



**APRS**  
The Association for the  
Protection of Rural Scotland

Director of Development and Infrastructure  
Highland Council  
Glenurquhart Road  
INVERNESS  
IV3 5NX

12 March 2020

Dear Sir

PROPOSED SPACE HUB SUTHERLAND

Application 20/00616/FUL

APRS objects to the above application on the following grounds:

National Significance

The issue of whether or not Scotland would benefit from having a Spaceport, and if so which would be the least damaging site from a social and environmental point of view, is clearly of national importance. It should therefore be decided by the Scottish Government rather than by local planning authorities.

The obvious mechanism for ensuring the appropriate level of debate around this proposal would be through the current review of the National Planning Framework. This would allow consideration to be given to re-using already-developed industrial sites, such as Prestwick or Machrihanish, which might benefit from a new use, rather than causing unnecessary damage to unspoilt greenfield sites. It would also ensure that the proposal is thoroughly tested against the Scottish Government's declarations of a climate emergency and biodiversity crisis and that the necessary strategic environmental assessment is carried out.

I am therefore copying this objection to the Scottish Government's Planning Minister to urge him to call in this and any other planning applications for a Spaceport for determination by Scottish Ministers, and to ensure that any such applications are refused until the NPF review has been completed.

Landscape

The proposed development is in an unspoilt wild area which should be protected from damaging developments for future generations to enjoy. The application site will be easily visible from parts of the Kyle of Tongue National Scenic Area and from parts of the Ben Hope – Ben Loyal Wild Land Area. When rockets are being launched it is likely that noise pollution will extend to parts of these areas. The proposed development will therefore adversely affect the special qualities for which the National Scenic Area was

4 Hunter Square, Edinburgh, EH1 1QW

[info@aprs.scot](mailto:info@aprs.scot) 0131 225 7012 [www.aprs.scot](http://www.aprs.scot)

President: Colin Prior FRPS Chairman: John Thomson MA MSc FRSA

Director: John Mayhew MA MSc DipTP MRTPI

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designated and the sense of wildness for which the Wild Land Area is so important. The application should therefore be refused.

### Biodiversity

Parts of the application site are designated as a Site of Special Scientific Interest, a Special Area for Conservation, a Special Protection Area and a Ramsar site. The rest of the site is immediately adjacent to these designated sites. This means that the site is of international importance for biodiversity. The proposed development, including its access road, will have an adverse effect upon the special interests for which these sites have been designated.

At a time when it is recognised at a national level that there is both a biodiversity crisis and a climate emergency, developments should not be allowed in or adjacent to such important sites. The restoration and extension of Scotland's internationally important peatlands has the potential to make a particularly important contribution to tackling the climate emergency. The peatlands of Caithness and Sutherland are the largest and most significant in Scotland and are a candidate World Heritage Site. Any proposed development which risks damage to such sites should not be allowed. The application should therefore be refused.

Please contact me if you require any further information or clarification.

Yours faithfully

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "John Mayhew". The signature is written in a cursive style and is underlined with a single horizontal line.

John Mayhew MA MSc DipTP MRTPI  
**Director**

cc Kevin Stewart MSP  
Minister for Local Government, Housing and Planning, Scottish Government