

WRITTEN EVIDENCE FROM THE HIGHLAND COUNCIL

Thank you for the invitation to comment on the Bill. Highland Council would offer the following officer comments.

The overall purpose of the Bill is welcomed, in both recognising the economic potential of Scotland's water resources whilst also adding some environmental safeguards. In particular, Highland Council welcomes the emphasis on and further encouragement of hydro renewables which accords with the Council's own policy on this issue.

In relation to Part 2 we would ask for further clarification on the criteria for prohibiting abstractions from the water environment. For example, we will be continuing to work closely with Scottish Water to examine the implications and water-related infrastructure requirements associated with emerging and future Local Development Plans. The proposed measures explained in Part 2 may have implications for the delivery of water-related infrastructure to support new development. Therefore, we would like to better understand the possible impact of these measures.

The Council has one specific comment in response to Question 15 of the Call for Views. We fully support the proposed new powers to encourage the better maintenance of poorly performing, shared septic tanks. There are several of these in Highland and the repair & maintenance of these facilities would benefit from the proposed change whereby one owner of a co-owned tank could take necessary remedial action and bill the other co-owners for their share of the work. The current need for unanimity does deter action. Ideally, the Bill should go further and support the replacement of poorly performing septic tanks with other private facilities that have greater capacity to accommodate any future development allocated in a Development Plan. The growth of many small villages in Highland is constrained by reliance on a mix of poorly maintained, small, public and private septic tanks. With Scottish Water's investment programme unlikely to offer a first time, coordinated public sewerage system for these communities, the option of full Scottish Water specification, private treatment facilities should be encouraged.