

Caithness & North Sutherland Regeneration Partnership
Advisory Board – Minutes of meeting
T3UK, 27 November 2009

Present: Cllr. Sandy Park; Fiona MacPherson; Ken Nicol (DSRL); Rev Ronnie Johnston (DSG); Cllr. Katrina McNab; Trudy Morris (CCoC); Ian Hargrave (THC); Frances Gunn (AoNCCC); Roy Kirk (HIE); Stuart Black (THC); Stephen Sutherland (CCoC); Claire Conway (HIE); Ian Clark (T&WTC); Cllr. David Flear; Simon Middlemas (DSRL), P. Barrett (Babcock International) & C Lockhart (Babcock Marine); Eann Sinclair (CNSRP); Iona Gunn (CNSRP)

Stewart Henderson (DSRL – Item 2 only)

1 Welcome & Apologies: Apologies were received from John Thurso MP, Cllr. G. Farlow, Cllr. I. Ross, W. Manson (AoCCC), N. Robertson (CCoC)

2 Update on National Nuclear Archive:

S. Henderson outlined progress with the planning of the National Nuclear Archive & Caithness Archive.

NDA retains its commitment to the project. The site was contributed by The Highland Council, and the facility would see the co-location of the Caithness Archive currently located elsewhere in Wick. Other archives may be attracted to co-locate in the future, so the facility would be modular.

There is likely to be a need for 24,000 linear meters of space for records, 2,000 of which are in Wick at the moment. A detailed design brief has been prepared. When recruited the Design team will be located at Naver House in Thurso. Rev. R. Johnstone asked if funding for the project had been secured. S. Henderson said that funding to take the project to design stage was available. S. Middlemas confirmed that whilst the NDA remained positive about the project there could be no guarantees on the likely funding levels in the future.

S. Henderson felt that the program was robust, and projected a final completion date of early 2013. He was unable to confirm costings until the design works had been undertaken. He had been disappointed at the lack of local firms responding to tenders for work. S. Sutherland commented on the potential value of using local companies, and it was agreed that procurement opportunities and tendering are issues requiring attention.

S. Henderson agreed to provide continuing updates through the CNSRP Programme manager, and to return to the Board in future where detailed updates were available.

ACTION 1: ES to liaise with S. Henderson.

3 Presentation from Babcock Group:

S. Middlemas introduced Paul Barrett, Head of Corporate Developments, Babcock International. He explained that the presentation was also used for the UKAEA staff introduction to Babcock.

BIG has a balanced interest between customers and staff. Babcock Group manages a range of UK establishments such as the naval bases on the Clyde and at Rosyth. Some 60% of current customer base is MoD contract work.

Interests of Customers, Staff and Investors are balanced. Corporate staffing policy – selecting the right people and delegating. BIG has a very low headcount at headquarters (35 FTE) with over 17,000 employees. Huge emphasis on routine safety.

Initial contact with UKAEA and DSRL staff has been very positive. The focus on performance & safety is very impressive. The company looks forward to the forthcoming competition and believes it can add value to the process.

R Thompson asked how the company saw workforce skills being utilised beyond requirements for the Dounreay decommissioning programme. In response, the company has had positive discussions with the unions on site, and recognises a UK-wide need for skills within the workforce. R Thompson asked if the company would therefore seek to service those needs from Caithness? In response, BIG seeks to provide what a customer wants.

C. Lockhart added that BIG is, for example, working with Clydebank College on a range of skills-related initiatives. This type of approach might be appropriate for use here too.

Cllr D. Flear asked if the company had looked beyond nuclear to opportunities such as marine energy in the Pentland Firth as a means of retaining workforce in the area beyond decommissioning. In response, it is too early to discuss some of these yet. But the company has been looking into opportunities such as renewables. C. Lockhart added that in seeking to capitalise on local opportunities such as renewables, the company might be able to assist by setting up initiatives such as supply chain conferences immediately, working with small companies.

S. Sutherland welcomed this as a fantastic opportunity to work in partnership with a major organisation, and described how local companies were already able to demonstrate a track record in delivering quality projects at a competitive price.

The Chairman thanked both men for their presentation.

4 Previous Minutes:

These were adopted as a true record.

5 Matters arising:

The Chairman offered congratulations to North Highland College for gaining their national award for partnership working.

Procurement – S. Black said the Highland Council had been running a series of procurement workshops around the highlands. Trudy Morris highlighted continuing concerns with some aspects of Council procurement fixed meeting events taking place. Cllr K Macnab agreed that some local firms had experienced difficulty with the procurement process. S Black said that the turnout for the Caithness procurement workshop had been disappointing, but agreed to take the issue back to the Council. Trudy Morris added that this was not just a local issue, and that the Scottish Chambers of Commerce were also involved in making representations at national level.

ACTION 2: S Black to discuss with Council colleagues.

6 Advisory Board role in Pentland Firth project:

R Kirk outlined issues and progress with Pentland Firth project. R Johnstone asked why so much recent media coverage focused on Orkney, whilst Caithness received

no mention. He questioned the pace of progress in Caithness and wanted to know why things appeared not to be moving. The Chairman argued that Caithness had received its share of publicity over the past 12 months, with the First Minister's announcement on the start of the competition process. S Black added that Orkney's main role at present was as the European test centre for wave and tidal devices, so it was to be expected that this would gain most attention in the short term, but that deployment was the big opportunity for Caithness and north Sutherland.

R. Johnstone suggested that our marketing effort was therefore lacking. Cllr D Flear added that Orkney Islands Council has invested in marketing material.

R Kirk agreed that Orkney was currently the focal point for testing of devices, but this is against the early development phase of a multi-billion pound industry. He outlined the content of his paper suggesting that a sensible means of ensuring better communication of progress was for the Advisory Board to become the local engagement body for the Pentland Firth project. This would enable the Board to inform and challenge project partners on progress. He felt it presented a real opportunity and he was confident the partners would listen very closely to comments. He went on to describe how HIE was currently leading the process of creating a "route map" – setting out how the partners proposed to make the project happen. Louise Smith is currently working on this, and a draft will be available for the Advisory Board early next year. S. Middlemas felt that this had to fit into the Master programme, the draft of which would show gaps that needed to be filled in achieving a critical path to success. **ACTION: ES to circulate draft of Route Map when available.**

R Thompson and S Sutherland expressed a fear that without greater urgency the opportunity would not be realised in this area. S Sutherland was frustrated at the role of the Crown Estate. Trudy Morris outlined a recent meeting that the Chamber had arranged with Crown Estate representatives. Despite concerns the meeting had been very positive. She felt that the scale of opportunity required everyone to work together, including Orkney, Nigg etc. Crown Estate had also offered to pass information on Caithness companies to developers, as a means of addressing concerns at the lack of information on developers' needs.

S Sutherland also reported that he, E. Sinclair, Trudy and local companies would be meeting that afternoon to discuss programming of activities and collective marketing of capabilities.

The Chairman commented that those who saw progress from the outside were impressed at the level of joint commitment locally. This had been echoed by Jim Murphy after his appearance at the Caithness Conference.

Cllr D Flear suggested that Advisory Board minutes could be forwarded to Highland Councillors, to keep members up to date. ES agreed to forward minutes as they became available. **ACTION: ES to forward minutes.**

S Black suggested that the Advisory Board should therefore become the body to provide engagement with the Pentland Firth project – he felt that it should also include SNH representation, as they were not present, yet had an important role. **ACTION: ES to approach SNH.**

It was therefore agreed that the Advisory Board would take on the role of local advisory body for the Pentland Firth Marine Energy project.

7 Action Plan & Master programme

ES reported that the Master programme was in draft format, and would be discussed at the next Executive Board meeting. He hoped to have a first published draft available thereafter. The Programme would then become the main mechanism for measuring progress and reporting on achievements.

ES also reported that following the Caithness Conference a revised version of the Vision document for the area was being prepared. He circulated draft designs for the document and asked members to forward any comments.

8 Member updates:

DSRL: It was noted that NDA budgets were likely to be under pressure, in line with wider public sector funding constraints. K. Nicol described how DSRL is working on workforce transition plans, ensuring a future beyond decommissioning.

NH College: an upsurge in applications for student places was reported, as well as greater volume of requests for student bursaries. Large capital programme at the College is proceeding according to programme.

Chamber of Commerce: a number of events have been run, including tourism and harbours events. Chamber has also been involved in Town Centre regeneration bids for Wick and Thurso. Although they were unsuccessful, many lessons have been learned. Chamber is now working with Caithness Partnership town centre co-ordinator to take forward town centre plans. S Black suggested that EU funding might be available to help fund town centre plans.

Thurso & Wick Trades Council: involved in political lobbying. Ran successful event at STUC conference this year, and planning Holyrood visit in December. The Trades Council works closely with HIE and CNSRP.

Katrina – PPP - £210,000 from Scottish government, NDA waiting for Council who are waiting for HIE who are also waiting to hear from the others so going in circles. Ready to do PPQ next week. Everyone waiting to see what others are doing. Won't attract people to the area at the moment. Leader meetings are always in Thurso they say there aren't any venues in Wick. We are struggling to get commitment.

Federation of North Coast Community Councils – The future of the Melness community wind power project hung in the balance following problems with a connection date to the National Grid. F. Gunn asked for advice and help on moving this forward. The Chairman suggested that R Kirk and S Black might be able to help with this. **ACTION: R Kirk & S Black to consider sources of help and advice.**

Highland Council: Cllr D Flear suggested difficult times ahead, given the likely budget position. The Chairman felt that some very difficult decisions lay ahead, and said the Council will need support from its communities. Cllr K Macnab pointed to a perceived lack of commitment to large projects like the Community Regeneration Centre being developed by Pulteneytown People's Project, despite receiving £1 million from the Lottery. R Kirk agreed to continue discussing this particular project with PPP.

9 Any Other Business

ES reminded members that he had circulated dates for Board meetings in 2010. Some dates may yet need to be changed, but a full timetable of Partnership dates will be issued in the next few weeks.

Actions List:

Ref	Action	Due Date	Responsible Person
1	ES to liaise with S. Henderson re future information to Advisory Board	Jan 2010	ES
2	S Black to discuss procurement issues with Council colleagues	Jan 2010	SB
3	ES to forward minutes to Councillors as they become available	Mar 2010	ES
4	ES to approach SNH re participation in Pentland Firth Advisory Board discussions	Dec 2009	ES
5	Consider sources of advice to Melness Wind Power project	Dec 2009	RK/ SB