



CAITHNESS & NORTH SUTHERLAND REGENERATION PARTNERSHIP (CNSRP)

MINUTES OF ADVISORY BOARD MEETING HELD 16th NOVEMBER 2010 AT T3UK, JANETSTOWN

Present: Cllr AS Park (Convener of THC - Chair), Donald Macbeath (North Highland College), Frances Gunn (Association of N&W Sutherland Community Councils), Cllr David Flear (THC), Cllr Katrina Macnab (THC), Cllr George Farlow (THC), John Green (Caithness Partnership), Trudy Morris (Caithness Chamber of Commerce), Neil Robertson (Caithness Chamber of Commerce), Steven Sutherland (Caithness Chamber of Commerce), Tom Kellet (SNH), Anna MacConnell (NDA), June Love (DSRL), Derrick Milnes (T&WTC), Ronnie Johnstone (DSG), Ian Carse (SDS), Duncan Mackay (Crown Estate), Roy Kirk (HIE), Geoff Robson (THC), Ian Hargrave (THC), Eann Sinclair (CNSRP)

In attendance: Eilidh Gunn (minutes), Sandy Mackie (Scrabster Harbour Trust – Item only)

Apologies: Simon Middlemas (DSRL), Stuart Black (THC), Cllr I Ross, John Thurso MP, Jamie Stone MSP, Gordon Jenkins (NHC), Lesley Cranna (SNH), Billy Manson (Assoc of Caithness Community Councils).

1 Welcome and Introductions

The chairman welcomed members to the meeting and asked members to briefly introduce themselves.

2 Previous Minutes

Minutes were agreed without further comment.

3 Matters Arising

All previous actions have been completed. Further news on the National Nuclear Archive will be forwarded when it becomes available.

ACTION (1) Anna MacConnell to pass on further information on NNA when it becomes available.

4 Update from Scrabster Harbour

Sandy Mackie, who has recently returned to Scrabster Harbour Trust, gave a presentation on the current status of Scrabster's phased development plans both for the harbour and the industrial park. Phase 1 should be fully complete by autumn 2012, before the marine energy industry anticipates deployment in 2013.

In answering questions from the floor Sandy made further comment:

- A wave study is underway to better understand the impact the developments may have on dredging requirements.
- Scrabster is not in competition with any areas. Currently none of the ports around the Pentland Firth have the required facilities for the marine energy industry.
- There will be short term economic benefits during construction.

5 Presentation on “Invest Caithness”

Trudy Morris gave a presentation on the new “Invest Caithness” initiative. Funding has been provided by HIE and NDA. The initiative intends to provide Caithness with an identity to help raise awareness and encourage investment. There was an Invest Caithness presence at Renewable UK with leads to follow and there will be a presence at Scottish Renewables Conference in Inverness on 24th November, as well as at Visit Scotland Expo and All Energy next year.

Various plans are being floated such as using the John O’Groats name to raise awareness of Wick airport. The website – www.investcaithness.com - will be developed to be a fully inclusive functional tool offering information to potential investors as well as links to other initiatives such as Skills Transition and Scrabster Industrial Park.

ACTION (2) Chairman to make THC press team aware of Scrabster/ Invest Caithness stories.

6 Programme Manager Update

Eann Sinclair provided an update on the CNSRP programme and highlighted key points within the most recent report which was tabled.

The draft “Caithness & North Sutherland Action Plan 2011-2014” was discussed. It was welcomed by members, and recommended for approval by the Executive Board. However it was felt that ongoing reporting and monitoring would be helped by a programme of activities. ES agreed on the need for accurate and timely reporting, and therefore agreed to come back to members with a draft programme.

- **ACTION (3) Eann to consider how the programme might be presented to the AB.**

7 Inward Investment Update

Crown Estate Pentland Firth community engagement event brought 400 visitors to meet the Round 1 developers. A very successful event, and HIE met with most of the developers during their time in the area.

HIE has commissioned four pieces of research to find leads in oil and gas, electrical marine work, data centres and pharmaceutical production. These will report back in two to three months. Further pieces of research will be commissioned around small contact centres, home working and relocation of public sector jobs.

HIE are currently working with seven leads from previous pieces of research. The IFMIF opportunity is still ongoing.

8 Member Updates

HIE

- Announcement of £35million project bringing super fast broadband to the Highlands and Islands.
- SR Marine conference next week in Inverness offers opportunity for local supply chain to engage with industry. Note that if local supply chain is not successful in securing tenders the next best thing would be to encourage supply chain from elsewhere to invest in Caithness rather than work remotely.

DSRL

- Lifetime plan will be presented to next DSG meeting in December and staffing profiles will be available after this.
- Planned reduction in DSRL posts this year has been met without redundancies.

Federation of N&W Sutherland Community Councils

- Note that the strategic LEADER group is very supportive of John O'Groats and its importance to the Highlands.

Thurso & Wick Trades Council

- Meeting due with bidders for the Dounreay PBO, will report back on issues discussed.
- Raised Scrabster and Berriedale with the transport minister who is very supportive.
- Dunbar hospital views/concerns. A video can be viewed on You Tube or STUC website.

Caithness Partnership

- Now completed first year of programme. Caithness Partnership is funded through LEADER and Highland Council.
- Involvement with Thurso Harbour funding package.
- Involvement with Thrumster Outdoor funding package.

Caithness Chamber of Commerce

- Will exhibit at SRF next week alongside ABSL and Scrabster Harbour. Can see opportunities in the technology neutral Pentland Firth Seabed leases such as SSE and Eon.
- Town Centre Strategy funding has secured from LEADER and NDA. Will now recruit Town Centre Strategy Officer.
- Note success of Mod in Caithness.

- Workforce transition plan: awaiting funding letters from SDS and DSRL. Ian Carse agreed to follow this up within SDS. **ACTION (4) Ian Carse - Check progress of Caithness Chamber funding letter.**

SNH

- Working closely with Scrabster Harbour
- Good reception at Crown Estate community engagement days
- SNH soon to undertake structural change which will see merger between Caithness, Orkney and Shetland.

NDA

- Note recent comment from Jon Philips, NDA director, impressed by NHRF model during his attendance at NHRF AGM, and the work of Neil Robertson and his colleagues. Neil Robertson said that NHRF job projections are going up and down. Construction sector has been hard hit while business services continues to grow
- Senior personnel from each bidding consortium for the PBO Competition will be meeting on 16/17 November with stakeholders as part of ongoing discussions.
- Low level waste fund meeting today.
- Discussions with DSRL re socio economic benefit which does not involve grant aid eg community benefit within contracts.

North Highland College

- Construction of CfEE due to finish this month and be in use by students by end of January.
- Energy Skills Centre construction of steel frame in place, working to plan and within budget.
- New full time programme for age 16-24 'access to college' in partnership with PPP has 16 enrolled.
- Another programme focused on training for trades contains two national progression awards and has 16 students enrolled.
- Full time numbers have increased overall. Biggest growth area is engineering.
- Curriculum development should be enhanced with recruitment of an Enterprise Co-ordinator.
- Consultation with developers to tap into their skills and research base. Eg Scottish Power Renewables were suggested by Highland Council to seek out talks with North Highland College.

Highland Council

- John O'Groats planning was granted last week.
- Note important development of Ackergill Tower as it is under new management with plans for buildings and site.
- Highland wide development plan – responses being collated, should be in use by Oct 2011.
- Onshore wind development strategy out to consultation in early 2011.
- Business Gateway has had a successful first year. BG also supports existing businesses as well as start ups.

Crown Estate

- Inner Sound has been leased to MeyGen and at 400W is double the size of any other.
- Note that the proposed £1.6 billion spend in the Pentland Firth area did not even reach the front page of the John O’Groat Journal.
- SSE have applied for a 450MW grid connection, another application has also been lodged. This has the added benefit of de-risking other projects.
- Grid enhancement work will provide jobs, SSE are recruiting.
- Build out story which has been complied with help from developers will be presented at SR Marine Conference in Inverness.
- Pleased with the success of the Pentland Firth community engagement event brought 700 visitors to meet the developers in Thurso and Orkney. This was the first time all the investing companies have been brought together under one roof.

Dounreay Stakeholder Group

- £3/4 million investment of West Church almost complete and almost all has been procured locally.
- Thurso Rotary Club are working with Thurso Town Improvement and spending approx £5000 putting on a ‘da doonie’ day with a Viking Galley burning at the riverside and concerts. Has had some difficulty in getting press coverage.

9 Any other Business:

A question was raised over what was being done to retain the skilled ROK workers and in general when these situations arise what assistance can be offered. Ian Carse explained that the Partnership Action for Continuing Employment (PACE) is the Scottish Government's national strategic partnership framework for responding to redundancy situations and is co-ordinated by Skills Development Scotland. PACE cannot intervene until the company or its administrators either seeks help or announces redundancy. Other opportunities are open, through Business Gateway or through the scheme open to employers offering £75 per week to re-employ an apprentice. Several members felt that these did not seem to be well publicised at present. Trudy Morris suggested that if the Chamber was provided with the relevant information it could be circulated more immediately if similar situations arose in the future.

- **ACTION (5) Ian Carse - Circulate apprentice subsidy information for situations such as ROK. (Ian Carse has subsequently circulated information – and suggested the links below for information:**

Flexible Training Opportunity

Leaflet link towards bottom of page <http://www.skillsdevelopmentscotland.co.uk/our-services/services-for-employers/encourage-employees-to-develop-new-skills.aspx>

Employer Recruitment Incentive

<http://www.skillsdevelopmentscotland.co.uk/our-services/services-for-employers/engage-in-industry-recognised-training/employer-recruitment-incentive.aspx>

List of Actions:

Ref	Action	Due date	Responsible person
1	Pass on further information on NNA when it becomes available	Next meeting	A MacConnell
2	Consider how a programme might be presented to the AB.	Next meeting	E Sinclair
3	Make Highland Council press team aware of Scrabster and Invest Caithness Stories	26/11/10	AS Park
4	Check progress of Caithness Chamber funding letter	19/11/10	I Carse
5	Circulate apprentice subsidy information for situations such as ROK	19/11/10	I Carse