



## **CNSRP ADVISORY BOARD MEETING**

**18 June 2015**

**The Pentland Hotel, Thurso**

**Attendees:** Cllr Gail Ross (Chair), Cllr Roger Saxon, Roddy Bailey (SDS), Anne Bremner (NHC-UHI), Cllr George Farlow, David Flear (DSG), George Hamilton (THC), Roy Kirk (HIE), Shona Kirk (WHA), Fiona Levack (CCoC), June Love (HIE), Tom Pottinger (SHT), Gill MacVicar (NHS Highland), Billy Manson (ACCC), Simon Middlemas (Cavendish Dounreay Partnership), Derrick Milnes (T&WTC), Ian Mitchell (SNH), John Robertson (Crown Estate), Eann Sinclair (CNSRP), Neil Smith (CVG), William Sutherland (HIAL),

**Apologies:** Bill Baxter (CCoC), Stuart Black (THC), Frances Gunn (CVS North), Donald MacBeath (NHC-UHI), Anna MacConnell (NDA), Dr Paul Monaghan (MP), Trudy Morris (CCoC), Ken Nicol (DSRL), Kristin Scott (SNH), David Sutherland (THC), Stephen Sutherland (CCoC), Willie Watt (WHA)

### **1. WELCOME**

Cllr Gail Ross asked if the meeting would be content for her to chair, in the absence of a confirmed Chair replacing Cllr Drew Hendry. Members agreed this.

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting, thanking previous Chair Cllr Drew Hendry for his significant contribution.

### **2. PREVIOUS MINUTES AND MATTERS ARISING**

Minutes approved. Outstanding actions complete and to be discussed during course of Agenda.

DF commented that this is an important meeting and inquired about the appointment of a new Chair. ES confirmed that the relevant Highland Council meeting had not yet taken place, but that he would let the Board know as soon as he was informed. **ACTION 1 – ES** to establish who would be new CNSRP Advisory Board Chair. ES will then work to agree the next meeting of the Advisory Board, likely to be in September. **ACTION 2 – ES** to investigate meeting dates with new Chair.

### 3. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest from Advisory Board members.

### 3. THURSO COMMUNITY SPORTS HUB – UPDATE PRESENTATION

The Chairman welcomed Shona Kirk, who gave an update presentation on the proposed developments for the TCSH. See presentation attached to email.

#### Key Points:

- The hub is currently the only ‘virtual’ hub (i.e. there is not yet a physical facility) in Scotland. Although based in Thurso, it is intended for Caithness-wide use.
- SportScotland have recommended a tensile structure (SK referred to an existing facility in the Western Isles that has followed this model successfully).
- SportScotland are one of the main potential funders, set to contribute approximately £500k.
- THC has suggested an application to the Capital Discretionary Fund.
- Other funders are also interested; however, planning permission must be obtained before formal commitments are made.
- Discussions with NDA and THC reveal the preferred location to be the Viewfirth site.
- The vision is to build both a traditional games hall and a 3G covered sports pitch, as well as an athletics track. SportScotland have commented that this may be too ambitious and should be scaled-back. A meeting to explore this is being held next week.
- Once operational, the centre should bring in approximately £17k per year, which will cover running costs.
- Reference was made to a similar project in Lochaber, to which THC has promised £600k.
- If the planning application can be submitted by a Community Council, it will save 50% on fees. Thurso Community Council has turned down this opportunity. A discussion was held regarding whether or not another Community Council could submit an application on behalf of TCSH; Cllr GF and GH confirmed that this is permissible. It was also asked if Highland Council could apply for planning permission itself – George Hamilton agreed to check on this. **ACTION 3 – GH** to check on Council’s ability to apply for planning permission.

#### Questions:

- RK: When is it proposed that this should be completed?  
SK responded that they hope to begin work by summer 2016.
- RK: What about a modular approach to funding/construction?  
SK confirmed that this has been suggested.

Note: Cllr GR said, while not a ‘conflict of interest’, she should have mentioned that her husband is a PE teacher in Thurso and thus is also involved with the TCSH project.

#### 4. PROGRAMME MANAGER UPDATE

ES quarterly update report was distributed to everyone in advance of the meeting, and some update slides were presented to the Board.

##### Key Points:

- There are encouraging numbers of jobs that have been committed to, primarily in the Energy sector but also notable improvements in Food/Drink.
- In 2006 in the Socio-economic Baseline Report for Dounreay Decommissioning, Caithness was reported as having one of the lowest start-up rates in the Highlands; in the 2011 Socio-economic Impact of Dounreay Decommissioning report Caithness had one of the highest. A third socio-economic impact study on Dounreay Decommissioning is due to be carried out next year.
- THC has approved funding for the B876 (non-trunk) road at Killimster Moss. This is one of two roads projects on the Programme. ES also reported that Transport Scotland has committed to the Berriedale project. Partners will seek to keep this a top priority in infrastructure projects.
- The initial projection for full decommissioning of Dounreay was 2023-25; this has been updated to late 2029.
- FL discussed the Investing in Young People project, which is a national project run by SG and based on the Wood Report recommendations. This also relates to the Talent Attraction (Inward Investment) on-going project. FL confirmed that a proposal was submitted on 4 June and TM will present further in August.
- It was mentioned that CCoC have been getting helpful support from SDS on this, and that they are also looking into both foundational and advanced apprenticeships to begin in 2016/17 (initially in Engineering and Health sectors, then incorporating more).
- FL also mentioned a social media campaign being run by CCoC which approaches youth attraction from a lifestyle viewpoint more than employment.
- RK commented that the Wood Report focused primarily on young people; this is important, but only one of 39 recommendations made (in the Regional Skills Investment Plan), it's important not to lose sight of the others.
- Talent Scotland, a free service run by SG to attract workers from outwith Scotland, was also mentioned. Local employers can be encouraged to make use of this.
- RB offered to do a presentation on SDS developments (regarding young people) at a future meeting. **ACTION 4 – RB** to present at next AB meeting.
- TP mentioned that the 2015 Cruise Programme at Scrabster begins shortly. 2016 looking very positive, with five confirmed and five tentative at the moment.
- The Communications Plan was discussed earlier in the week by the CNSRP Delivery Group. ES commented that the Annual Review is a useful document to circulate. He will shortly begin work on the next Review and will submit a draft for members' comments by September.
- There have been several stories in the press about projects with which the Partnership is involved, but they do not identify/mention/raise the profile of CNSRP itself. The group discussed the need to raise the visibility of the Partnership's work. GF suggested writing to thank editors when they do make mention of Partnership/projects. DF pointed out that there are many exciting

- things happening with NHC, CCoC etc., and these should give confidence to others.
- ES raised the question of whether Advisory Board meetings should be opened to the public/press. The issue had been raised twice previously and both times the Board decided to keep the meetings private. Following discussion, it was felt that the purpose of the meetings was to allow members to exchange open and honest views on the Programme and the individual projects within it. It was felt that this level of debate would not happen in an open meeting, and may in fact dissuade some members from attending. Members suggested the following alternative options:
    - Chair to meet with press following Board meetings;
    - Regular press releases to be issued;
    - Raise profile of ES weekly report;
    - Hold a sub-meeting following Board meetings with a member of the press
    - CNSRP column in local paper(s)

ES agreed to issue a press release following this meeting, and to consider the other points for action. **ACTION 5 - ES** to draft a press release and **ACTION 6 – ES** to consider other points made.

## 5. INWARD INVESTMENT – PROGRESS REPORT

RK and JL provided an update on the activities that have been undertaken since the last meeting. The following items were of note:

- There are currently about four projects that are well on their way, and at least twelve more that are in the early investigative stages.
- In the Oil & Gas sector, cost reduction and margin improvement are key watchwords and Caithness can offer potential solutions. Precise cost-comparison data is being collected.
- JL is reviewing the Caithness Ambassadors programme. One victory is that an ambassador's involvement has opened doors with two major Oil & Gas companies.
- JL is working on several proposition documents that seem promising; one company is exploring facilities available in the area.
- RK and JL continue to visit businesses and intermediaries in Aberdeen regularly.
- A sustainable, overarching Inward Investment marketing plan is in the early stages.

## 6. MEMBER UPDATES

### Caithness Chamber of Commerce

- Proposal for a North Highland Invest in Young People group submitted to Scottish Govt, will be considered by National Group and then taken forward to an August meeting, where it is expected Chamber will be required to do a presentation. Feedback so far has been extremely positive
- Highland Council are providing £2,000 for the Caithness Transport Forum. This is being matched by Stagecoach. DSRL's £10,000 funding remains in place. The Chamber is also exploring with the Scotrail Alliance the funding of a rail users

- group. As the CTF funding is a reduced budget, meetings will be scaled back to 3 times a year.
- Chamber membership continues to grow and develop due to the efforts of business development manager Fiona Levack – indeed Caithness topped the Scottish Chambers of Commerce quarterly economic survey results response rate, enabling this area to get its voice heard in regards to economic statistics data and trends.
  - The Chamber is trialling a social media campaign to reach individuals who may be interested in a lifestyle change along with local jobs. It is part of the Recruit Caithness initiative which it is looking to develop. Chamber is approaching the issue from the lifestyle aspect rather the job.
  - The Chamber annual dinner is fully booked and will be held in September at Mackays Hotel.
  - DSRL business support / mentoring programme - we continue to support individuals and have provided - Initial Guidance: 33 potential business; Business Advice/Consultancy: 15 Potential businesses; Mentoring: 1 potential business Out of the above interventions, 11 related to potential businesses involving DSRL/Supply individuals of which 3 are now known to be trading

#### CVS North

There was no representative available to attend.

#### Cavendish Dounreay Partnership

- Four projects are currently running; there are some problems surrounding lack of skills in the nuclear market etc., but SM is confident that the projects will go forward.
- Enabling projects are being investigated as a means of generating the right environment for job creation.

#### Dounreay Stakeholder Group/ DSRL/ NDA

- Efforts are being made to ensure that the socio-economic elements are being built into contracts.
- Contact with the MOD has confirmed they don't need an onsite test facility in the future, thus Vulcan is to be decommissioned. They are looking for community input on what to do moving forward.
- A meeting was held with Japanese professionals from Fukushima, as they are very interested in socio-economics and community engagement.
- Attended a meeting of the Caithness Transport Forum.
- Discussions with the Chief Financial Officer of NDA about upcoming needs/issues.

#### The Highland Council

- Four finalists have been chosen (amalgamated from various submissions) for the Caithness Flag competition. The vote opens to the public next week and runs through the end of July. This is a great branding exercise and aid to the Tourism sector.
- Caithness & Sutherland Local Development Plan to be reviewed in August by the Council's Planning Development & Infrastructure Committee.

## CNSRP Advisory Board – June 2015 minutes - approved

- The Pentland Firth & Orkney Waters Marine Spatial Plan consultation is ongoing. ES confirmed that more information would be available in the weekly update.
- Business Gateway has reported 52 start-ups supported in Caithness during 2014-15, one of which is now account managed by HIE. Eighteen start-ups were supported in Sutherland.
- Work has now started on the derelict building on Princes Street in Thurso that was the subject of compulsory purchase by the Council. It is to be converted into three flats.
- THC and SportScotland are discussing a contract to revamp the Thurso swimming pool (for approximately £2.7m). The library is scheduled to open in September.

### Crown Estate

- The Crown Estate, together with Welsh Government and Marine Scotland, has recently committed to fund a Secretariat function to run the Offshore Renewables Joint Industry Programme (ORJIP) for Ocean Energy. The programme follows on from the successful ORJIP for Offshore Wind and will bring industry, funders, and researchers together to address consenting issues facing wave, tidal stream and tidal range projects. The Secretariat function will be run jointly by Aquatera, MarineSpace and EMEC. The intention is to establish a broad Network of interested stakeholders from which project teams will be formed to address key research issues, and projects will be funded through various UK, European and other international research programmes. The Crown Estate sees consenting as one of the key challenges for the ocean energy sector and this collaborative approach through ORJIP Ocean Energy aims to help address the key issues so that the sector can progress.
- JR is giving an update at a Wave and Tidal conference in Edinburgh next week. He will make reference to CNSRP Advisory Board as a model for other areas. This will also help raise wider awareness of CNSRP. This was welcomed by members.

### HIAL

- The recladding of the unsightly hangar doors nearest to the Terminal building is being carried out at present. The work to the runway apron is due to start on 5 July, and this should last approximately 10-12 weeks.
- Four new staff appointments have been made (two in air traffic and two in the fire service).
- Dr Paul Monaghan MP is to be invited to visit the airport, as part of efforts to increase the image of Caithness as a place to visit.
- It is hoped that Wick will be able to utilise the satellite based landing system by the end of the year. Part of the issue is the new kit required in the aircraft; pressure needs to be shifted from the airport to the airlines themselves.

### HIE

- RK reported that the forecast is generally quite positive, with an increase in jobs and £7million turnover.

### North Highland College

## CNSRP Advisory Board – June 2015 minutes - approved

- The role of NHC is essential to the area, and working long-term/ on a six to eight year lead time (as many of the targeted young people are currently in high school).
- The local 'skills pool' needs to be increased as well, through skills attraction. The implementation of superfast broadband in the area is a big positive.
- The Engineering curriculum is being developed.
- A bid has been submitted for financial support of the Business Development Unit.
- The creation of apprenticeships is both critical and transformational; employers and schools to be worked with closely. A seven-year plan is being developed, with a focus on selling the value of these to both students and parents.
- There is a project underway to further develop the Thurso campus.
- NS pointed out that NHC needs a new Board from 1 August 2015. This is an absolute requirement and he encouraged people to get involved. **ACTION 7 – ALL** to disseminate information on College Board opportunity.

### Caithness Voluntary Group (Niall Smith)

- There has been an increase in start-up charitable institutions in recent months.
- Two policy reviews in the past fortnight have led to revamps on contracts of employment.

### NHS Highland

- By changing the focus of some of the posts (which were having difficulty bringing in applicants), there has been an increase in interest. Two appointments have been made in Emergency Response and four Clinical Fellows are to rotate throughout the area.
- There has been some wider political interest: Shona Robison (Cabinet Secretary for Health, Wellbeing and Sport) is soon to conduct the NHS Highland Annual Review.

**Review of Adult Services, Caithness** - The Reference Group met on 4 March and heard presentations from the workstream groups by way of update and also prioritisation for funding some initiatives using the Programme Budgeting and Marginal Analysis (PBMA) methodology. The PBMA session was led by Professor Cam Donaldson and Marissa Collins of Glasgow Caledonian University. Bids for development and / or funding were received for a Palliative Assessment and Rehabilitation Unit (Palliative Care Group), Befriending Caithness (Community Development & Service Capacity Group), a Dementia Link worker and additional Dementia Specific Day Care (both Alzheimer Scotland).

A commitment to engage with the community regarding the results of the PBMA process was made. Meetings with community groups, e.g. community Councils are in progress. Care at Home emerged as a key theme at the Reference Group meeting. It was agreed to organise a follow-up meeting with members of the Reference Group. This took place on 22 April in Thurso.

The meeting also heard from Pam Garbe and Ron Coggins about the redesign work ongoing at Caithness General Hospital, and received a presentation from the Director of Operations on the current challenges facing Caithness General. The options for the future, detailed below, were presented for discussion by the Reference Group and

opportunity given for people to put forward other options or shape those developed by the Clinical Staffing Sub Group.

**Caithness General Hospital** - The Caithness General Hospital work stream has been focussing on patient flow and internal improvements in the hospital following the external consultant report and the two day improvement event held in December.

However, events have been overtaken by a staffing crisis amongst medical staff primarily but maintaining other departments such as Labs and 24 hour Theatre cover is also challenging. In December a contingency plan was developed due to a lack of surgeons and since then other vacancies have arisen which has led to an extremely fragile position. One of the biggest concerns at present is that there are no substantive Physicians in post. The full contingency was not put in place but the hospital remains vulnerable. The situation has been exacerbated by concerns around support for Drs in training due the amount of locum consultants that are required. In March, out of 12 posts, there were only 4 substantive post holders. Urgent meetings were held to find an immediate short term solution. Consultants in Raigmore have been extremely supportive as have consultants in Belford who have provided advice. The short term solution has been long weekend cover provided by Raigmore consultants on a rota basis with mid week support from the N&W Clinical Director, a Rural Practitioner when there has been no consultant surgical cover in place. This has worked very well but clearly, it is not sustainable and the newly established Clinical Staffing Sub Group of the Caithness General Working Group, has developed some options for the future which have now been discussed by the wider group and was also discussed at the Reference Group in April. A preferred option has been identified mainly by the clinicians, which would maintain and indeed expand “in-hours” surgical and medical services, with a developed Emergency Department. This is being tested and refined through engagement with wider groups at present. Action Plans are in place and Project Management support identified. A formal options appraisal, independently facilitated, with a much wider group of people including staff, public representatives and members of the public took place on 17th June.

**North West Sutherland Redesign of Services** - Capital monies have been made available from the Highland Council to develop a replacement facility for Caladh Sona which is very welcome news. The opportunity is being taken to have a wider review of health and social care services for the area and to explore this further we carried out a series of meetings with community councils and local groups during April and May.

These meetings were generally very well attended and extremely constructive. There was a good understanding of why it is important not to look at things in isolation and support, in principle, to review all facilities and services. There were some wider concerns around GP recruitment and care at home provision and the next phase of the work will allow exploration of all such matters in more detail. The issue of whether NHSH would continue with two residential care facilities or move to one came up, as did location. It was emphasised that there is no pre-determined decision and an outline of the process to be gone through was explained. This approach seemed to be supported.

Key to success is going to be to support staff to get involved in the process so that they can work alongside our local communities, service users and partners to come up with the best solution for the area. To this end NHSH hope to be in a position to write out with dates to bring people together to start these discussions.

NHSH know that this will bring some challenges and will inevitably be unsettling for some. NHSH are keen that to get through the process as quickly as possible but recognise that it will take some time to make sure the necessary engagement from all concerned is secured. NHSH will be writing to local community representatives later in the week to explain the next steps. Bob Silverwood, Area manager, will be overseeing the re-design and the day to day project management will be overseen by Christian Nicolson with Maimie Thompson (the boards head of PR and Engagement) providing advice and support on the communications engagement process. There will also be staff-side support.

### Scrabster Harbour Trust

- Increase in West of Shetland activity, more awareness of Scrabster.
- Little current interest/activity around the proposed Enterprise Area.
- There has been some interest from the timber sector regarding cargo/space.

Specific progress since the last meeting is as follows:

- **Phase 2** – Re-development of the St Ola Pier to create modern deep-water harbour infrastructure: a technical report covering wave climate modelling and associated high level parametric costing has been completed.
- **Phase 3** – Seabed reclamation works to create laydown: The effect of a 36,000m<sup>2</sup> extension on the harbour wave climate has been studied and high level costings prepared.
- Although there was some falling back of port activity in the final quarter of the financial year 2014-15, overall it was a particularly successful period with annual port revenues at a record level. Fishing was the best performing sector with a 15.6% increase in box landings in 2014-15 with over 288,000 boxes landed.
- For 2014-15, there were 2,208 vessel arrivals at Scrabster, a 6% increase on the previous year. The overall tonnage of vessels through the port was 8.086 million tonnes, an increase of 3.5% on the previous year.
- Renewables - The project to discharge, store and transport component for SSE's Strathy North Wind Farm is now complete.
- Fishing - Activity in April and May has been quieter with fish prices being depressed. Although there has been a delay in the full implementation of the whitefish discards ban, the introduction is still a concern as the onshore implications have not been thought through.
- Oil and Gas - Oil and Gas vessel arrivals numbers have steadily risen since April. The vessel tonnage through the port (as at 15<sup>th</sup> June 2015) was 71% higher than at the same point last year. This is reflection of the following:
  - Growing activity West of Shetland. For example, the semi-submersible rig, Deepsea Aberdeen, is now in position at the beginning of a seven year drilling programme for BP to develop Quad 204 West of Shetland.
  - A greater awareness of the advantages that using Scrabster offers.
- Cruise - The 2015 cruise programme will begin on 28<sup>th</sup> June with the visit of the Minerva. The booking position for 2016 is brighter with five confirmed and five provisional bookings at this stage.
- Over the past period the Trust has had the opportunity to meet with John Swinney MSP the Deputy First Minister, Derek Mackay MSP the Transport and

Islands Minister and Richard Lochhead MSP the Cabinet Secretary for Rural Affairs, Food and Environment. The opportunity has been taken to discuss

- Further port development
- Crown Estate devolution
- Fish Discards Ban
- Lifeline ferry contract
- Wider transport issues (Berriedale Braes, Wick Airport and rail freight)

#### Wick Harbour Authority

- A High-water Protection Gate is key to attracting further business; the options report has been completed and will be discussed in the near future.
- One developer has been working on the pier and substructure.
- Discussions regarding the creation of an O&M facility are ongoing; a technical proposal has just been submitted and another meeting to be held next week.

#### Scottish Natural Heritage

- A written update was previously submitted. Updates:
- The £2m Peatlands research centre is looking for additional funding, but has been out to tender. It looks likely to go to a local firm.
- The new viewing tower at Forsinard Flows opened last Saturday (two photographs were circulated).

#### Skills Development Scotland

- In order to develop the young workforce, work continues with students in S4 – S6, but this coming school year will see SDS engaging with younger pupils from P7-S3
- SDS continues to encourage employers to link directly with schools, which is happening with increased frequency already.
- Through DYW there have been 2 standards created which are under consultation; standard for Careers Education and standard for Work Experience. Members are encouraged to comment on these through the Education Scotland website.
- Highlighted the work of PACE (Partnership Action for Continuing Employment) partnership in working with organisations and employees under threat of, or having gone through, redundancy.

#### Job Centre Plus

- There were no representatives available to attend the meeting.

#### Cllr George Farlow, North Sutherland

- Construction at Strathy North nearly completed. It is accessed via an old croft road which has public access, although will be subject to CCTV. Ecologists have confirmed an increase in biodiversity.

#### Thurso & Wick Trades Council

- The Training course for safety representatives was very successful.

CNSRP Advisory Board – June 2015 minutes - approved

- Continue looking into the problems regarding ScotRail (e.g. delays and cancellations), this is being taken forward. FL said this was highlighted with Abellio Scotrail at the last meeting of Caithness Transport Forum.

**7. AOB**

The Chair informed members of two Traffic Management Forums which she has arranged: Thurso on 27 July and Wick on 29 July. The forums will address primarily:

- Safe routes to school/improvements
- Enforcement of traffic regulations
- Road maintenance

**Date of Next Meeting:** September (date to be confirmed, ES will issue an Outlook invitation)

**Summary of actions:**

	<b>Action</b>	<b>Lead</b>	<b>Due</b>	<b>Status</b>
1	Report on appointment of Chair for Board	ES	July	
2	Invitation to next meeting to be issued	ES	July	
3	Check Highland Council ability to apply for planning permission for TCSH	GH	29 <sup>th</sup> June	
4	Present on SDS at next meeting	RB	Next Meeting	
5	Draft and agree press release	ES	29 <sup>th</sup> June	
6	Increase of press activity to be discussed (column, Chair meeting press, sub-meeting, etc.)	ES	Next meeting	
7	Members to promote interest in new Board for NHC	All	ASAP	