

# Caithness & North Sutherland Regeneration Partnership



14 October 2009

Mr Ian Grant  
Chairman  
The Crown Estate  
16 New Burlington Place  
London  
W1S 2HX

Dear Mr Grant

As you may be aware the Caithness & North Sutherland Regeneration Partnership (CNSRP) is an informal partnership of the main public agencies with a remit to tackle the economic diversification of the Caithness and north Sutherland area in the wake of the decommissioning of the Dounreay nuclear plant and the loss of some 2,000 jobs (around 25% of the local employment market). CNSRP is credited with identifying the potential to derive local economic impact from the natural tidal and wave resources of the Pentland Firth, and we have remained supportive of The Crown Estate's role in the process of leasing the seabed in the Firth since its official announcement by Scotland's First Minister Alex Salmond at the 2008 Caithness Conference. It was therefore with some concern that members of the Partnership's Advisory Board read press coverage of Crown Estate comments regarding the likely timescale for making announcements on the results of the competition process for the sea-bed licensing in the Pentland Firth.

At the 2009 Caithness Conference on 1st October a large audience - including Secretary of State for Scotland Jim Murphy MP - heard an update on this process from the Crown Estate. Nowhere in this update was there a suggestion that the final announcement was to be delayed until February 2010. Therefore the press comments over the weekend, coming less than two weeks after the Conference, have caused huge concern within both the marine energy industry and the local supply chain in Caithness.

As you know this emerging industry has the potential to provide vital sources of significant future employment in the north of Scotland. However it remains embryonic and therefore very fragile and easily damaged. Sudden and apparently unforeseen delays to key stages of the development process can have a

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disproportionate effect especially if a perception is allowed to develop amongst investors and key stakeholders that we are somehow losing momentum.

I am therefore writing to you to express our very real concern that delays within The Crown Estate's processes are now putting at risk the onshore economic benefits we have all worked so hard to cultivate. Our area stands on the threshold of an exciting new industry, and can provide the skills and infrastructure to nurture it. But we now fear that unless device developers, financiers and suppliers are given confidence the industry in the UK may be stillborn, allowing international competitors to move on and realise the global benefits of this technology.

As Chairman of the Advisory Board of CNSRP I would therefore urge you to publish as soon as possible, and certainly by December 2009, the likely details of Pentland Firth Round 1, including the names of successful applicants, types of applications and likely developer requirements. Only with this information can our local supply chain commit to the necessary level of expenditure needed to meet the requirements of the industry as it develops. Publication of this information would send a very significant signal both to industry and to the local community in the north of Scotland, and would go a long way towards convincing the wider public of the Crown Estate's continuing commitment to the area's socio-economic needs.

Yours Sincerely



PP Councillor Sandy Park  
Chairman, CNSRP Advisory Board

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