



CNSRP ADVISORY BOARD MEETING

18th March 2013

Attendees: Cllr Drew Hendry, Cllr Thomas Prag, Cllr Roger Saxon, Frances Gunn (Sutherland Partnership), John Green (Caithness Partnership), Trudy Morris (CCoC), Steven Sutherland (CCoC), Derrick Milnes (T&WTC), Seonaig Campbell (SDS), Stuart Black (HC), June Love (DSRL/HIE), Roy Kirk (HIE), David Sutherland (HC), Eann Sinclair (CNSRP), Alastair MacDonald (Babcock), Donald MacBeath (NHC), Fiona Bruce (CNSRP)

Apologies: Cllr George Farlow, Anna MacConnell (NDA), Bill Baxter (CCoC), Ken Nicol (DSRL), John Thurso (MP), Gordon Jenkins (NHC), Sandy Mackie (Scrabster Harbour Trust), Ronnie Johnstone (Dounreay Stakeholder Group); Lesley Cranna (SNH)

1. WELCOME

Cllr Drew Hendry opened the meeting, followed by round the table introductions.

2. PREVIOUS MINUTES AND MATTERS ARISING

The minutes of the last meeting were accepted, by those members present, as a true record of the previous meeting.

It was noted that under item 4 that the Superfast Broadband contract has not been signed yet, however it is progressing and is expected to be signed by the end of March 2013.

3. SKILLS UPDATE

Seonaig Campbell provided an update on the skills gathering exercise currently being conducted by SDS. Information has been gathered from SDS, Job Centre Plus and MtRC about what skills investments are being made in Caithness and North Sutherland and also what the potential employment opportunities are for the future. From this a strategic skills pipeline has been produced to try and identify ways and methods of getting individuals back into employment or transitioning into alternative employment.

Although supportive of the work being undertaken to address the skills issue in the long term some of the members felt that something more immediate needs to happen to address the short term skills shortages. It is felt that more apprentice opportunities in

the engineering and construction skills sectors will be required to meet future industry demand in Caithness and North Sutherland. However there are some issues related to financing and mentoring of more apprentices places and how this is best managed. It was agreed that the system currently being used where UHI acts as the employer of it's apprentices is working well and there could be the potential to develop this further. It was of concern to the Advisory Board members that if the skills issue is not addressed in a timely and positive manner it could affect future growth of the Caithness and North Sutherland economy.

18/03 – 001	Donald MacBeath and Stuart Black to discuss availability of Highland Council employability grants.
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It was agreed that a progress update will be provided at the next meeting.

4. PROGRAMME MANAGER UPDATE

Priority Projects

Following the last CNSRP Executive Board it was agreed that the CNSRP Delivery Group should concentrate on 4-5 priority projects, the following projects have been agreed:

- Scrabster Harbour
- Wick Harbour
- Wick John O'Groats Airport
- Inward Investment 1
- Skills

These priority projects will be taken to the CNSRP Advisory Board for approval on 20th March 2013.

CNSRP Membership 2013/14

Eann Sinclair outlined changes in circumstance at Caithness Partnership and Federation of NW Community Councils, and also proposed new organisation to invite onto the Advisory Board. Members agreed with the recommendations put forward in the paper.

[It was further noted that Billy Manson is no longer a member of the Halkirk & District Community Council – John Green is the Chair of the Association of Caithness Community Councils].

Crown Estate Update

Unfortunately John Robertson was unable to attend the meeting, however a written update was distributed to members.

The Chairman expressed his disappointment in the lack of attendance and lack of stakeholder engagement being carried out by the Crown Estate. He advised that he will be writing to the Crown Estate asking them to ensure someone in an attendance at future meetings.

18/03 - 002	Chair to write to the Crown Estate asking that a representative is in attendance at future CNSRP Advisory Board meetings.
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5. INWARD INVESTMENT – PROGRESS REPORT

Leads – Good discussions are being held in relation to Marine Energy developments in Caithness. Highland Councillors on the North Planning Applications Committee have approved Meygen's proposed onshore infrastructure associated with Phase 1 of its tidal site in the Inner Sound.

Work continues to progress to get the enterprise area site at Scrabster operational as soon as possible.

It was noted that superfast broadband will be a significant advantage in securing new business to Caithness.

Work is progressing at Wick Harbour to secure business opportunities in the offshore wind and Oil and Gas sector.

Marketing Plan 2013/14 – JL provided a summary on the draft Marketing Plan. This is a first draft of the Marketing Plan and feedback is welcomed from the Advisory Board members. Further work needs to be carried out to cost out the activities included in the plan and determine how the activities can be resourced.

SCDI Event – An SCDI Event is being held in London on 29th May to influence businesses in the energy and business sectors. The event will be sponsored by Babcock International Group.

6. MEMBER UPDATES

Association of Caithness Community Councils

John Green said that community benefit is high on the Association members' agendas.

Caithness Chamber of Commerce

The 'Jobs and how to get them' event held in February 2013 has received positive feedback from its attendees and exhibitors. The event attracted 300+ visitors on the day. As a direct result of this event several attendees have been able to take forward employment opportunities.

18/03 – 003	Caithness Chamber to produce a press release advising that real employment opportunities have been created as a result of the 'Jobs and how to get them' event.
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Caithness Partnership/Sutherland Partnership

Caithness - the contract for the p/t member of staff expires at the end of March 2013, the partnership annual accounts will be finalised by this point.

Sutherland Partnership – Also considering long-term future. Work is progressing on the 'Visit Sutherland' website, with some quotes from regular famous visitors have been gathered to add to the website. The Wild North Festival was a success, a youth festival

has also been held, 2 jobs have been secured on the back of this. They are also looking at funding for community transport.

Dounreay Stakeholder Group

The DSG are due to meet with the project manager of the National Nuclear Archives in the near future, of note they will be discussing socio economic benefit in contracts.

At the recent AGM David Flear was appointed as the new Chairman and Anne Chard was appointed as the Deputy Chairperson. Derrick Milnes will also remain as chair of the socio-economic subgroup. A review of the membership list will be carried out shortly.

DSRL/NDA/BDP

A workshop was held with members for the DSG and CNSRP Advisory Board members to gain input and feedback on the Dounreay past and future Socio Economic Plans. It was a positive session that promoted a lot of good input. The feedback from this session is now being taken into account during the preparation of the 2013/14.

The 'This is Caithness' supplement has been published to try and boost confidence that there is a lot already happening in Caithness. Feedback has been positive a second edition is plan for October 2013.

DSRL is continuing to support North Highland Initiative with the Dark Skies project.

Work continues to support projects in terms of business support and funding.

Highland Council

The Wick and Thurso Charrettes were carried out in February 2013. The charrettes prompted good positive discussions. Feedback from the facilitators was also positive in the fact that the attitude in Caithness was more positive compared to other regions.

It was noted that Alastair MacDonald provided an excellent presentation at the Highland Council PED Committee.

A meeting is due to be held in the near future with the National Nuclear Archives project manager.

Funds have been provided to support the recent Dark Skies weekend in Caithness. Funds have also been provided to showcase local produce at the at The Royal Highland Show.

Highlands & Islands Enterprise

Progress is being made in the Energy and Nuclear sectors, with some real opportunities starting to develop.

Progress is also being made in the food and drink sector with some growth plans being prepared by businesses.

North Highland College

Funding options are still being considered for the 2013/14 term, flat funding is expected with a possible 1% reduction in funding.

The centre for land based studies is now based at Dale Farm, there is the potential and aspirations to develop this site further to create a centre of excellence for land based training.

Work is ongoing to develop the curriculum to introduce new course option for the 2014/15 term.

Scrabster Harbour Trust

There was no representative available to attend, however Eann Sinclair advised that Scrabster Harbour Trust (SHT) have recently attended a cruise ship exhibition in Miami. In advance of this exhibit the Caithness Chamber of Commerce (funded by DSRL) produced a brochure to specifically target the cruise ship market.

Scottish Natural Heritage

There was no representative available to attend.

Skills Development Scotland

Update provided under agenda item 3.

Job Centre Plus

There was no representative available to attend.

Thurso & Wick Trade Council

Initial discussions have been held with Eann Sinclair, Job Centre plus and Highland Council employability team about skills issues. The Trade Union have an idea related to skills that they want to explore. A meeting will be set up shortly (April) to discuss way forward.

The Trades Council wrote to the local paper following recent headlines about Wick Harbour.

Wick Harbour Authority

There was no representative available to attend.

7. AOB

- Trudy Morris Chamber attended Best of Britain/Ireland F&D exhibition in Birmingham. Delighted with focus - attendees were all serious buyers looking for something different. 2000 footfall and people actively engaging.
- Eann Sinclair reminded everyone that the next Advisory Board would be on 11th June and was the annual joint meeting with the Executive Board.

Actions

Ref	Action	Actionee
18/03 – 001	Discuss availability of Highland Council Employability Grants.	Donald MacBeath/Stuart Black
18/03 – 002	Write to Crown Estate asking for a representative to attend all future CNSRP Advisory Board meetings.	Cllr Drew Hendry
18/03 – 003	Produce a press release advising that real employment opportunities have been created as a result of the 'Jobs and how to get them' event.	Trudy Morris/Stephen Sutherland