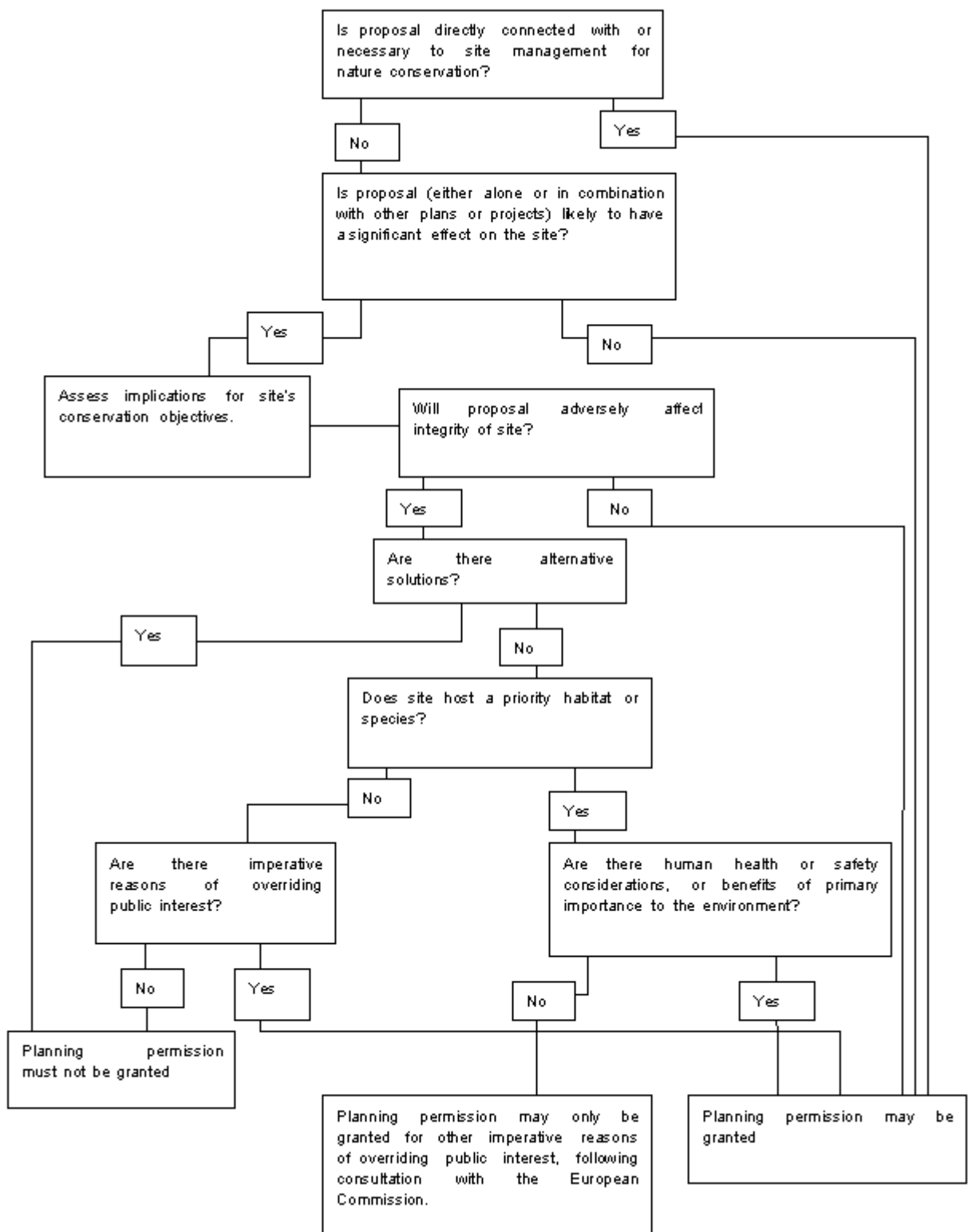


Appendix 3

CONSIDERATION OF DEVELOPMENT PROPOSALS AFFECTING SPAs AND SACs



Appendix 4

Rt. Hon. Alex Salmond MSP,
First Minister of Scotland,
St. Andrew's House,
Regent Road,
EDINBURGH.
EH1 3DG

ALEX A MACDONALD

CONVENER

28 January 2008

Dear First Minister,

ELECTRICITY ACT 1989 PROPOSED LEWIS WINDFARM, ISLE OF LEWIS

Comhairle nan Eilean Siar has now received notification of the assessments of the impacts of the proposed Lewis Windfarm from Mr. Colin Imrie, Head of Energy Consents Unit in Scottish Government. The conclusion of these assessments is that Scottish Ministers are minded to refuse the application.

Comhairle nan Eilean Siar, as Planning Authority and principal consultee, has previously recommended that the application should be approved. It is the belief of the Comhairle that this project represents the Western Isles' best opportunity for achieving significant benefit, on socio economic grounds, in the immediate future. The Comhairle fully recognises that there are serious environmental issues to be considered, but is most anxious to ensure that these are fully balanced against other legitimate local aspirations for the growth and retention of our population, new and existing jobs, and the possibility of lasting economic development.

The Comhairle, therefore, remains strongly of the view that a refusal of this application would be the wrong decision for the Western Isles, for renewable energy and for Scotland. The Comhairle has concerns that a negative decision would have the unfortunate side effect of implying that the Western Isles were closed for renewable energy business in future, and that environmental considerations are the principal, and dominant, factor in considering applications for renewable energy developments in the Western Isles. The Comhairle strongly feels that the high quality environment of the Western Isles is a product of sensible and sustainable management of that environment by the people of the Western Isles over generations, and that the Western Isles and its people are well able to assess an appropriate balance of development and conservation.

The Comhairle would urge that the proactive approach of Scottish Government towards strategic economic development opportunities be extended to the Lewis Windfarm proposal, and it is the Comhairle's strong view that the proposed development sits well with the strategic objectives of Government, particularly as regards the creation of a more successful country, with opportunities for all parts of Scotland to flourish through increasing sustainable economic growth. The need for sustainable economic growth is particularly acute in the Outer Hebrides, whose economy is undeniably fragile.

I will not reiterate in detail the massive demographic and economic challenges faced by the Western Isles. Should the ultimate decision of Scottish Government be to refuse this application, I believe it is essential that the Comhairle and Scottish Government representatives meet immediately to discuss the implications of such a decision, and to explore how Government and other partners can assist in the provision of effective and alternative investment to address what the Comhairle believes would be a lost opportunity.

The Comhairle believes that it would be productive for all parties to consider further the environmental impacts and how these can be addressed before any final decision is reached.

The Comhairle also believes it is essential that a meeting be arranged as a matter of urgency with Scottish Government at the highest possible level, and my Officials will be contacting your Office shortly to identify a suitable opportunity to do so. Members and Officials of the Comhairle would make themselves available to accommodate your own diary requirements at very short notice.

I look forward to hearing from you, and discussing this whole matter as soon as possible.

I have also written to the Cabinet Secretary for Finance and Sustainable Growth, in identical terms.

Yours sincerely,

Convener