (many of which are Scheduled Ancient Monuments).
WWII remains - MOD (activity and influence in area)	Recorded on National Monuments Record	20 th Century WWII remains (including bunkers and look out posts) can be found throughout the area. MOD continue to use the area for training.
John Lennon Memorial Garden		John Lennon was a visitor to Durness, spending his childhood holidays in the area with his cousin Stan at Sangomore. Stan's stepfamily owned a croft in Durness where the family would spend the summer. The John Lennon memorial garden was opened at the new village hall in 2002.

<p>Local People and stories</p>		<p>Gaelic Poet, Rob Donn was born in the parish of Strathmore in Durness in 1714. He never learned to speak English or to read and write, but was known for this satirical oral verses. These verses are now recognised as supreme examples of Celtic verse-forms. He is buried at Balnakeil Churchyard.</p> <p>There is a local story that James Munro, 5th President of the United States of America (1817-1825), came from Durness ancestry.</p> <p>The MacDonald Collection of Piping music was published by the son of elder Murdo MacDonald, an influential minister of Durness. Joseph MacDonald was the first musician to commit bagpipe music successfully to paper. This brother Patrick published the collection in Argyll in the 1760's. Although known as the Argyll collection, much of the music was inspired by the province of Strathnaver and many of the tunes have a direct link to Durness.</p> <p>General emigration: In the 1700's, a whole community from Hope emigrated to Price Edward Island, while in the "People's Clearance" only 1772, families from Loch Erribol made the journey to North Carolina.</p> <p>A bell, from a ship that ran aground in Balnakeil Bay in the mid 19th century, is said to have was given to the women of Durness who helped to rescue the crew.</p> <p>Durness also had a part to play in the Disruption of 1843 (the split with the establish church which lead to the formation of the Free Church of Scotland).</p>

DETAILS OF ARCHAEOLOGICAL SITES

(Details from Durness Estate: Feasibility Study Report, produced for Durness Development Group by Rowan Tree Consulting in association with COMPASS:TMRP, LDN Architects, Carraig Associates and Dr Kenny Taylor, August 2004.

Site no. 1 Durness Limekiln **NMRS Number:** NC45NW 19

Location: NC 4163 5908 **SMR No.** NC45NW0044

Site Type: Limekiln

Description: None

Site no. 2 Allt An Lagain **NMRS Number:** NC45NW 23

Location: NC 4115 5915

Site Type: Building

Description: The footings of a crudely-constructed building 6.5m by 3.5m. Early modern.

Site no. 3 Allt An Lagain **NMRS Number:** NC45NW 22

Location: NC 4060 5970 **Site Type:** Enclosure

Description: A probable early modern cattle pound in a shallow natural gorge. It measures 17 ft by 15 ft and the stones are piled, not built.

Letter from K Reid to Ordnance Survey, 25 September 1978.

Site no. 4 Loch Eriboll **NMRS Number:** NC46SW 1

Location: NC 4049 6102

Site Type: Wheel House **SMR Number:** NC46SW0001

Scheduled Ancient Monument

Description: An enigmatic structure known as Tigh na Fiarnain - House of the Fingalians - and set in an uncultivable area of almost bare rock at a height of over 900ft. It measures 5.5m NE-SW by 5m NW-SE within its dry-built wall, 1.1m thick and 1.4m high, with the entrance in the E.

In the interior is a circle of seven orthostats set at a distance of about 1m from the wall, one of which is lintelled, another partially so, and possible roofing slabs lie about. On the W, an annexe, 8.5m long and 3m broad, defined by erect slabs bedded in the peat, curves round the structure. The peat in the interior has been scooped out. To the N are traces of an outer wall which appear to curve in towards the annexe wall; and to the SW are vague traces of yet another enclosure formed by erect slabs, now collapsed, and bounded by rock outcrops on the S.

J Mathieson 1925; Information from Dr C S Sandeman, 2nd March 1959; Visited by Ordnance Survey, 5th April 1959.

An unusually well-preserved example of a wheelhouse, as described and illustrated by the previous authorities. Tumble has been added to the wall accentuating its height, and the S side of the entrance has been buttressed against collapse. Some of the internal lintels appear to be re-erections.

Visited by Ordnance Survey, 12th May 1980.

This structure is more akin to the round aisled-houses or 'wags' of the Latheron district of Caithness, having free-standing orthostats as opposed to radial walls or slabs of the true Hebridean wheel-house, and should be considered as a homestead for publication. Its remote location and being so distant from the main group far to the east, is puzzling.

Visited by Ordnance Survey, 1st February 1983

Site no. 5 Portnancon NMRS Number: NC46SW 5.01

Location: NC 4271 6031

Site Type: Fishing Station

Description: For Portnancon township (centred NC 426 606), see NC46SW 5.00.

(Location cited as NC 427 603). Portnancon, pier, store etc. Mid 19th Century. A long coursed-rubble pier with a ramp on one side, with a wood-piled extension at right-angles. There is a two-storey and attic storehouse with external stair to the first floor and the characteristic Sutherland Estates projecting eaves. A small cottage next door is in similar style. There is also a small smoking house of wooden construction on a stone base. *J R Hume 1977.*

Site no. 6 Portnancon NMRS Number: NC46SW 5.00

Location: NC 426 606

Site Type: Township

Description: A township comprising two unroofed and seven roofed buildings is depicted on the 1st edition of the OS 6-inch map (Sutherland 1878, sheet xv). The township contains four unroofed and five roofed buildings and several enclosures on the current OS 1:10,560 map (1961). Three of the roofed buildings on the 1st edition OS 6-inch are part of Portnancon Fishing Station at NC 427 603 (NC46SW 5.01).

Information from RCAHMS, 14 August 1995.

Site no. 7 Port Chamuill NMRS Number: NC46SW 11

Location: NC 4312 6094

Site Type: Longhouse

Description: Longhouse, 25m by 5m.

Site no. 8 Port Chamuill NMRS Number: NC46SW 12

Location: NC 429 611

Site Type: Township

Description: Footings of three buildings, measuring from 14m by 4m to 21m by 4m, of 18th-19th century date and remains of accompanying enclosures. Lazy-bed cultivation is present.

Visited by Ordnance Survey, 17th April 1980.

A township comprising two unroofed buildings and an area of cultivated ground is depicted on the 1st edition of the OS 6-inch map (Sutherland 1878, sheet xv). The township is depicted as seven unroofed buildings on the current edition OS 1:10,560 map (1961).

Information from RCAHMS, 15th August 1995.

Site no. 9 Portnancon South NMRS Number: NC46SW 3

Location: NC 427 611

Site Type: Souterrain (Possible) **SMR Number:** NC46SW0003

Scheduled Ancient Monument

Description: NC 427 611. This possible souterrain is a mound within 10.0m E of the road, with stonework in the base of the lower (E) side; it sounds hollow when jumped on.

Visited by A L F Rivet, Assistant. Archaeological Officer, 21st August 1964.

The SMR record goes on to note that “there is no evidence of a souterrain at the map reference given or in the vicinity. The only mound located is natural”.

Site no. 10 Portnancon NMRS Number: NC46SW 2

Location: NC 4282 6129

Site Type: Souterrain; Hut-Circle **SMR number:** NC46SW0002

Scheduled Ancient Monument

Description: An Leabaidh-fholaich' - the Hiding Place (Name Book 1874) - or 'An Tigh Fo Thalaigh' (OS 6" map, 2nd ed., 1908) - an apparently meaningless name, which may be for 'An Tigh Fo Thalamh' - the House below the Ground - is a souterrain which was cleared and drained by Buxton between 1927 and 1935. The entrance was blocked by a slab 3ft 6ins long and 2ft 6ins high which now lies beside it, and the flight of twelve stone steps which led down into the gallery had been infilled by earth and stones. The gallery itself was 27ft long and 4ft 4ins to 5ft 5ins high; and the walls of undressed stone rose in an outward curve so that the width across the floor was 4ft 3ins, half-way up it was 5ft and at the roof, where it was spanned by stone lintels, it was 3ft 5ins. The end chamber was 4ft 9ins high and 5ft 7ins wide and at the NE corner was a hollow in the floor 4ft in diameter and about 2ft deep, which may have been used to drain the gallery. No relics were found but, after draining, the floor deposit yielded fragments of bone which were, however, too small for identification.

The entrance passage to the souterrain measures 3m long and 0.8m wide. The gallery could not be examined as the floor is again flooded but it could be seen that the walls and roof were in good condition. A mound, 1m high, covers the souterrain.

Visited by Ordnance Survey, 5th April 1960.

The souterrain is as described in the preceding reports. It has been entered from within a hut circle in the SE arc but all that remains of the latter is an arc of walling extending for about 4.5m on either side of the entrance to the souterrain. The wall is overlaid by debris (presumably cleared from the souterrain) but it appears to have been about 2.0m wide, with five or six large stones on edge defining the inner face. The majority of the hut has been destroyed by the road and a ruinous field wall parallel to the road.

Visited by Ordnance Survey, 12th May 1980.

Site no. 11 Coire Na Creubhaich **NMRS Number:** NC36SE 27

Location: NC 399 619

Site Type: Shieling-Huts (Possible)

Description: Three unroofed structures which are depicted on the 1st edition of the OS 6-inch map (Sutherland 1878, sheet xiv) may be shieling-huts. On the current edition of the OS 1:10000 map (1988) there are three unroofed structures shown, one of which is depicted as a ruin.

Information from RCAHMS, 10th August 1995.

Site no. 12 Meall Meadhonach **NMRS Number:** NC46SW 16

Location: NC 411 635

Site Type: Shieling-Huts (Possible)

Description: What may be two unroofed shieling-huts are depicted on the 1st edition of the OS 6-inch map (Sutherland 1878, sheet xv). They are not depicted on the current edition OS 1:10,560 map (1961).

Information from RCAHMS, 15th August 1995.

Site no. 13 Beinn Ceannabeinne **NMRS Number:** NC46SW 4

Location: NC 432 644

Site Type: Shieling-Huts

Description: Steading, 6.0m by 4.0m, with spring and enclosures; on the 550ft contour. *T C Welsh 1972.*

Centred NC 432 644, on a shelf on a hillside, are the earth and stone footings of at least six shieling bothies, dimensions ranging between 4.0m to 5.0m long by 2.0m to 3.0m broad, and the ruins of a later dry-stone building, 6.0m by 4.0m.

Visited by Ordnance Survey, 16th April 1980.

Site no. 14 Allt Chailgeag **NMRS Number:** NC46SW 13

Location: NC 4351 6471

Site Type: Shieling-Hut

Description: Turf and stone footings, approximately 6m by 4m, of a shieling bothy; 20m to the N a linked series of small, crudely-built structures are probably lambing pens.

Visited by Ordnance Survey, 17th April 1980.

Site no. 15 Rispond **NMRS Number:** NC46NW 13

Location: NC 449 652

Site Type: Township

Description: NC 448 653: Three longhouses, 14m by 19m long by 5m across, with associated enclosures, etc, lie on the N side of the road. Also, at NC 450 652 are two longhouses, one with an enclosure, two ovals 9m by 4m and 7m by 4m, and two rectangles 9m by 5m and 8m by 5m. T C Welsh 1972ab.

Corrected to NC 449 652. Deserted crofting township abandoned in 18th-19th century, on W side of Rispond Bay. Landward extent delimited by a head dyke in part renovated and incorporated in the line of a later wall. There are remains of five longhouses, dimensions between 11m to 18m long by 4.5m, with accompanying enclosures and field walls.

Visited by Ordnance Survey, 11th April 1980.

Footings of longhouse, 26m by 4m, on the N side of the road.

Visited by Ordnance Survey, 11th April 1980.

A township comprising seven roofed buildings and one unroofed building is depicted on the 1st edition of the OS 6-inch map (Sutherland 1878, sheet vi), but not one of the buildings noted by the OS and by Welsh (1972) are shown. One of the roofed buildings is part of Rispond fishing station (see NC46NE 1). Five roofed buildings are shown on the current edition of the OS 1:10,560 map (1961).

Information from RCAHMS, 14th August 1995.

Site no. 16 Allt Chailgeag **NMRS Number:** NC46NW 12

Location: NC 442 652

Site Type: Buildings

Description: NC 442 652. Steading, 9.5m by 4m, with enclosures.

TC Welsh 1972.

NC 4423 6524 and NC 4429 6529. Ruins of two dry stone buildings, 10m by 3m and 7m by 4m, one with an adjoining enclosure.

Visited by Ordnance Survey, 11th April 1980.

Site no. 17 Rispond Road End, Bridge **NMRS Number:** NC46NW 24

Location: NC 44416528

Site Type: Bridge

Description: None

Site no. 18 Clais Charnach **NMRS Number:** NC46NW 19

Location: NC 4409 6542

Site Type: Building

Description: One unroofed building is depicted on the 1st edition of the OS 6-inch map (Sutherland 1878, sheet vi). There are no buildings shown at this location on the current edition OS 1:10,560 (1961).

Information from RCAHMS, 8th August 1995.

Site no. 19 Ceannabeinne NMRS Number: NC46NW 20

Location: NC 4397 6570

Site Type: Enclosure

Description: A single enclosure is depicted on the 1st edition of the OS 6-inch map (Sutherland 1878, sheet vi). What may be a wall of the enclosure is shown on the current edition of the OS 1:10,560 map (1961).

Information from RCAHMS, 14th August 1995.

Site no. 20 Traigh Na H'Uamhag NMRS Number: NC46NW 4

Location: NC 4415 6599

Site Type: Monastery (Possible)

Description: (NC 4415 6599) Over a natural arch is a causeway defended by two lines of boulders. On the promontory are two buildings - rectangular. The SW edge of the promontory may have been delimited by a wall.

Information from Dr C S Sandeman, Durness, 14th March 1967.

The promontory is approached by a natural causeway about 15ft wide over a natural arch. At the W end six boulders have been set upright in the earth. Sixteen feet to the E of the boulders the causeway is 9ft wide. On the promontory is a sub-rectangular structure, with a rectangular structure about 33ft to the E.

Information contained in letter and field notes from K Reid to Ordnance Survey, 25th September 1978.

A cliff-girt promontory accessible from the landward side by a natural causeway over a natural arch. A line of earthfast angular boulders block the approach, and on the causeway itself an embedded, transverse slab may indicate a further blocking wall. On the promontory are footings of a rectangular structure measuring an estimated 8.5m by 5.0m within a wall 1.2m thick; a short distance to the E among rock outcrops are traces of a small, possibly circular structure. Along the SW side of the promontory and round the NW, stone showing in an eroded scarp indicates a skirting wall. It is unlikely that this is a fort in view of vulnerability from the NE where the cliffs give way to shelving rock. This could well be a monastic settlement and it may not be coincidental that a monastic site (NC46NW 5) is clearly viewed to the W.

Visited by Ordnance Survey, 23rd April 1980.

Site no. 21 Cnoc Nan Uamhag NMRS Number: NC46NW 18

Location: NC 438 658

Site Type: Farmstead

Description: This farmstead which comprises two unroofed buildings and one enclosure is depicted on the 1st edition of the OS 6-inch map (Sutherland 1878, sheet vi). The site comprises two unroofed buildings and three enclosures as depicted on the current edition OS 1:10,560 map (1961).

Information from RCAHMS, 8th August 1995.

Site no. 22 Sangobeg NMRS Number: NC46NW 17

Location: NC 427 661

Site Type: Township

Description: A township, comprising five unroofed, twenty-four roofed buildings, one partially roofed building and seventeen enclosures is depicted on the 1st edition OS 6-inch map (Sutherland 1878, sheet vi). The township has sixteen unroofed and nine roofed buildings on the current edition OS map (1961).
Information from RCAHMS, 9th August 1995.

Site no. 23 Leirinmore **NMRS Number:** NC46NW 16

Location: NC 421 669

Site Type: Crofting Township

Description: A township, comprising one unroofed and twelve roofed buildings is depicted on the 1st edition of the OS 6-inch map (Sutherland 1878, sheet vi). The township has six unroofed and seventeen roofed buildings on the current OS 1:10,560 map (1961).
Information from RCAHMS, 9th August 1995.

Site no. 24 Leirinmore **NMRS Number:** NC46NW 23

Location: NC 4215 6716

Site Type: Radar Station

Description: The transmitter block for a Chain Home radar station is situated approximately 70m N of the Smoo Cave Hotel within an area annotated Leirinmore on the current chart copy edition of the OS 1:10560 map (1967). The radar station, which lies to the E of Sango, Smoo radar station (NC46NW 22.00), is visible on vertical air photographs (CPE/Scot/UK/185: 3161-62, flown 1946). Two masts, the transmitter block and the bases of at least two huts are visible on the photographs.
Information from RCAHMS, February 1999.

This is possibly a Gee rather than a Chain Home Station, for radio direction of bombers.

Information from C Latham and A Stobbs, 1997.

Site no. 25 Smoo Cave **NMRS Number:** NC46NW 6

Location: NC 4188 6714

Site Type: Caves - settlement site SMR Number: NC46NW0006

Scheduled Ancient Monument.

Description: Excavated by GUARD – copy reports available from Highland Council Archaeology Unit.

Site no. 26 Smoo **NMRS Number:** NC46NW 15

Location: NC 417 669

Site Type: Crofting Township

Description: A township, comprising eighteen roofed and two unroofed buildings is depicted on the 1st edition of the OS 6-inch map (Sutherland 1878, sheet vi). The township has 16 roofed and 2 unroofed buildings on the current edition OS 1:10,560 map (1961).
Information from RCAHMS, 9th August 1995.

Site no. 27 Sango Radar Station **NMRS Number:** NC46NW22.01

Location: NC 4170 6685

Site Type: Military Camp

Description: The accommodation camp and what may be the remote reserve generator house for the radar station are situated to the S of Smoo Lodge. The buildings are visible on vertical air photographs CPE/Scot/UK/185: 3160-61, flown 1946).
Information from RCAHMS, February 1999.

Site no. 28 Smoo Lodge **NMRS Number:** NC46NW 7

Location: NC 4165 6720

Site Type: Gatepiers

Description: Smoo Lodge – Gate piers.

Sutherland: An Illustrated Architectural Guide: Smoo Lodge - 18th Century and later. Wide crow-stepped house said to incorporate the 17th Century house of Murdo Lowe. Lowe was an Orkney merchant who traded out of the geo (inlet) of Smoo and is reputed to have employed local women to carry sacks of meal up the steep track from beach to clifftop in return for an oatmeal biscuit.

Site no. 29 Leirinbeg, Sango Radar Station **NMRS Number:** NC46NW

Location: NC 4153 6750

Site Type: Radar Station

Description: Sango or Smoo, Chain Home Low Radar Station occupies much of the area annotated Leirinbeg on the current chart copy edition of the OS 1:10560 map, (1967). Several of the buildings, including the transmitter/receiver block (NC 4150 6780), with tracks and bunkers connected with the radar station are depicted on the map.

The Radar Station, with at least five upstanding masts (NC c.4189 6770, NC c.4159 6749, NC c.4148 6754, NC c.4136 6754 and NC c.4127 6756) and a further two mast bases (NC c.4175 6764 and NC c.4180 6755), is visible on vertical air photographs (CPE/Scot/UK/185, 3160-61, flown 1946). Many accommodation buildings are also visible, with what may be the remote reserve generator (NC46NW 22.01).

Information from RCAHMS and Mr I Brown, February 1999

Situated to the N and S side of the A 838 public road, just E of Durness (NC46NW 8). Many buildings are extant connected with the radar and accommodation sites.

J Guy 2000; NMRS MS 810/10, Part.1, 4, Vol.3, 4-8

Site no. 30 Geodha Smoo **NMRS Number:** NC46NW 10

Location: NC 420 677

Site Type: Landing-Place

Description: None.

Site no. 31 Leirinbeg House **NMRS Number:** NC46NW 9.00

Location: NC 4108 6741

Site Type: Residential

Description: None.

1830. Alexander Coupar. Simple, dignified regularly fronted two-storey whitewashed house built for the Sutherland Estate Ground Officer, the datestone enriched with the Stafford arms. It is said that masons who worked on Cape Wrath Lighthouse were at Leirinbeg when bad weather kept them from the lighthouse. *Sutherland: An Illustrated Architectural Guide.*

Site no. 32 Church of Scotland **NMRS Number:** NC46NW 27

Location: NC 4041 6693

Site Type: Church

Description: None.

Sutherland: An Illustrated Architectural Guide. Sangomore, 1844. William Henderson, remodelled 1891. White-harled, plain former Free Church with entry in north-facing gable crowned with bellcote.

Site no. 33 The Old Manse **NMRS Number:** NC46NW 26

Location: NC 4038 6688

Site Type: Manse

Description: None.

Sutherland: An Illustrated Architectural Guide: 1885-86 and 1830; drawing- and dining-room addition 1865. Plain house with mural sundial. Re-used moulded doorpiece dated 1727 inscribed MMD (Murdoch MacDonald) and *God sees you*. The Revd Murdoch MacDonald (1769-1763) became Minister of Durness in 1726; an accomplished musician, he was well-known as *a most melodious and powerful singer* and as a supporter of the local Gaelic poet, Rob Donn, who composed an elegy in his memory. (Note: this is an extract from a more detailed entry about the Old Manse contained in the book).

Site no. 34 Durine School/Schoolhouse **NMRS Number:** NC46NW 25

Location: NC 4031 6760

Site Type: School

Description: None.

Site no. 35 Durness Inn **NMRS Number:** NC46NW 21

Location: NC 403 677

Site Type: Inn

Description: None.

Site no. 36 Durness **NMRS Number:** NC46NW 8

Location: NC 4031 6775

Site Type: Crofting Township

Description: Dr Close-Brooks notes the generally older houses gable-end on to road, newer houses side-on. Narrow crofts run back from houses.
Information from Dr J Close-Brooks, 1986.

Site no. 37 Balvolich, Durness **NMRS Number:** NC36NE 82

Location: NC 3982 6783

Site Type: Building (possible)

Description: What may be an unroofed building is depicted on the 1st edition of the OS 6-inch map (Sutherland 1878, sheet v) and is shown as unroofed on the current edition of the OS 1:10000 map (1991).

Information from RCAHMS, 14th August 1995.

Site no. 38 Durine, Durness **NMRS Number:** NC36NE 81

Location: NC 399 673

Site Type: Crofting Township

Description: A crofting township containing seventeen roofed and two unroofed buildings is depicted on the 1st edition of the OS 6-inch map (Sutherland 1878, sheet v). The township has eight roofed and five unroofed buildings on the current OS 1:10,000 maps: NC46NW (1961).

Information from RCAHMS, 14th August 1995.

Site no. 39 Durness **NMRS Number:** NC46NW 3

Location: NC 40 67

Site Type: Find spot **SMR Number:** NC46NW0003

Description: In Dunrobin Castle Museum is a 'Bronze swivel, about 2,000 years old, from Durness' (NC 40 67).

Visited by Ordnance Survey, 1st July 1960.

A sketch of the swivel is given in a letter from J M Joass, Golspie, to Dr J Anderson, National Museum of Antiquities of Scotland (NMAS), which suggests that it had been found shortly before. He says in a second letter that the keeper of the Ashmolean Museum, after seeing a sketch of it, calls it Late Celtic and believes that it might be from horse gear or a dog collar, although too heavy for the jesses of a falcon. Joass adds that its Celtic character suggests a local origin although Durness was a Viking station.

Letters from J M Joass, 10 December 1894 and 20 February 1895.

A bronze swivel, total length 1.8ins, consisting of two cast hemispheres connected by a ball and socket joint, each having a similar loop, 1.85ins across, swelling into animal heads where they are attached to the hemispheres. Surface much worn (Accession No: 109).

Information from TS catalogue of Dunrobin Museum (A S Henshall to Ordnance Survey).

Site no. 40 Loch Caladail **NMRS Number:** NC36NE 43

Location: NC 393 667

Site Type: Enclosures

Description: (A: NC 3949 6687; B: NC 3938 6684; C: NC 3937 6674; D: NC 3937 6663; E: NC 3827 6649) Enclosures.

Visible on Ordnance Survey air photographs 64.457. (Undated) annotation on Ordnance Survey record card.

'A' is a natural rock formation.

'B' is a sub-rectangular enclosure on a steep, E-facing slope. It measures 10.5m N-S by 9.0m within a spread, turf-covered wall, 1.5m wide and up to 0.5m high. The interior follows the natural steep slope. The age of the enclosure is unknown, but it is probably early modern.

'C': No artificial platform or enclosure.

'D', at NC 3938 6663, is a distinctly pear-shaped enclosure measuring 10.5m WSW-ENE by 7.5m within a spread bank, 1.5m wide and 0.3m high. There is no surface evidence of stone in the bank. The sloping interior shows no indication of levelling. No entrance is visible. The date and purpose of the enclosure are unknown, but it may pre-date the early modern period. 'E' is a natural platform by erosion. 'B' and 'D' surveyed at 1:2500.

Visited by Ordnance Survey, 1st May 1980.

Site no. 41 Loch Caladail **NMRS Number:** NC36NE 21

Location: NC 3909 6645

Site Type: Settlement (Possible)

Description: NC 3909 6645. An occupation site may have existed on an eroded sand-hill, from which Mr Campbell (G Campbell, Achins, Durness) has obtained a few medieval or later pot-sherds and pieces of metal. It may have been abandoned because of shifting sand. No evidence of building was seen. The finds are in Mr Campbell's possession, as is a quantity of water-worn stones and pebbles of no archaeological value.

Visited by Ordnance Survey 4th June 1959.

No trace and no further information.

Visited by Ordnance Survey, 20th July 1971.

No change to previous field report.

Visited by Ordnance Survey, 9th May 1980.

A survey was undertaken along a proposed water pipeline route close to Durness. The assessment was designed to identify and evaluate any archaeological monuments present in the areas, through the examination of documentary sources and fieldwalking. The results of this work suggested that, although the locality is rich in archaeological remains, the pipeline successfully avoids all but a few monuments of lesser worth. Only previously unrecorded monuments are presented in the following list:

NC 3875 6607 (centre) Rig and furrow.

NC 3876 6603 to NC 3881 6609 Turf bank.

NC 3890 6604 to NC 3892 6608 Turf bank.

NC 3894 6606 Penannular stone feature.

NC 3923 6598 to NC 3926 6601 to NC 3930 6609 Fieldbank.

NC 3936 6602 Small stone pile.

NC 3914 6600 Sheepfold.

NC 3921 6609 to NC 3926 6611 Turf dyke.

NC 3923 6611 (centre) Rig and furrow.

NC 3909 6600 to NC 3910 6609 to NC 3906 6637 Field bank. Gap between NC 3910 6605 and NC 3910 6606

NC 3881 6616 (centre) Turf banked, rectilinear enclosure.

The entry noted that a report would be lodged with NMRS. Sponsor: Highland Regional Council. (T Neighbour 1995).

Site no. 42 Loch Caladail West **NMRS Number:**NC36NE 35

Location: NC 393 663

Site Type: Hut-Circles

Description: ('A': NC 3927 6639 & 'B': NC 3933 6632 & 'C': NC 3928 6629)

Huts or enclosures. Visible on OS air photographs 68.057: 090-1 (flown 15th April 1968)

A settlement of three oval stone-walled huts (A-C). Heavy peat growth over the surrounding area and no trace of contemporary cultivation. 'A' measures 11.5m NW-SE by 10.0m transversely between the centres of a wall, obscured by peat, spread to indeterminate width except in the NE where two outer facing stones are evident and the wall is spread to 2.5m. The entrance in the SE is ill-defined.

'B' measures 13.5m NW-SE by 11.0m transversely. The wall is mainly obscured by peat except in the NW where it incorporates a rocky outcrop. The entrance in the SE is ill-defined.

'C' measures 10.0m WNW-ESE by 8.5m transversely between the centres of a wall, obscured by peat and spread to an indeterminate width. The entrance in the SE is ill-defined. The S arc is scarcely discernible.

Visited by Ordnance Survey, 22nd July 1971.

No change to the previous field report.

Visited by Ordnance Survey, 21st April 1980.

Site no. 43 Loch Meadaidh **NMRS Number:** NC36SE 5

Location: NC 398 640

Site Type: Shieling-Huts

Description: (Centred NC 398 640) Old Shielings (NAT) (Remains of)
OS 6" map, (1961)

NC 3978 6401. Situated at the head of Loch Meadie on low-lying ground which has been cleared are approximately twelve shieling foundations mostly of square plan. There are no circular ones among them. They lie between two streams and all are considerably mutilated. They vary from 3.0m by 2.4m to 5.0m by 2.4m and 0.2m maximum height.

Visited by Ordnance Survey, 7th April 1960.

No change to the previous field report.

Visited by Ordnance Survey, 21st November 1978.

Site no. 44 Bealach Mor **NMRS Number:** NC36SE 8

Location: NC 38 60

Site Type: Chapel (Possible)

Description: 'The red priest is believed to have built a chapel at Bealoch Mhor between Durness (NC 403 677) and Eriboll (NC 432 565) at which the inhabitants of Eriboll occasionally worshipped . . . The red priest is said to have been the last incumbent of Farr (NC 7163) or of Durness previously to the Reformation and withal a worker of miracles.' (OPS 1855). The only 'Bealach Mor' between Durness and Eriboll would appear to be at NC 3860. It seems ridiculous to suggest that the inhabitants of Eriboll worshipped here but the name 'Ach na h' Anaite' (NC 385 656) might have some relevance. 'The Red Priest' is also associated with Durness church (NC36NE 1) which, in turn, is associated with St Maelrubha. (See also Applecross (NG74NW 1) for the association of St Maelrubha and the 'Red Priest'.) *Orig Paroch Scot 1855; Information contained in letter from E McIver to J Loch.*

No further information was found locally regarding this site.

Visited by Ordnance Survey, 22 April 1980.

Site no. 45 Allt An Tighe **NMRS Number:** NC35NE 6

Location: NC 3875 5877

Site Type: Cairn

Scheduled Ancient Monument

Description: (NC 3875 5877) A cairn, 25 ft by 16 ft, with an upright pointed stone at the SW end, lies at a height of 1075 ft about 80 yds N of NC35NE 3. *R Reid 1968; Information from Dr C S Sandeman, Durness, 14th March 1967.*

This is a natural accumulation of broken slab in a glacial field. It is a feature of the area.

Visited by Ordnance Survey, 15th April 1980.

Scheduled with NC35NE 2, 3 and 5 as Meall nan Cra, cairns.

Information from Historic Scotland, scheduling document dated 13th December 2000.

Site no. 46 Allt An Tighe **NMRS Number:** NC35NE 5

Location: NC 3870 5874

Site Type: Cairn

Scheduled Ancient Monument

Description: (NC 3870 5874) A cairn lies, at an elevation of 1075ft, about 100yds NW of NC35NE 2. It is constructed of thin slabs placed on edge with their long axes tangential to the 'circle', 17 ft by 14 ft.

R Reid 1968; Information from Dr C S Sandeman, Durness, 14th March 1967.

This is a natural accumulation of broken slab in a glacial field. It is a feature of the area.
Visited by Ordnance Survey, 15th April 1980.

Scheduled with NC35NE 2, 3 and 6 as Meall nan Cra, cairns.
Information from Historic Scotland, scheduling document dated 13th December 2000.

Site no. 47 Allt An Tighe **NMRS Number:** NC35NE 3

Location: NC 3875 5869

Site Type: Cairn **SMR Number:** NC35NE0003

Scheduled Ancient Monument

Description: (NC 3875 5869) A possible cairn, oval, measuring 16 ft by 13 ft, lies about 80 ft NW of NC35NE 2.
R Reid 1968; Information from Dr C S Sandeman, Durness, 14th March 1967.

This is a natural accumulation of broken slab in a glacial field. It is a feature of the area.
Visited by Ordnance Survey, 15th April 1980.

Scheduled with NC35NE 2, 5 and 6 as Meall nan Cra, cairns.
Information from Historic Scotland, scheduling document dated 13th December 2000.

Site no. 48 Allt An Tighe **NMRS Number:** NC35NE 2

Location: NC 3877 5866

Site Type: Cairn

Scheduled Ancient Monument

Description: NC 3877 5866. A large round cairn is situated on fairly level ground NE of Carn an Righ at a height of 1050 ft OD. It measures 19.0m in diameter with a maximum height of 4.0m, but the W half only remains, the E half having been extensively robbed. It is formed of small broken stones and is partly heather and turf covered. In the centre, a number of flat stones, not in situ, possibly represent the remains of a cist.

Visited by Ordnance Survey, 3rd June 1959.

This is a natural mound of shattered rock in a glacial field. There are several similar mounds in the area. Published survey (6") deleted.
Visited by Ordnance Survey, 15th April 1980.

The Ordnance Survey surveyor (15th April 1980) is incorrect in his description and the earlier visit in 1959 is more accurate. This is a large D-shaped cairn which may be chambered, although the slumped internal slab-built construction makes this hard to determine for certain. There are also a number of smaller cairns nearby. *Information contained in a letter from Historic Scotland (Dr N Fojut), dated 16th August 2000.*

Scheduled with NC35NE 3, 5 and 6 as Meall nan Cra, cairns.
Information from Historic Scotland, scheduling document dated 13 December 2000.

Site no. 49 Loch Caladail **NMRS Number:** NC36NE 22

Location: NC 3949 6612

Site Type: Cairn: Kerb

Description: On a rise, a cairn 10.7m overall diameter and 0.8m high, partly robbed but not deep enough to expose a cist. Six boulders (two displaced) of the kerb survive in the SE arc. The rest of the kerb has been removed, leaving a trench 0.7m wide by 0.3m deep in which the boulders were embedded.

Visited by Ordnance Survey, 5th April 1960 and 22nd July 1971.

Site no. 50 Loch Caladail **NMRS Number:** NC36NE 11

Location: NC 391 660

Site Type: Settlement

Description: Two well-defined hut circles: 'A' - A circle of stones with a slight bank in places. It measures 8.2m by 9.2m with a 1.0m wide entrance on the E. The interior is slightly scooped, the floor lying 0.7m below the bank. 'B' - A bank of earth and stones 0.7m high by 1.0m broad. A revetting kerb is clearly visible on the NW and the entrance is in the NE. It lies at the base of a rocky scarp.

Visited by Ordnance Survey, 7th April 1960.

Three other huts (D, E and F) noted by Dr Sandeman at NC 3917 6614, NC 3915 6607 and NC 3919 6601.

Information from Dr C S Sandeman, Durness, 14 March 1967.

A settlement of six stone-walled huts (A - F), centred at NC 391 660. Apart from two or three denuded stone clearance heaps near hut 'F', there is no trace of contemporary cultivation. The area is enclosed by later walls and has been used for rough grazing.

'A' is circular, measuring 9.5m in diameter between the centres of a wall spread to 2.5m. The outer face is visible in the W and the inner face in the N. The simple entrance is in the E. Inside the hut are several stones which have rolled from the wall.

'B' is oval, measuring 7.0m NE-SW by 6.0m transversely between the centres of a wall spread to 2.0m. The outer wall face is apparent in the NE. The simple entrance is in the NE.

'C' and 'D' are identical and measure 10.0m E-W by 8.5m transversely between the centres of a wall spread to 2.5m. Each has a mutilated entrance in the E. There is a swallow hole in the centre of 'C'.

'E' measures 10.5m in diameter between the centres of a wall spread to 2.5m. The simple entrance in the ESE is flanked on the N side of an earthfast stone. Immediately outside the entrance on the S side is an outer wall facing stone. Some 4.0m outside the entrance is a mound which is probably a contemporary ramp leading to the hut door.

'F', heavily overgrown with peat, measures 9.0m in diameter between the centres of a wall spread to about 2.0m. There is an earthfast stone on the S side of the simple entrance which is in the E. There is also an earthfast stone on the outside wall in the N.

Visited by Ordnance Survey, 21st July 1971.

This settlement of six hut circles among undulating limestone country is as described in the previous field report.

Visited by Ordnance Survey, 14th November 1978.

Note: This site was the subject of a site visit on 10th May 2004. The features previously recorded were not easily identifiable, and the site is situated at some distance on foot from the village of Durness. It is considered that this site would not be a good candidate for interpretation to the general public, particularly as better (ie, more easily identifiable and closer to the village) examples can be seen in the Loch Croispol area.

Site no. 51 Cnoc Na Moine **NMRS Number:** NC36NE 85

Location: NC 3914 6600

Site Type: Sheepfold

Description: A survey was undertaken along a proposed water pipeline route close to Durness. The assessment was designed to identify and evaluate any archaeological monuments present in the areas, through the examination of documentary sources and fieldwalking.

The results of this work suggested that, although the locality is rich in archaeological remains, the pipeline successfully avoids all but a few monuments of lesser worth.

Sponsor: Highland Regional Council. (T Neighbour 1995).

Site no. 52 Cape Wrath Hotel **NMRS Number:** NC36NE 13

Location: NC 3898 6609

Site Type: Chambered Cairn

Description: The heavily robbed remains of an Orkney-Cromarty round cairn with a polygonal chamber (A S Henshall 1972), found during field investigation (OS [JLD] 7 April 1960). Peat covers the remains of the cairn material but a slight bank round the W and N sides seems to represent the original edge of the cairn giving a diameter of between 55 ft and 65 ft. The cairn material seems to have spread beyond the original edge on the E and S, the orthostats of the chamber standing in the resulting slight hollow with varying amount of cairn material surrounding them. Robbing has been heaviest behind the chamber, inside which there is about 3 ft of stone.

A S Henshall 1972, visited 1963; Visited by Ordnance Survey, 7th April 1963.

Sutherland: An Illustrated Architectural Guide: Cape Wrath Hotel, Keoldale (also Keodale). From c 1835. Typical double-pile north-west Sutherland estate house similar to Melvich Hotel and Scourie; crow-stepped gables, diagonal chimney stacks, balck and white paintwork. Unusual small circular walled gardens. Set in green fields on a sheltered site on the shores of the Kyle of Durness, Keoldale was long occupied bu the Balnakeil factors of the Lords of Reay, whose principal residence was at Tongue.

Site no. 53 Keodale **NMRS Number:** NC36NE 12

Location: NC 3888 6640

Site Type: Cairn; Mound

Description: The remains of a cairn, 12.5m in diameter and 1.2m high, now turf-covered and considerably mutilated. The footings of a small house encroach on the E side.

Visited by Ordnance Survey, 8th April 1960.

Some 20m to the NE is another mound, 9.0m in diameter and about 1.0m high, which shows some stone content; possibly a cairn.

Visited by Ordnance Survey, 23rd July 1971.

The cairn published by the Ordnance Survey is as described by Ordnance Survey field surveyor. The mound to the NE is heather-covered, contrasting sharply with the turf mantle of the cairn, and though some stone is apparent in its content, it cannot be classified with certainty as a cairn, and it may even be a natural accumulation.

Visited by Ordnance Survey, 28th May 1980

Site no. 54 Cnoc Na Moine, North **NMRS Number:** NC36NE 48

Location: NC 3892 6627

Site Type: Cairn

Description: At NC 3892 6627 on top of a knoll is an oval, turf-covered stony mound about 8.5m by 6.5m. Possible cairn, possibly natural.

Visited by Ordnance Survey, 22nd July 1971.

This is probably a cairn, prominently situated on a knoll in a similar position to the example 150m to the NNW (NC36NE 12). It appears to be composed of rubble stones, but is disturbed, surviving to a height of 0.3m. No cist or kerb is exposed, and what remains is too slight to enable sound classification.

Visited by Ordnance Survey, 22nd May 1980.

Site no. 55 Cape Wrath Hotel **NMRS Number:** NC36NE 14

Location: NC 3906 6613

Site Type: Cairn: Kerb **SMR Number:** NC36NE0014

Scheduled Ancient Monument

Description: An approximately circular setting of six large stones which appears to be the kerb of a robbed cairn about 15.5m in diameter. It is situated on the summit of a knoll.

Visited by Ordnance Survey, 7th April 1960.

The poor remains of a robbed cairn surviving as a rim of cairn material, about 14.0m in diameter and 0.2m in height. Within the cairn, and outside it on the N, are about twelve boulders, some earthfast, presenting no intelligible plan, which probably constitute part of a displaced kerb. These boulders are very similar to the kerb of the cairn described on NC36NE .

Visited by Ordnance Survey, 21st July 1971.

Site no. 56 Cnoc Na Moine **NMRS Number:** NC36NE 34

Location: NC 391 659

Site Type: Hut-Circles

Description: NC 3918 6593) Probable hut circle with a most unusual entrance; 27 1/2 ft by 28 ft. (NC 3918 6597)

(i) Ruined hut circle, overall 36 ft.

(ii) Some 50 ft to the S is a hut circle, with a complex entrance facing E; overall 32 ft.

Information from Dr C S Sandeman, Durness, 14th March 1967.

(NC 391 659) A group of three hut circles (A - C) lying between the 150 ft and 175 ft contours. 'A', at NC 3918 6593, is built against a steep bank. It measures 29 ft by 37 ft 6 ins overall and has an extended entrance. 'B' at NC 3918 6597, measures 36ft overall. 'C' lies about 50 ft S of 'B' and has measured about 32 ft overall. The entrance is sheltered by a boomerang-shaped arrangement of stones, thought to have protected a cooking-fire.

RWK Reid 1968.

The site, in a valley of broken limestone country, comprises two hut circles ('A' and 'C'). 'B' was not certainly identified, but an arc of walling at the given location has possibly been interpreted as a hut. 'A', at NC 3918 6592, is as described above, being 8.0m N-S by 6.0m internally. The elongated entrance in the S is 2.8m long and 0.7m wide. The hut wall is more evident on the E side, opposite the steep slope, where it is spread to 2.0m and 0.4m high. A number of outer facing stones are visible around this arc. 'C', at NC 3920 6596, is about 7.5m in diameter within a wall spread to 1.5m and 0.3m high. The entrance is in the E with an upright slab 0.5m high probably defining the inner S side. The 'boomerang-shaped arrangement of stones' was not noted. A sheep track crossing the hut has slightly disfigured the wall in two places in the S. The wall is best-preserved in the SSE where some outer facing stones show. A small number of widely scattered clearance heaps are the only evidence of contemporary cultivation.

Site no. 57 Balnakeil Church **NMRS Number:** NC36NE 1.01

Location: NC 39090 68653

Site Type: Church

Description: The remains of the former parish church which was built in 1619 and had an aisle added to the N in 1692. It was in use until about 1814 when the present church was built (at NC 4042 6693). Although somewhat irregular in plan, it is generally typical of its period with a belfry on the E gable. The remains stand to the wall-head, the crow-stepped gables being intact. The earliest reference occurs between 1223 and 1245 when it was assigned to find light and incense for the cathedral church (NH78NE), but it is said to have been a Celtic foundation of St Maelrubba (6, 7 & 8). An old font known as the 'Clach na sagart ruadh' or 'stone of the red priest' (cf Applecross - NG74NW 1 - for association of St Maelrubha and 'the Red Priest'), lay in front of the door of Balnakeil House (NC36NE 4) before 1867 but by 1874 it had been moved to within the church. The church is said to occupy 'the site of a cell of Dornoch monastery' (? NH78NE), but there is no mention of such by Easson.

Visible on RAF air photographs CPE/Scot/UK 185: 1150-1: flown 1946.

Orig Paroch Scot 1855; J Horsburgh 1870; H Morrison 1883; D MacGibbon and T Ross 1897; RCAHMS 1911; A Mackay 1914; A B Scott 1918; D E Easson 1957.

What could be a former, circular, enclosing bank of the churchyard is visible on aerial photographs within the confines of the modern graveyard.

D E Easson 1957.

The church is well preserved, the walls of rubble masonry being 0.8m thick and averaging 2.3m in height. Externally, the nave measures 13.8m by 6.0m and the aisle 7.7m by 6.0m.

Visited by Ordnance Survey, 5th April 1960.

This church is as described and planned by MacGibbon and Ross. The font stands within the church and is covered by the top half of a rotary quern. There is no ground trace of the suggested circular graveyard wall.

Visited by Ordnance Survey, 22nd July 1971.

The church is as described by the previous authorities. The font has been removed by persons unknown in recent years. A holy water stoup, now cracked in half, lies immediately inside the church entrance on the S side.

Visited by Ordnance Survey, 22nd April 1980.

Scheduled as Durness Old Church, Balnakeil. Information from Historic Scotland, scheduling document dated 9 October 2001.

Sutherland: An Illustrated Architectural Guide: 1619, north aisle 1692, some reconstruction, including gables, 1727-28. Roofless crowstepped T-plan church with similarities to Tongue Church. The oldest portion is aligned east-west in pre-Reformation manner, apparently incorporating the ground plan of an earlier medieval church. Table tomb of Duncan MacMorrach. Memorial in burial ground to Rob Donn, the "Burns of the North". (Note: This is an extract of more detailed entry for church and burial ground which can be found in the book).

Site no. 58 Balnakeil House and associated features

NMRS Number: NC36NE 4

Location: NC 3919 6863

Site Type: Laird's House

Description: Balnakeil House, built in 1744, occupies the site of the former summer residence of the Bishop of Caithness (D MacGibbon and T Ross 1891), which was presumably the 'Castle of Durinas' referred to by Gordon in 1630 as having existed at 'Baill-ne-Kill'.

Balnacille manour, there was to be seen - till this last year (i.e. 1725) that it was thrown down for building a new house - the ruins of an old wall about eight or nine foot thick and in some places thirty foot high, without any window thereon, it seemed to extend on the one side one hundred foot long, and in breadth forty foot; there is no tradition by whom it was built, or for what purpose; it seems to have been some old monastery (W Macfarlane 1906). (The present house is a mansion in the traditional style, harled, with crowsteps (1967).

R Gordon 1813; D MacGibbon and T Ross 1891; W Macfarlane 1906.

The house is in use.

Visited by Ordnance Survey, 23rd June 1960.

Superbly situated on a mound, Balnakeil House may incorporate remains of the bishop's residence but appears to be basically a laird's house of the 17th century, altered and extended the following century, forming an E-plan with the main block running N-S and the wings projecting W at either end. The oldest part of the

house is said to be the N wing but the walling is very thick in various other parts. The walls are harled and rise to three storeys and a garret, with the gables crow-stepped.

N Tranter 1970.

No trace of the earlier work. The present house is occupied and is of no outstanding architectural merit.

Visited by Ordnance Survey, 22nd July 1971.

Balnakeil (nameplate) is situated on a natural rocky mound.

No change to previous information.

Visited by Ordnance Survey, 15th April 1980.

Sutherland: An Illustrated Architectural Guide: Commenced in 1720s, allegedly completed c 1744. Incorporates earlier cellars and perhaps earlier fabric in the west (rear) elevation, probably of medieval summer palace of the Bishops of Caithness. Important and handsome crowstepped two-storey, shallow U-plan mansion, this was the occasional residence of the Lords of Reay. Walled garden is dated 1863, farm steading incorporated the earliest improved buildings in the north-west, disused early 19th Century corn mill served by lade (millstream) diverted from the burn flowing out of Loch Croispol. Ruined wheelhouse downstream from the mill once housed a wheel and endless wire rope on pulley wheels running up to the steading to motivate threshing machinery and agricultural tasks, the only known detached wheelhouse of its type in the Highlands. The Balnakeil area is notable for fine drystone dykes enclosing the fields. (Note: This is an extract of a more detailed entry for Balnakeil House and associated buildings which can be found in the book).

Site no. 59 Balnakeil Craft Village **NMRS Number:** NC36NE 90

Location: NC 3928 6791

Site Type: Village

Description: Post-1939-45 war built village visible on vertical air photographs (V 540/RAF/1631, 0081-0082, flown 1 June 1955). The air photographs show the village under construction.

Information from RCAHMS, May 2004

Sutherland: An Illustrated Architectural Guide: 1939-1945. Rehabilitated military encampment of flat-roofed white-painted cabins, quite incongruous in relation to its Highland setting but full of varying enterprise, including hotel and craft workshops.

Background

Rowan Tree Consulting undertook a survey to gather information on visitors to Durness, visitors' views on the existing interpretation at the Durness TIC and Visitor Centre and how to improve the experience of visiting the Centre. The face-to-face surveys were undertaken by Hazel Bews in and around the TIC over 5 days in August 2007.

- Monday 6th August 12 Questionnaires (Rain)
- Thursday 9th August 15 Questionnaires (Sunny)
- Saturday 11th August 12 Questionnaires (Sunny)
- Sunday 12th August 11 Questionnaires (Rain)
- Friday 17th August 10 Questionnaires (Sunny)

A total of 60 questionnaires were completed. A copy of the questionnaire as appended below.

Survey Results

The main results were as follows:

ORIGIN OF VISITOR

1. Where is your normal/main place of residence?

	No.	%
England	16	26
Scotland	7	12
Wales	1	2
UK SUB TOTAL	24	40
Germany	14	23
France	4	6
Italy	5	8
Switzerland	5	8
Spain	2	3
Belgium	1	2
Canada	1	2
Chile Republic	1	2
Holland	1	2
Hungary	1	2
ROI	1	2
OVERSEAS SUB-TOTAL	36	60
TOTAL	60	100

Visitors to Durness were most likely to be from overseas, particularly continental Europe (14% of those surveyed were from Germany, 8% from Italy and Switzerland and 6% from France). UK visitors were most likely to be from England. (26% were from England and 12% from Scotland)

TYPE OF VISIT

2. Which of the following best describes your visit to Durness today?

	No.	%
On holiday away from home	60	100
On business staying away from home	0	0
On a day out or day trip from home	0	0
Visiting friends or relatives – on holiday/day-out	0	0
Visiting friends or relatives – not on holiday/day-out	0	0
Going shopping, visiting doctor, dentist, bank, post office etc in Durness– not staying away from home	0	0
On business/working – not staying away from home	0	0
Other	0	0
TOTAL	60	100

All the visitors surveyed were on holiday away from home (100%).

MAIN REASON FOR VISITING DURNESS TODAY

3. What is your main reason for visiting Durness today?

	No.	%
General touring/sightseeing	54	90
Visiting tourist information centre for information on things to see/do, accommodation etc	0	0
Visit Smoo Cave	1	2
Visit Balnakeil Craft Village	0	0
Visit Cape Wrath	1	2
To go for a walk	1	2
To go cycling	0	0
To go bird/wildlife watching	1	2
To find out about your family history	0	0
Break in journey/rest-stop (using car-park, picnic area, toilets etc)	0	0
Shopping and/ or using local services such as tea-room,	0	0
To visit the beach	2	3
TOTAL	100	101

The main reason for people visit Durness was for general sightseeing (90%) with many visiting Durness as part of a tour around the North West Coast of Scotland. They were also visiting the beach (3% - especially on Thursday 9th with was a hot, sunny day) and local attractions.

INTERESTS AND ACTIVITIES

4. Which of the following activities have you undertaken or do you intend to undertake during your current stay away from home/day-out.

	No.	%
Short/low level walks, rambling (2-8 miles)	33	55
Watch birds and/or wildlife	24	40
Buy gifts/souvenirs	21	35
Visit museums/historic buildings/heritage centres/archaeological sites	20	33
See/find out about the area's geology	15	25
Go to a local/cultural event (eg festival, gala day, Highland Games)	10	17
Low level walking of more than 8 miles	7	12
Hill walking/mountaineering	7	12
Research your family history	3	5
Cycling (on roads)	2	3
Cycling/mountain biking (off-road)	2	3
Loch or river fishing	2	3
Go to ceilidh/musical event	1	2
Sea fishing	1	2

Visitors to Durness were most likely to go for short, low-level walks of 2-8 miles (55%); watch birds and /or wildlife (40%); buy gifts and souvenirs (35%) or visit a museum/ historic building/ archaeological site (33%). 25% are likely to want to see or find out about the area's geology.

PLACES VISITED IN DURNESS AREA DURING CURRENT VISIT

5. Have you visited/do you intend to visit any of the following in the Durness area today?

	No.	%
Beach (es)	27	45
Smoo Cave	21	35
Balnakeil Craft Village	21	35
Tearoom/restaurant/pub in Durness	20	33
Cape Wrath	14	23
Balnakeil Church/Graveyard	8	13
Shops in Durness	7	12
John Lennon Memorial Garden	5	8
Golf course	0	0

Visitors were most likely to visit the beaches (45%); visit Smoo Cave or Balnakeil Craft Village (35%); and go to a tearoom/restaurant/pub (33%). None of those surveyed planned to visit the Golf course.

SIZE AND COMPOSITION OF GROUP

6a. Including yourself, how many people are with you on this visit/day out?

	No.	%
1	7	12
2	35	58
3	6	10
4	7	12
7	3	5
9	1	2
10	1	2
TOTAL	60	101

Over half the visitors to Durness (58%) were travelling in groups of two adults (generally a partner, friend or family member). Only 25% of visitors had children (under 18) as part of the group.

6b. And what are their ages? (Note: Some people did not wish to give ages)

	No.	%
35-44 years	38	26
25-34 years	25	17
45-54 years	15	10
65 + years	15	10
5-9 years	13	9
18-24 years	12	8
55-64 years	12	8
Under 5 years	7	5
10-14 years	4	3
15-17 years	4	3
Total	145	

Visitors to Durness were fairly likely to be aged between 25-34 years old (17%) or 35-44 years old (26%). Over 55's accounted for 18% of visitors.

SPENDING DURING THIS STAY AWAY FROM HOME/DAY-OUT

7a.

		AVERAGE SPEND PER HEAD
1	Accommodation	17.88
2	Eating out	1.96
3	Food shopping	0.18
4	Entertainment/things to see and do	0.00
5	Other shopping, including souvenirs and gifts	0.37
6	Transport locally (including petrol, public transport etc)	0.31
7	Miscellaneous/other expenditure	0.06

	not mentioned above	
	AVERAGE SPEND PER HEAD	20.80

The survey identified that average spend per head for visitors was £20.80.

LENGTH OF STAY IN DURNESS

8. How much time have you spent/do you plan to spend in the Durness area during this current stay away from home/day-out?

	No.	%
1-2 hours	10	17
2-4 hours	10	17
24-48 hours	8	13
30-60 minutes	7	12
12-24 hours	7	12
2-4 days	7	12
4-7 hours	3	5
7-12 hours	3	5
Up to 30 minutes	2	3
4-7 days	2	3
more than 7 days	1	2
TOTAL	60	101

Almost a third of visitors to Durness (33%) intended to stay for 1-4 hours in the village. 15% of visitors intended on staying up to one hour only.

LENGTH OF STAY IN SUTHERLAND AND THE HIGHLANDS

9a. How many nights will you be spending away from home on this trip in total?

	No.	%
21 (3 weeks)	14	23
14 (2 weeks)	11	18
7 (1 week)	9	15
17	5	8
10	4	7
30 (1 month)	3	5
15	3	5
12	2	3
8	2	3
60 (2 months)	1	2
35	1	2
28	1	2
27	1	2
16	1	2
6	1	2
4	1	2
TOTAL	60	

Visitors were most likely to be on holiday for 2 - 3 weeks (41%). 15% were on holiday for 1 week. Only 4% of visitors were on short breaks (6 days or less).

9b. How many nights will you be spending away from home in Sutherland on this trip?

	No.	%
0	10	17
Don't know/ Not sure yet/ Undecided	10	17
7	9	15
2	8	13
1	8	13
14	5	8
4	4	7
5	2	3
3	2	3
12	1	2
8	1	2
TOTAL	60	

Most visitors were not spending any nights in Sutherland (17%), while a further 17% had not booked accommodation/ were not sure of plans. 15% were planning to stay for 1 week in Sutherland.

9c. How many nights in total will you be spending away from home in the Highlands (including Sutherland) on this trip?

	No.	%
7	18	30
14	13	22
Don't know/ Not sure yet/ Undecided	10	17
10	3	5
8	3	5
5	3	5
2	3	5
4	2	3
21	1	2
16	1	2
12	1	2
9	1	2
6	1	2
TOTAL	60	

Visitors were staying typically one week in the Highlands (30%), with 22% staying 2 weeks. 17% were undecided/ unsure and 13% were staying 5 days or less.

WHERE YOU STAYED LAST NIGHT

10. Where (nearest town or village) did you stay last night?

	No.	%
Durness	17	28
Ullapool	11	18
Tongue	5	8
Scourie	5	8
Lairg	2	3
Other places (various)	20	33
o <i>Strathy</i>	1	
o <i>Portree</i>	1	
o <i>Orkney</i>	1	
o <i>Oldshoremore</i>	1	
o <i>Melvich</i>	1	
o <i>Lochinver</i>	1	
o <i>Kinlochbervie</i>	1	
o <i>Inverness</i>	1	
o <i>Inchnadamph</i>	1	
o <i>Preston (England)</i>	1	
o <i>Loch Eriboll</i>	1	
o <i>Helmsdale</i>	1	
o <i>Drumbeg</i>	1	
o <i>Don't know (bus tour)</i>	1	
o <i>Dingwall</i>	1	
o <i>Cannich</i>	1	
o <i>Brora</i>	1	
o <i>Dunnet</i>	1	
o <i>Tarbat</i>	1	
o <i>Thurso</i>	1	
TOTAL	60	100

The majority of visitors surveyed had stayed in Durness the previous night (28%), or had come to Durness from Ullapool that day (18%)

WHERE YOU PLAN TO STAY TONIGHT

11. Where (nearest town or village) do you plan to stay tonight?

	No.	%
Durness	22	37
Ullapool	8	13
Scourie	6	10
Tongue	2	3
Thurso	2	3
John O Groats	2	3
Gairloch	2	3
Lairg	1	2
Other places	15	25
o <i>Bonar Bridge</i>	1	

○ <i>Cannich</i>	<i>1</i>	
○ <i>Dingwall</i>	<i>1</i>	
○ <i>DK</i>	<i>1</i>	
○ <i>Drumbeg</i>	<i>1</i>	
○ <i>Helmsdale</i>	<i>1</i>	
○ <i>Inverness</i>	<i>1</i>	
○ <i>Kinlochbervie</i>	<i>1</i>	
○ <i>Lochinver</i>	<i>1</i>	
○ <i>Not sure</i>	<i>3</i>	
○ <i>Orkney</i>	<i>1</i>	
○ <i>Strathy</i>	<i>1</i>	
○ <i>Tarbat</i>	<i>1</i>	
TOTAL	60	

Again, the majority of visitors surveyed planned to stay in Durness overnight (37%), or to travel from Durness to Ullapool that day (13%)

LIKELIHOOD OF RETURN VISITS TO DURNESS

12a. How likely are you to return to Durness during your current stay away from home/day-out?

	No.	%
Very unlikely	41	68
Very likely	7	12
Not very likely	7	12
Fairly likely	5	8
TOTAL	60	100

12b. How likely are you to return to Durness during the next two years?

	No.	%
Fairly likely	20	33
Very unlikely	15	25
Very likely	13	22
Not very likely	12	20
TOTAL	60	100

Most visitors to Durness are very unlikely to return to Durness during their current holiday (68%); but, are fairly likely to return to Durness again in the next 2 years (33%).

ENJOYMENT OF CURRENT VISIT TO DURNESS

13. Has your current visit to Durness been:

	No.	%
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Better than you expected	23	38
About the same as you expected	20	33
Didn't know what to expect	17	28
Not as good as you expected	0	0
TOTAL	60	99

Most visitors found their current visit to be better than they had expected (38%); 33% thought it was the same as they had expected and 28% said that they did not know what to expect.

USE OF/SATISFACTION WITH CURRENT VISITOR CENTRE

14a. Which of the following facilities/services in the Tourist Information Centre/Visitor Centre did you use/look at?

	No.	%
Displays of free information leaflets/brochures/posters	54	90
Items for sale (books, postcards etc)	44	73
Exhibition about history/geology/culture of area	42	70
Display of local craft items	41	68
Countryside ranger display	40	67
Millennium embroidery panels	38	63
Advice/information from member of staff	33	55
Accommodation booking	17	28
Other (please give details)	0	0

The majority of visitors surveyed had looked at the displays of free information leaflets/brochures/posters (90%), looked at items for sale (73%) and looked at the exhibition about the history/geology/culture of area (70%). Only 28% of visitors had made an accommodation booking.

14b. Which of the facilities/services you used in the Centre did you find MOST useful/interesting?

There were many different answers to this question – detailed below. Many people did not have a strong opinion and answered don't know, not sure or nothing (28%).

- *Don't know (7 people)*
- *Not sure (5 people)*
- *Nothing (5 people)*
- *Quilts (3 people)*
- *Staff – Rosie (2 people)*
- *Whalebone (2 people)*
- *All/ All good/ All very interesting/ everything (4 people)*
- *Boards and geology and staff*
- *Bookings*
- *Bookings and maps*
- *Books*
- *Crofting boards*

- *Depends of what looking for*
- *Education corner*
- *Family history and clans*
- *Geology*
- *Geology and history*
- *Good info*
- *Hands - on*
- *History*
- *History display*
- *History Panels*
- *History, geology and bones*
- *Info brochures*
- *Info, displays and staff*
- *Kids part*
- *Land ownership - crofting*
- *Local Info*
- *Local things to do - kids area*
- *Maps*
- *Paintings and History Panels*
- *Panels*
- *Panels and hands-on*
- *Pictures*
- *Ranger and info desk*
- *Rosie and postcards*

14c. Which of the facilities/services you used in the Centre did LEAST useful/interesting?

Many visitors thought that nothing in the centre was least interesting/ useful (58%). A further 25% of visitors were not sure or could not think of anything.

- *Nothing (35 people)*
- *Gifts are not local products – Edinburgh jams etc*
- *Nature*
- *Gifts section*
- *DK/ Not sure (15 people)*
- *All in English - not other languages(Italian visitor)*
- *Accommodation info on B&B (as not staying B&B)*
- *Puffins*

14d. Did you find the TIC/visitor centre:

	No.	%
Didn't know what to expect	25	42
About the same as you expected	21	35

Better than you expected	14	23
Not as good as you expected	0	0
TOTAL	60	

Nearly one quarter of visitors found the TIC/ Visitor Centre better than expected (23%); 35% thought it was the same as expected and 40% did not know what to expect.

SUGGESTIONS FOR WHAT AN IMPROVED/EXPANDED VISITOR CENTRE MIGHT PROVIDE

15 Do you have any suggestions as to what an improved/expanded visitor centre here might provide?

- *Café*
- *Café - hot & cold drinks*
- *Camper vans- have places for water and waste water in car park*
- *Coffee and hot drinks*
- *Coffee and John Lennon information*
- *Coffee and Tea available*
- *Coffee shop - waiting 3hrs for bus in rain*
- *Coffee shop (3 people)*
- *Events board with info for the week, bigger shop and local crafts*
- *Geology map of Scotland*
- *Good as it is!*
- *Have a coffee shop*
- *Have a leaflet of the panel info to take away - toilets - open all year round*
- *Have maps and copies of maps of the area*
- *Have more gifts, things to buy and presents plus tea room with light snacks*
- *Looking for a B&B in the area*
- *Looking for maps*
- *Looking for toilets*
- *Make leaflet of information from panels*
- *More books in German, more on animals and wildlife*
- *More detailed weather forecast*
- *More family history and clans*
- *More geology info - basics for kids*
- *More gifts - including whisky in shop*
- *More info of archaeology and history*
- *More info of flowers, birds/ wildlife and guide to daily walks*
- *More leaflets on local attractions and local crafts*
- *More of John Lennon connection, walks and wildlife info and coffee and food*
- *More of things to See and Do - plus the Hood Memorial*
- *More stones and minerals to buy*
- *Not easy to find info in Italian*
- *Offer activities for kids to keep them busy*
- *OK as is! (2 people)*
- *Pretty good as it is!*

- *TIC very useful*
- *Toilets (3 people)*
- *Toilets and café*
- *Toilets and café would be good*
- *Toilets and tea/ coffee*
- *Better gift section - with local goods*
- *A warm fire and cup of coffee*

CURRENT EXHIBITION (PHOTOGRAPHIC RECORD)

APPENDIX SIX



Note of workshop held to present and discuss draft plan with members of Durness Development Group and local stakeholders: Thursday 6th September 2007.

Attendees: Ronnie Lansley, Durness Development Group; Graham Bruce, Durness Development Group; Yvonne MacKay, Durness Development Group; Donald Mitchell, Highland Council Ranger Service; Sheila Frazer, Durness Field Studies Group; Elaine MacKay, VisitScotland Highland; Helen Smith, Rowan Tree Consulting and Hazel Bews, Rowan Tree Consulting.

1	<p>General discussion:</p> <p>It was noted that the Geopark Conference would be held shortly and that with the high profile of the Geopark, there would be good opportunities to get involved/link with this. It was felt that it was important to tell the story of Durness through its geology and people in the landscape/ the influence of geology on the natural environment.</p>
2	<p>Notes on Report:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Scoring of resources:</i> it was agreed that this worked well and had pulled out some key themes. • <i>Visitor figures:</i> EM noted that the latest (2007) visitor figures for Durness showed an increase of 13% on the previous year – but that Lochinver had fallen by 8%. GB noted that the money donated to the John Lennon garden had increased this year also. It was felt that a better centre would increase the time and money spent in the village. Having toilets and coffee facilities available would encourage people to stop and stay longer (and money spend in the TIC in Durness is better than no money spent at all in the area). • <i>Survey:</i> HS noted that the survey echoed much of the Highland Visitor Survey – but showed many more German visitors. It was noted that Geoparks are well known on the continent and may attract more foreign visitors. • <i>Interpretation:</i> Survey showed that most people have an interest in sightseeing and walking, with only a general interest in geology. It was felt that it was important not to dumb-down the subject – but still cater for a range of knowledge and interest. • <i>Walking:</i> It was agreed to make walking information more available (there are many good walks – some that could be added to existing network). • <i>Cape Wrath:</i> Lots of people want to visit the point, but issues of access due to MOD etc. Potential to include some part of the experience at the TIC for people unable to get there. • <i>Leaflet:</i> Possibility of creating branded leaflets – for Durness generally and Ceannabeinne – linking with Geopark. • <i>Interpretative Objectives:</i> The group felt that the objectives worked well. • <i>Child friendly facilities:</i> It was noted that 13% of visitors had children with them, but that Durness lacked facilities for children generally. HS noted that although it was not a main market – facilities in the TIC could promote to families. • <i>Local people:</i> It was noted that it was important to involve local people in the interpretation.

3	<p>Themes and Sub –themes</p> <p>It was felt that it was important to make more of geology in main theme.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Famous rocks</i> – good to have hands-on (eg model of how Moine thrust works). Also would be good to have a Geopark play area outside and external puzzles etc. • <i>Wildlife</i> – good to have viewing area from inside building, have coffee and look at information about there to go and what to see. • <i>Archaeology</i> – noted that the old poor house can be seen from the window of the building – could show how Durness has changed over time. Possibility of replica of Viking grave being displayed under the floor – and display of low-value archaeological/local artefacts. • <i>Changing times</i> – this theme covers the clearances to the 20th Century – including John Lennon story. Important to show Durness as a 21st century place – Geopark is forward thinking – involve people in telling their story. <p><i>Overall, it was felt that the sub-themes where right, but that more emphasis should be given to geology and Geopark in the main theme. Agreed to amend overall theme title – perhaps with idea of the Durness connection.</i></p>
4	<p>Operation Matters:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Coffee Machine: Coffee shop not of prime importance – could start with a machine put back into building. Alternatively, if a bigger building was created, local people could bid for the franchise (renewed every 2 years) to run the coffee shop. • The problem of lack of VisitScotland registered accommodation on the Durness area was noted. This could make it difficult to encourage people to stay as they might think that no rooms are available, and VS cannot make booking for non-members. However, it was suggested that if a local leaflet on accommodation was available, that staff could pass this on. • It was noted that accommodation bookings via centres have dropped generally – possibly more people booking in advance/online. Durness needs to make its mark on the Ullapool-Caithness route as a place to stop and stay. • EM agreed to try to locate name and address of lady owner of building based in England – it was felt that she might be supportive of the project. • Agreed to look at options with existing floor space and new space (providing an estimate of what would be required and cost). It was felt that a comfortable seating area where people would look at the interpretation would be good. • Entrance way – it was suggested that one of the doors could be shut off as it wasted space (and an additional fire exit was available anyway). • Re Opening times, it was suggested that as people were looking for entry from 8.00am-8.00pm, basic orientation should be included outside the building. EM also noted that there might be opportunities to have the exhibition area separated from the TIC/Highland Council Service Point, so that it could be opened in the evening. • It was suggested that interpretation in other areas could be branded with TIC to direct people there.

5	<p>Design/Visual Concept</p> <p>The group looked at a series of pictures showing different styles of visitor centre. Overall, it was agreed that they liked the idea of clean, modern style, with glass panels and good sense of space. Keen to mix panels with artefacts that could be touched/audio-visual elements. It was felt that a glass floor would be excellent to show the Viking burial. Looking for contemporary style with opportunity to have storage behind displays.</p>
6	<p>Next Steps</p> <p>HS noted that the next step would be to contact additional consultees by email for any final comments (by 14th September), to work on the visuals with Cuan Design and to write up the final report – which would include an action plan for next steps by the group and look at revenue costs etc. This would be supplied for end September 2007.</p>

Durness Visitor Centre indicative layout
 exact design of building would need to be drawn up by architect.

