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28th September 2021

Dear Maria

I write to you in your leadership position for Knocknagael Ltd, and in support of the pending Asset Transfer Request application. I write as a General Practitioner with 30 years' experience working in Inverness, and an overlapping 15-year career in postgraduate medical education involving senior regional and national roles.

I have taken an interest in the evolution of the initiative to secure the Smiddy Field at Knocknagael as a community asset, and feel that there is very strong justification for this with respect to sustaining and improving health.

Scotland has six stated Public Health priorities¹:

- ***Live in vibrant, healthy, and safe places and communities*** including support for the Scottish Government ambition for Scotland to be a world leader in improving and protecting health and wellbeing.
The community and environmental benefits of Knocknagael Ltd's proposal are consistent with this ambition
- ***Flourish in our early years*** with an emphasis on collective responsibility for health and emphasising collaborative partnership working
There is potential for collaborative working between Knocknagael Ltd and schools, nurseries etc, including support for outdoor learning that would support this ambition
- ***Have good mental wellbeing*** and reducing the adverse impacts and inequalities that often result from poor mental health and wellbeing
A stated aim for the Knocknagael proposal is to provide growing space and training to organisations working with people living with mental illness
- ***Reduce the use of, and harm from alcohol, tobacco, and other drugs*** with an understanding of the economic and social conditions that can be a driver of harmful consumption.
As with the above bullet point, the aims for Knocknagael Ltd are consistent with supporting this ambition
- ***Have a sustainable, inclusive economy with equality of outcomes for all***, with a focus on reducing poverty and inequality and the effects of poverty and inequality on health in Scotland
The strength of community empowerment is evident in the evolution of Knocknagael Ltd, and there is potential to widen and deepen this engagement, including in the areas of deprivation in the catchment area of Knocknagael

¹ [Improving our health and wellbeing - Our areas of work - Public Health Scotland](#)

- ***Eat well, have a healthy weight and are physically active***, including the stated outcomes of the Government's Diet and Healthy Weight Delivery Plan², notably the outcome stating 'the food environment supports healthier choices'; the measures explicit in the Good Food Nation policy, including grow your own measures and increased availability and consumption of fruit and vegetables³; and stated outcomes from the Active Scotland Delivery Plan⁴

There are many examples of how the Knocknagael Ltd proposal would support these ambitions including supporting healthier food choices and providing a community resource that would support the desired outcomes of the Active Scotland Delivery Plan

At a more local level, NHS Highland is one of the organisations involved in the Highland Green Health Partnership⁵, one of four pilots in Scotland to take forward the Scottish Government's strategy 'Our Natural Health Service'. The aims of this partnership are

- To get more people to use the outdoor environment and more regularly
- To contribute to reducing health inequalities by targeting activity at those who are most in need
- To co-ordinate partnership efforts on use of the outdoor environment for health
- To identify existing assets, make links between them, and identify gaps in provision
- To develop a network of those with an interest in promoting the outdoor environment for health
- To create a shared learning environment

There are clear linkages to the aspirations of Knocknagael Ltd in each of these stated aims

While much of NHS Highland's focus over the last 18 months has understandably been on the Covid-19 pandemic, including that of its Public Health department, the most recent annual report from the NHS Highland Director of Public Health, from 2020, has the following amongst its list of ten 'Recommendations and Actions'⁶

- Support the further development of Public Health work on income and employment, food insecurity, mental health and support to access nature and greenspace for health

Knocknagael Ltd is a local, community-led initiative that clearly addresses this aspiration

In summary, and based on a background of a career in education and in the health service, it is clear to me that the Knocknagael Ltd proposal would deliver an extremely valuable asset for the city of Inverness with many measurable benefits at both an individual and community level

Yours faithfully



Professor Ronald MacVicar

² [A healthier future: Scotland's diet and healthy weight delivery plan - gov.scot](#)

³ [Food and drink: Good Food Nation policy - gov.scot](#)

⁴ [Active Scotland Delivery Plan - gov.scot](#)

⁵ [Home - Think Health Think Nature](#)

⁶ [NHS Highland Director of Public Health Annual Report 2020](#)