

**CAITHNESS & NORTH SUTHERLAND REGENERATION PARTNERSHIP  
(CNSRP) – EXECUTIVE BOARD**

**MINUTES OF MEETING HELD 16<sup>th</sup> JUNE 2009 AT NDA, FORSS**

**Present:** Sir Anthony Cleaver (Chair)  
Alistair Dodds, THC  
Randall Bargelt, NDA  
Greg Allan, Scottish Government  
Charlotte Wright (in place of Sandy Cumming)

**In Attendance:** Roy Kirk, HIE  
Ian Hargrave, THC  
Eann Sinclair, CNSRP  
Fiona Macpherson, CNSRP  
Eilidh Gunn, CNSRP (minutes)

**Apologies:** Sandy Cumming

**1. Welcome and Introductions**

The chair welcomed everyone to the meeting.

**2. Minute of Executive board Meeting held on 17<sup>th</sup> March 2009**

The minutes of the meeting of 17<sup>th</sup> March 2009 were approved.

**3. Matters Arising**

Wick Tax Office – Sir Anthony has followed up his lead and confirmed that the short term plan to close Wick tax office is irreversible. There are plans to open 1-2 contact centres which would employ up to 500 staff. They will be looking for an area which would give them confidence of good reliable staff. The board view is that talks with HMRC should continue.

- **ACTION Sir Anthony** to establish a contact person within HMRC and pass details to board.

Fusion – The Scottish Government Energy Team has indicated that there is no objection in principle to fusion. Scottish Government staff have written a background report and the board will pass this back to Simon Middlemas. Sir Anthony will contact John Thurso to establish if there is a political will at Westminster re fusion opportunities for the north. Alistair Dodds will ascertain Highland Council's view on fusion opportunities in Caithness. Randall Bargelt will prepare a more technical briefing including materials, timelines, community benefit to be passed to Colin Imrie, Scottish Government Energy Team before next board meeting.

- **ACTION Alistair Dodds** to check Highland Council stance on fusion.
- **ACTION Sir Anthony** to contact John Thurso
- **ACTION Randall Bargelt** prepare technical briefing

Feb 2008 Report on Berriedale Braes – Highland Council has had positive joint meetings with Stewart Stevenson, Transport Minister re three or four pinch points, including Berriedale. Local Councillors have met with Berriedale land owners re the possibilities suggested in the Feb 08 report. HIE can assist in building up an economic case to complement the socio-economic information already held by Hi Trans and the strong support from Orkney. Alistair Dodds intends to write to the NDA for funding assistance for two separate feasibility studies, one for the climbing lane option and one for the hairpin bend option.

- **ACTION Alistair Dodds** to write to NDA re feasibility.

Wick Airport – A new Sunday service by Loganair is due to commence in October this year. Small scale improvements such as car hire service and catering are also being looked at. HIAL is currently scoping the upgrading of its airfield ground lighting system. This option would require land acquisition out with the airport grounds. HIAL already have funds for a standard upgrade and the difference between this budgeted upgrade and the ILS is around £700,000. HIAL will detail requirement in writing to HIE who will share it with the NDA.

- **ACTION Roy Kirk** to share HIAL information with Randall Bargelt.

John O' Groats – Consultants GVA are working on the masterplan and will hold a public meeting in July. Final plan is expected in August.. It is anticipated that information such as visitor attractions, pathways, opening hours, increasing visitor time and spend as well as funding options will be covered.

- **ACTION Roy Kirk** to update board at next meeting.

#### 4. Issues from Advisory Board Meeting held 12<sup>th</sup> June 09

Eann Sinclair gave a verbal update from the recent AB meeting.

- Duncan Mackay and Louise Smith of the Pentland Firth Project attended the advisory board meeting to give a presentation and update.
- There was some discussion as to the role of the AB – i.e. to advise or to listen. The board agreed that they would welcome feedback from each meeting of the AB. AB members had suggested a change to the agenda so the AB meetings commence with an opportunity for members to have their say.
  - **ACTION Eann Sinclair** to speak to AB Chairman Cllr Sandy Park about adding agenda item – ‘feedback from members’
- There had been some discussion about making the Action Plan more ‘user friendly’ perhaps by adding a colour code or gant chart.
  - **ACTION Eann Sinclair** to make amendments.

The board raised the question of how members feed back from the meetings into their organisations.

## 5. Pentland Firth Update

Terms of reference documents for the eight work streams have been drafted and were circulated. Work will continue on developing the detail of these work streams. The coordinating committee has had three good meetings since it was formed. The Stakeholder Advisory board is due to meet for the first time this week.

There is significant appetite for progress from the private sector. Leases will be awarded between September and December to the successful of the 42 who have applied. Ownership of a lease will in turn encourage investment from the developers.

MESPG are currently assessing developers' needs. Project team hopes to have sight of this once complete. Fiona will liaise with the MESPG.

- **ACTION Fiona Macpherson** to liaise with the MESPG to get information developers needs assessment.

The board felt there was little clarity on a key contact for the project. Roy Kirk said that each work stream has an accountable leader, however if in doubt all queries from developers should be sent to Fiona Macpherson.

The board also queried the reliability of a rotating chair. The strong view of the Board was that experience has often shown a named accountable chair has a better impact. Sir Anthony is going to query this.

- **ACTION Sir Anthony** to query rotating chair.

The NDA stressed their support in offering assistance with comms and considering funding to support project delivery, as long as it would add value.

Jim Mather is due to visit this area at the end of July. A board meeting with him present, or a separate meeting with him might be worthwhile. A brief will be prepared within a week, action by Alistair Dodds, Ian Hargrave, Randall Bargelt, and Charlotte Wright, led by Roy Kirk.

- **ACTION Roy Kirk** (with assistance) to prepare brief for Jim Mather to consider.

The Board is keen not to underestimate the urgency of gearing up for the industry, the window of opportunity to get real opportunity benefit to the area is anticipated to be about one year. The Scottish Government consenting team had its capacity increased from 30 to 60. Greg Allan will find out from the Scottish Government Energy Team their view on the sense of urgency to develop the industry.

- **ACTION Greg Allan** to discuss dates and urgency with Scottish Government Energy Team.

## 6. Programme Manager Update

Eann Sinclair gave a verbal update – his update paper had been circulated in advance of the meeting.

- Caithness Conference is likely to take place in October. Initial invite list has been drawn up. Focus this year is on a local audience. Jim Murphy has been invited, however a Scottish Minister has not yet been sourced. Greg Allan felt that the absence of a Scottish Minister might be detrimental as the urgency of the regeneration programme was communicated.
- Dounreay Competition Industry Day is planned for December. This will include a day in Caithness to discuss socio-economics.
- Action Plan – suggested amendments came from AB members. Executive Board members suggested addition of an executive summary, covering key areas for attention, significant progress milestones etc.
  - **ACTION Eann Sinclair** prepare executive summary for snapshot 8.

## 7. Inward Investment Update

Fiona Macpherson gave a verbal update:

- Recent meeting with developer regarding tidal sites and data centre. Project brief for this potential investment has now been completed. Project appraisal now at gathering info stage. The rationale for any HIE spend will be the establishing of data centres as an industry in Caithness, job clusters and increased “band-width” for the area.
- Another project has arisen which would mean the creation or retaining of around 250-300 FTE jobs in the area.
- PF developers’ forum should be ready to commence in December to complement the awarding of leases.
- Skills audit has been commissioned and should report back within three months.
- Consultant commissioned to look at mixed-use tourism resort eg golf, health and wellbeing.

## 8. Evaluation of Partnership & Programme

There has been some public concern about clear progress being made, however this is seen to be a lack of awareness of progress than an actual lack of progress. It was felt that the Partnership was currently under-resourced for this important function. There was discussion about having a communications/marketing person to establish a vision. It was decided to engage an external adviser to recommend methods for comms delivery.

The communications plan is due for review so this could become part of it.

A brief will be prepared to have a suitably-qualified company look at comms vehicles and have report back by next board meeting.

- **ACTION Randall/ Eann** to prepare brief.

Charlotte Wright described the Benefits Realisation Plan that HIE has developed to inform its expectations from HIE funding of partnership activities and projects. Members agreed the need to review the partnership’s performance and impact, but felt that internal review in the short term would be most appropriate.

## 9. Economic Situation

Information from the NHRF shows that of the £700,000 handed out only one loan has so far defaulted. In this current economic situation this is seen as a good news story. There has been an increase in referrals to the NHRF from Business gateway since its launch in April.

## 10. Any other business

Roy Kirk said HIE would appreciate information on how the NDA will legally dispense funds to private businesses. Randal Bargelt said that this is still being looked at within NDA, and that he would update once he had further information.

- **ACTION:** Randall to update Board.

A copy of a letter from HIE to Sandy park was circulated showing the current spend of the £12 million.

Greg Allan said there are other areas in Scotland (e.g. Chapelcross) with decommission issues. He asked if members thought a board similar to this one would work in those areas. Randall Bargelt felt it would help in other areas, but that NDA presence would depend on number of employees being lost, and the relative socio-economic impacts expected. Eann Sinclair felt that it would be a positive outcome for the Caithness & North Sutherland community to be the area that others model their work on. Greg Allan suggested that Randall and Eann might travel south to discuss the idea with key stakeholders.

- **ACTION:** Greg Allan to discuss with other stakeholders.

Date of December meeting needs to be changed. A new date will be circulated to check availability.

- **ACTION:** Eann Sinclair to circulate

## Summary of Actions

Action	Due Date	Responsible Person
Establish a contact person within HMRC and pass details to board.	ASAP	Sir Anthony
Check Highland Council stance on fusion.	ASAP	Alister Dodds
Contact John Thurso to establish if there is a political will behind fusion.	ASAP	Sir Anthony
Prepare technical briefing on	Next board meeting	Randall Bargelt

fusion to pass to Colin Imrie.		
Share HIAL information with Randall Bargelt.	ASAP	Roy Kirk
Provide update on GVA John O'Groats masterplan.	Next board meeting	Roy Kirk
Speak to Sandy Park about possibility of adding agenda item – 'feedback from members'	Next AB meeting	Eann Sinclair
Look at Action Plan layout (Colour code, gant chart etc).	Next snapshot	Eann Sinclair
Request information from MESPG re assessment of developers needs.	ASAP	Fiona Macpherson
Liase with MESPG re developers' needs assessment.	ASAP	Fiona Macpherson
Query rotating chair with PF coordination committee.	Next meeting	Sir Anthony
Prepare brief for Jim Mather to consider meeting board.	Tuesday 23 <sup>rd</sup> June	Roy Kirk Alistair Dodds Ian Hargrave Randall Bargelt Charlotte Wright
Talk to Scottish Government Energy Team re their view on the urgency of the industry.	Next meeting	Greg Allan
Prepare brief so a PR company can look comms vehicles and report back by next board meeting.	ASAP	Randall Bargelt