



CNSRP ADVISORY BOARD MEETING

3rd September 2013
T3UK, Janetstown

Attendees: Cllr Drew Hendry (Chair), Stuart Black (HC), Eann Sinclair (CNSRP), Cllr Roger Saxon, June Love (HIE), Roy Kirk (HIE), David Sutherland (HC), Connie Bremner (Job Centre Plus), Sandra McCaughey (CCoC), Frances Gunn (CVS North), Billy Manson (Association of Caithness Community Councils), Alastair MacDonald (Babcock), Fiona Bruce (CNSRP - minutes), Bob Earnshaw (DSG), Mark McKean (Crown Estate), Cllr Gail Ross George MacDonald (CVG), Bill Baxter (Caithness Chamber of Commerce), William Sutherland (HIAL), Gordon Jenkins (NHC)

Apologies: Cllr Thomas Prag, Trudy Morris (CCoC). Derrick Milnes (T&WTC), Seonag Campbell (SDS), David Flear (DSG), John Robertson (Crown Estate), Ken Nicol (DSRL), Anna MacConnell (NDA), Stephen Sutherland (CCoC), Lesley Cranna (SNH), Cllr George Farrow, Sandy Mackie (SHT), Willie Watt (WHA), Susan Johnson (Job Centre Plus),

1. WELCOME

The Chair opened the meeting and commented on the progress that has been made highlighting the important work that has already been undertaken by CNSRP partners. The Chair referred to Caithness & North Sutherland as the 'New Frontier for Energy & Industry'.

The Chair emphasised the important work that is currently being undertaken by Highland Council on the local plan. He encouraged members of the Advisory Board to engage in discussions with Highland Council on what should be included in the local plan.

2. PREVIOUS MINUTES AND MATTERS ARISING

The minutes of the last meeting were accepted as a true record of the previous meeting.

3. PROGRAMME MANAGER UPDATE

Programme Summary

The key issues and highlights from this period are:

- During 2012/13 over 34 local companies/business starts projected the creation or retention of 127.5 full-time equivalent jobs (67.5 in the energy or business services sector). A further 55 FTE jobs have been projected since the start of the 2013/14 financial year.
- NDA and HIE confirmed funding of £0.45M in support of the first phase of Wick Harbour Authority's plan to position the harbour to attract new business from offshore renewables.
- NorSea Group, have signed an agreement with Scrabster Harbour Trust, and a further agreement with Hugh Simpson (Contractor) Ltd. Both contracts are in support of SHT plans to create a major oil and gas service base at Scrabster.
- Ashley Ann has announced 20 new jobs over the next 18 months in the manufacturing business.
- The CNSRP partner's priority projects for the coming period are the development of the business/industrial park at Scrabster Harbour, the attraction of offshore wind operations base at Wick Harbour and an inward investment in the marine energy sector.

Forward Plan

ES provided the members with a presentation on CNSRP's Forward Strategy. In summary the following key issues and actions were noted:

- DSRL will continue to be a steady source of employment for at least the next 3 years. This provided CNSRP and its partners with a 3 year period to focus on attracting key sectors to the area and time to make any necessary infrastructure improvements.
- Support needs to continue on the skills agenda in terms of transition and employability training and support. Early engagement must be carried out in local schools to advise pupils what opportunities may be open to them in the future – to allow them to make the correct study options.
- Cllr Drew Hendry advised that Highland Council have introduced a Science Academy to engage with the industry and education providers to provide a clear picture of what skills will be required in the emerging energy sectors. The Highland Science Academy will begin to engage with children at pre-school age and continue right the way through their education to keep them fully informed.

ES advised that he will present recommendations to the CNSRP Executive Board later this month to gain their views on the forward plan.

Communications

Eann Sinclair noted that to date in 2013/14 there had been less media stories generated this year in comparison to previous years. Eann Sinclair met the North of Scotland

Newspapers' editorial team to provide them with an update on progress and on the partnership's future plans. The session proved useful and Eann will continue to engage with the local editorial team to keep them up to date on progress.

Reference was made to the recent GMB article which stated little progress was being made in terms of socio economic development in the area. A note of thanks was made to Derrick Milnes and the Thurso & Wick Trades Council for their very clear response to this article – stating their disagreement with statements made by the GMB.

It was suggested that better use should be made of the weekly blog produced by Eann as it provides a quick snapshot of what has been happening. Some thought will be given to distributing this to a wider audience.

Publication of the CNSRP Review has been delayed, but Eann Sinclair highlighted the very positive article that John Swinney MSP had contributed. Eann Sinclair agreed to circulate a final draft of the publication as soon as it is available. **ACTION 1 ES** to circulate final draft.

Marketing Proposal

AJM provided a brief on the work currently being undertaken on Marketing Caithness and North Sutherland. In summary Dounreay previously dominated the local press with stories, most of which used negative headlines rather than focus on the positive aspect of the work undertaken and the people and skills employed at the site. As a result of this Dounreay decided to replace the former 'Decommissioning Supplement' (issued every six months) to 'This is Caithness' which celebrates all that is good about Caithness and North Sutherland.

A marketing proposal is being drafted to capture future activities, conference attendance, promotional material and events that CNSRP could focus on. The proposal will also identify the costs and resources required to deliver a comprehensive marketing strategy. The CNSRP Advisory Board members were positive about this piece of work and recognised the importance of getting this right. Eann Sinclair said that this paper would also be discussed by CNSRP's Executive Board. **ACTION 2 – ES** to feed back Executive Board comments.

4. INWARD INVESTMENT – PROGRESS REPORT

Roy Kirk thanked DSRL for the continued support of June Love's secondment to the Inward Investment team. It was noted that Highland Council have also agreed to provide a replacement for the post formerly held by Eilidh Gunn within the Inward Investment Team.

A group of 13 Caithness representatives visited SSE's off-shore wind operations maintenance base in Lowestoft as part of a learning journey in August 2013. This visit was a direct result of a contact made at the SCDI Dinner hosted in London. Feedback from those who attended the visit has been positive, a short report of the visit and any lessons learnt from this trip is currently being produced.

The work currently being undertaken to identify labour market intelligence is on schedule for completion by the end of September 2013. The final report will provide details of

current status, existing talent and underlying skills, the skills gaps and potential business strands.

Meygen are hopefully only weeks away from positive consent, they hope to have a contract for work placed later this year. In line with the current timescales they expect to have devices in the Pentland Firth in 2015.

There is a greater current focus on Tidal Energy as opposed to wave energy, with one engineering company currently engaged in discussions about a Caithness base.

There are also developments in the Oil & Gas sector. HIAL is trying to attract new business from the west of Shetland oil fields. NHC Helicopters now have a second helicopter based at Wick, as well as a site office and engineering base. Plans for supply and operations base at Scrabster continue to be discussed.

Roy Kirk and June Love met with a number of companies in Aberdeen in July 2013 to discuss inward investment opportunities in Caithness, and this led to a number of positive leads. Further visits to Aberdeen are planned and a London visit is scheduled for October 2013. There are also plans to host events in Aberdeen, Holyrood and Westminster to promote Caithness as a business destination.

Some research is currently being undertaken to consider which publications and events provide the best promotion opportunities. This fits into the work currently being undertaken by the CNSRP Delivery Group to produce a marketing and communications strategy for the area.

5. MEMBER UPDATES

Association of Caithness Community Councils

- Progress on improvements at Berriedale Brae is still high on the agenda.

Caithness Chamber of Commerce

- The Annual Dinner will be held on 20th September 2013, tables/seat are still available for booking and the Chamber's AGM will be held on 3rd October at Thurso Cinema.
- An agreement has been reached with European Social Fund to allow the MtRC Programme to be extended until December 2014.
- Funding has been secured to allow the Chamber to run WorldHost training in Caithness. The project aims to train at least 50% of front line staff to enable Caithness to be recognised as a WorldHost destination.

Caithness Voluntary Group/CVS North

- Caithness Voluntary Group – it was noted that the recent AGM was well attend and there were no issues raised.
- CVS North – The visit Sutherland website, twitter and facebook accounts are now live. Maximum use has been made from feedback from regular visitors to the area including some famous visitors.

- It was noted that 2014 marks the 200th Anniversary of the Strathnaver clearances, a programme of events/activities is being produced to commemorate this occasion. In parallel funding has been secured for the first full-time post at the Strathnaver Museum.
- North Highland College, as part of the student curriculum, are developing an App that provides details of all museums in Caithness and Sutherland.

Crown Estate

- Mark McKean advised that 3 of the Pentland Firth and Orkney waters W&T projects are off the Caithness coast and consenting/surveying work is ongoing at each of these sites. The Crown Estate is continuing to work with the developers and decision on Meygen's application to Scottish Government for consent is expected imminently.
- A new seabed leasing round is about to be launched, with the Crown Estate seeing the ongoing need for technical development.
- The Crown Estate has previously announced it is considering making investments of up to £10m each in up to two wave and/or tidal stream array projects to support industry development to the next level.

Dounreay Stakeholder Group

- The DSG are continuing to work with DSRL on a guidance note for socio economics in procurement which will benefit the local area.
- A number of DSG representatives met with the leader of Prospect as part of a stakeholder meeting to discuss socio economics.
- The DSG are working with the NDA on the National Nuclear Archives project, the NDA will be setting up a stakeholder group to take this project forward.
- A presentation on Higher Activity Waste and what Scottish Government Policy means for Dounreay will be provided at the next DSG meeting. Options for community benefit will be explored.
- Kick-off discussions have been held with regard to community benefit and how to make best use of funds available and should all funds be amalgamated rather than administered individually. It was noted that DSG has no wish to administer funds but simply want to start the discussion.
- DSRL have contracted a consultant to provide an impacts assessment of their socio economic interventions, the DSG have been promised a copy of the report once finalised.

DSRL/NDA/BDP

- DSRL co-ordinated and supported the Ready, Steady, work programme during the school summer holidays, 12 school leavers attended.
- DSRL have offered 4 intern places this is in varied disciplines.
- The second edition of 'This is Caithness' is scheduled for publication in October 2013, stories are currently being sourced and written.
- Alastair MacDonald has been asked and accepted to join the Energy North Task Force.
- Some work is currently being undertaken to write up a strategy to identify the gaps and seek what funding is available to support the tourism and creative industry sectors.

Highland Council

- Discussions are being held to try and make better use of unused accommodation in Wick as a result of the shortage of bed spaces.
- Renovation work has begun on Wick Town Hall, once the renovations are complete the facilities will be available for use by all.
- The Highland-wide development plan engagement is ongoing until 17th October 2013.
- It was confirmed that following the success of Harbourfest a similar event will be held next year.
- Work is currently being undertaken to re-open the Skate Park in Wick. The Skate Park had to be temporarily shutdown on health and safety grounds. Quotes are currently being sought to develop the park so that it is fit for purpose.
- Concerns were raised by a number of members regarding mobile phone coverage in Caithness and Sutherland. Stuart Black advised that work is being undertaken to try and improve mobile phone coverage.

HIAL

- Footfall at the airport continues to increase in business, tourism and oil related traffic. As a result of customer feedback and increased passenger numbers Loganair have added additional Edinburgh flights to their existing timetable.
- Further options to increase Oil and Gas sector use of the airport are being discussed.
- It was noted that a really positive article was included in the latest edition of 'Executive' magazine that referred to Wick John O'Groats Airport as 'the can-do airport'. It was agreed that maximum effort should be put into promoting the airport.

HIE

- Timeline information is currently awaited from BT regarding the roll out of superfast broadband.

North Highland College

- Course applications have increased from last year, with students due to arrive on campus over the next two weeks.
- The college is continuing to expand its facilities with further development planned for the Dale Farm site.
- Options are currently being considered to further develop the curriculum.

Scrabster Harbour Trust

- There was no representative available to attend.

Scottish Natural Heritage

- There was no representative available to attend.

Skills Development Scotland

- There was no representative available to attend as SDS were running a PACE event in Golspie for former GREAN staff.

Job Centre Plus

- There are currently 710 individuals on the Job Seekers Allowance list, a slight increase since the last meeting.
- Representatives from JCP are supporting SDS at the PACE event for the former GREAN employees.
- JCP are continuing to engage with employers to gain work experience placements for the unemployed. Some individuals are currently on placement with Reids of Caithness, JGC Engineering have also agreed to future placements.
- JCP are involved with the planning committee for the next "Jobs & How to Get Them" event. Following the success of the Caithness events plans are in place to hold a similar event in Sutherland.
- The Caithness Employability Partnership meet in August, and they are starting to gather skills base information.
- JCP are continuing to move forward on their digital agenda by encouraging clients to use the online facilities and providing basic training on how to use the online facilities.

Thurso & Wick Trades Council

- There was no representative available to attend.

Wick Harbour Authority

- There was no representative available to attend

6. AOB

Frances Gunn suggested that more PR should be produced on the back of the good work undertaken by the Caithness and North Sutherland Fund. The Fund has done a lot of good and positive press coverage should be made from it.

Cllr Roger Saxon noted that an imminent announcement is expected regarding community funding related to the Camster Windfarm project.

Cllr Drew Hendry thanked the members for their attendance, and commented on the positive messages of the work already undertaken and aspirations for the future and the commitment of the members to doing this right.

The CNSRP Advisory Board will meet again on **Tuesday 3rd December 2013.**

Summary of actions:

	Action:	Lead:	Due Date:	Status:
1	Circulate draft final Annual Review document	ES	04/10/13	
2	Feed back Executive Board comments on 2014-17 delivery strategy	ES	Next meeting	