**Nairn Community Councils respond to proposed ship to ship oil transfers at mouth of Cromarty Firth**

*Below is a text from Nairn West/Suburban's Community Council's objection to the Cromarty Firth Port Authority's application for ship to ship oil transfers at the mouth of the Moray Firth. Nairn River CC have also made a similar submission*.

"This recent licence application has generated local publicity and prompted concern among residents of Nairn (as well as, evidently, other communities around the Moray Firth).

We are not aware of any public notification or invitation to comment, and we note that this application was apparently submitted over the festive holiday period. We note from the details on the CFPA website that the "consultation period" has been extended to 8 February.

This message is therefore to register the strong objection of Nairn West & Suburban Community Council, on behalf of local residents, to the application. We would urge that the application be refused.

The short notice and imminent deadline is a constraint on production of a submission setting our our concerns in detail. But the key reasons for objection include the following:

Nairn is located directly opposite the area of the Moray Firth where the transfers are proposed;

A detailed technical study by Cromarty Community Council's expert advisers (which we have seen) indicates clearly that there are significant and quantifiable risks, and that the proposed precautions and contingency arrangements appera to be deficient;

the study also suggests that the existing transfer arrangements are adequate and that the case for new or additional offshore transfers has not been demonstrated;

the fact that a similar proposal for the Firth of Forth was refused (withdrawn) in the face of objections not only from individuals and communiteis but also the local authorities, reinforces local misgivings;

The Moray Firth is an environmentally sensitive area which already qualifies for special protection;

Nairn is a tourist town with extensive and highly-rated beaches, and a harbour which is the base for local leisure-sailing, dinghy-training for youngsters, and a destination for visiting recreational boats. Any threat or risk to them from pollution resulting from ship-to-ship transfers, or ballast-dumping, will have a direct and damaging impact on the local environment, and on the local ecology and marine life (dolphins are an iconic attraction for tourists, and the area is also important for bird life with a designated RSPB reserve and other protected sites and SSSIs),

Similarly any threat to that environment and those facilities will have a detrimental impact on the local tourism-based economy;

the significance of the Firth and the nearby Moray and Black Isle coastline (Fort George, Chanonry Point, the Sutors etc) which include designated Special Landscape Areas seems to have been ignored. The natural landscape is a key element of Nairn's appeal to visitors;

there is a specific concern about a direct threat to Nairn. Turbulent and stormy weather in recent years has led to severe coastal damage around the Moray Firth (including our own harbour and sea-front) has frequently been driven by gale-force winds from the north-west and north. Such storms are likely to pose difficulties for shipping in the Firth. Morever, wind and storms from that direction mean that any failures, spills or other discharges from shipping in the proposed oil-transfer zone will be driven directly south-eastwards across the Firth and on to the coast and beaches along the southern side (Ardersier - Nairn- Culbin - Findhorn)."